The Role of Social-academic Goals in Chinese Students' Self-regulated Learning

Jing Wang, Kun Liu, Guanzhong Ma
xiaoyuer19921023@126.com, liukun2014@gmail.com, maguanzhong@gmail.com
Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

Abstract: Social-academic goals play an important yet unexamined role in self-regulated learning (SRL). Focusing on 11th-grade students from China, this study showed that parent-oriented goals were strongly associated with performance-avoidance goals while social status goals were strongly associated with mastery goals. Students' parent-oriented goals had a direct effect on SRL strategy use, while social status goals had an indirect effect on SRL strategy use through mastery goals.

Introduction

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) has attracted increasing attention due to its significance in predicting academic success. SRL refers to a proactive learning process that encompasses motivation, metacognition, and strategy use (Zimmerman, 1990). Parent-oriented goals and social status goals are commonly endorsed social-academic goals, especially among the Chinese students. However, there is a dearth of research that has investigated the direct and indirect ways that social-academic goals may influence SRL. Informed by the hierarchical model of achievement motivation (Elliot, 1999), social-academic goals are posited as antecedents of achievement goals through which social-academic goals further influence the use of SRL strategies.

Methods

Participants

Two groups of students participated in the study. The first sample was 449 students in Shanghai. The second sample was 553 students in Jiangxi.

Measures

Parent-oriented goals were assessed with 12 items developed by Cheung and Pomerantz (2012). Social status goals were assessed with six items adapted from Dowson and McInerney (2004)'s Goal Orientation and Learning Strategies Survey (GOALS-S). These items assess students' purpose to obtain or maintain social status at present or in the future. Academic achievement goals were assessed with 14 items adapted from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Skills (PALS) (Midgley et al., 2000). SRL strategy use was assessed with 22 items (Rao & Sachs, 1999). Two types of SRL strategies were assessed: 13 items on cognitive learning strategies and nine items on self-regulation.

Procedure

All the items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The first author administered the questionnaire, requiring participants to complete in around 15 minutes.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis

First, after checking the univariate normality of variables, we posited a five-factor model comprised of mastery, performance-approach, performance-avoidance, social status, and parent-oriented goals. For the models in both areas, the majority of factor loadings were higher than .60, except two items were higher than .50.

Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses

Correlations for the Shanghai sample and the Jiangxi sample are presented below the diagonal and above the diagonal respectively (see Table 1). Parent-oriented goals and social status goals were positively correlated. The two kinds of social-academic goals both had positive correlations with achievement goals. More specifically, in both areas, parent-oriented goals were mostly associated with performance-avoidance goals, which followed by performance-approach goals, and lastly mastery goals.

Table 1： Correlations among the Central Constructs (N = 1002)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Alpha (JX)
1. Parent-oriented goals	—	.45**	.13**	.33**	.42**	.24**	.16**	.86
2. Social status goals	.46**	—	.33**	.31**	.25**	.18**	.16**	.83
3. Mastery goals	.27**	.44**	—	.29**	.08	.33**	.30**	.73
4. Performance-approach goals	.47**	.41**	.37**	—	.57**	.13**	.07	.77
5. Performance-avoidance goals	.50**	.38**	.23**	.66**	—	.16**	.08	.75
6. Cognitive learning strategies	.28**	.29**	.45**	.26**	.16**	—	.69**	.76
7. Self-regulation	.24**	.24**	.40**	.23**	.08	.71**	—	.74
Alpha (SH)	.93	.89	.82	.84	.81	.81	.73	

Note. *p <.05. ** p < .01. *** p <.001.

Structural equation modeling

The model reported a significant probability value: χ^2 (169 N = 1002) = 794.73, p < .001. Nevertheless, the model fit was considered reasonable according to other indexes: RMSEA = .06, CI = .06, .07, GFI = .92, CFI = .94, TLI = .92. Concerning social-academic goals' effects on achievement goals, social status goals significantly predicted mastery goals (γ = .504, p < .001), performance-approach goals (γ = .206, p < .001), and performance-avoidance goals (γ = .150, p < .001). Parent-oriented goals significantly predicted performance-approach goals (γ = .391, p < .001) and performance-avoidance goals (γ = .451, p < .001). But parent-oriented goals did not have significant effect on mastery goals. Regarding the direct effect of these goals on academic engagement, mastery goals positively predicted SRL strategy use (β = .416, p < .001), which followed by parent-oriented goals (γ = .205, p < .001).

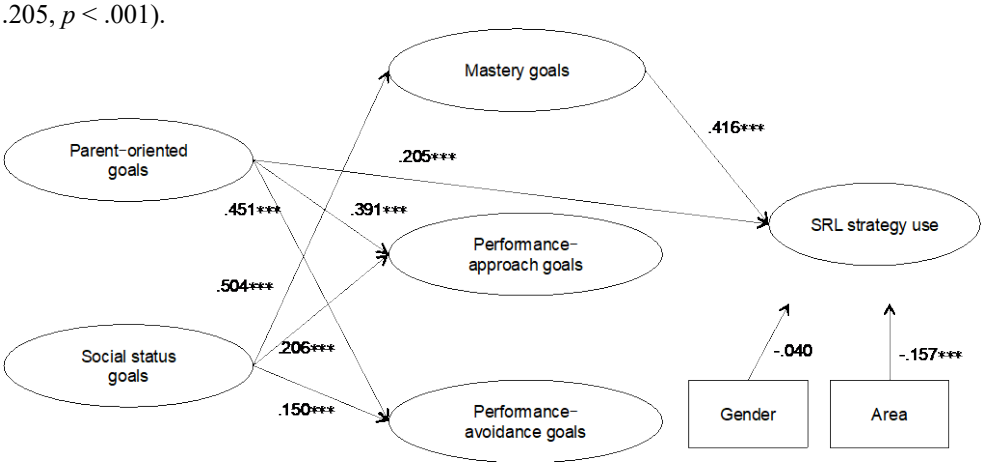

Figure1. Path coefficients of the hierarchical model.

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