

The Correlation Between General Motivation and Academic Motivation

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Abstract

This study focused on examining motivation using two different scales to find the convergent validity between said scales, which measured general and academic motivation. Twenty-four questions from the Duckworth Grit Scale and the Academic Motivation Scale were used to examine twenty-one participants using a 1-5 scale. General motivation and academic motivation were found to be weakly positively correlated.

Introduction

The concept of motivation is one that has been studied countless. Whether it's completing a huge project or just getting out of bed in the morning, motivation is a core part of someone's reason or willingness to perform a task. It's a feeling that many, especially those in school, desire in order to achieve the success that they want in their own lives. In order to further study the concept of motivation pertaining to an individual, several measures have been established to empirically analyze the level of motivation someone has, such as Angela Duckworth's "Grit Scale", and R.J. Vallerand's "Academic Motivation Scale". The purpose of this study is to implement both of those scales and determine whether someone's general motivation had any correlation with their studies in the academic world. Our hypothesis is that the scores on the Duckworth Grit Scale (DGS) and the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) will have a strong correlation.

Method

Participants for this study consisted of 21 respondents, all of whom were given the same twenty-four-question survey, twelve questions derived from the DGS and twelve from the VAMS. Respondents chosen were either currently in college or had a college-level education. For the first set of twelve questions, respondents were asked to rate themselves in regard to a series of statements revolving around self-motivation. There were five answer choices, ranging from "Very much like me" on the high end and "Not like me at all" on the low end. The second set of twelve questions asked respondents to rate on a 1-7 scale (1 meaning "does not correspond at all", 7 meaning "corresponds exactly") how the statement corresponds to their personal reasons for going to college. The questionnaire was created using a survey-making software provided for free from Google. Given the flexibility of the survey, respondents were free to

complete the survey at their own pace with any device with internet connectivity. The initial hypothesis was created with the aim of finding a correlation between general, everyday motivation and how that motivation translates into college academics. Responses were recorded and a bivariate Pearson correlation was performed on the data.

Results

After the survey, data was collected to reflect both general motivation (using the Duckworth Grit Scale) and academic motivation (using the Academic Motivation Scale). Overall the Academic Motivation Scale had a higher Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Variance, and Range ($M = 5.38$, $Mdn = 5.50$, $Mode = 6.00$, $SD = 1.07$, $Variance = 1.15$, $Range = 3.83$) as compared to the Duckworth Grit Scale ($M = 3.21$, $Mdn = 3.33$, $Mode = 2.50$, $SD = 0.55$, $Variance = 0.30$, $Range = 1.92$). These results show a positive but relatively weak correlation ($r = .13$), which does not support the previous hypothesis of a strong correlation between academic motivation and general motivation. This data is shown in the Appendix.

Discussion

The data did not match the initial hypothesis of a strong correlation between the scores on the Duckworth Grit Scale and the Academic Motivation Scale. The general motivation measured was found to have a weak correlation with academic motivation. Academic motivation was shown to have a greater mean among participants than general motivation. Completing everyday tasks that are basic “needs” is considered general motivation. These results display that students find more reward in academics than in performing everyday tasks. These tasks, such as doing housework, are obstacles that one needs to complete to live a healthy life. A plausible explanation for this could be that many financial and societal factors could influence a student’s

decision to prioritize completing academic work over everyday tasks. Although academic work is not essential, societally and economically, there is more pressure to succeed. A possible problem in the procedure could be the presence of an extraneous variable such as the time of day the survey was taken. If a participant was tired at night and decided to take the survey, they are more likely to be low on energy and not put much thought into answering critically; therefore, the data is not entirely reliable. Future studies could benefit from the use of requiring participants to take the survey at a specific time of day to eliminate this specific extraneous variable. Overall, student academic motivation had a low correlation to general motivation. This can be due to students viewing rewards for school work higher than everyday tasks that require general motivation.