



Examining the dimensional structure and nomological network of achievement goals in the Philippines



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to test the cross-cultural validity of the 2×2 achievement goal model in the Philippine context. The dimensional structure of the four achievement goals (mastery-approach, performance-approach, mastery-avoidance, and performance-avoidance) and their associations with key learning outcomes were investigated. In Study 1, support for the dimensional structure of the 2×2 model was found. In Study 2, associations between achievement goals and learning outcomes such as engagement, disaffection, and achievement were investigated. Contrary to Western research, performance-avoidance was positively associated with adaptive outcomes and performance-approach goals were only weakly related to achievement. Cross-cultural implications are discussed.

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Achievement goals refer to competence-relevant aims that individuals strive for in achievement settings (Elliot, 2005). Scholars have proffered the 2×2 achievement goal model which has currently received widespread acceptance (Huang, 2012; Hulleman, Schrager, Bodmann, & Harackiewicz, 2010). This model states that achievement goals have a dimensional structure with each goal underpinned by two key dimensions: definition and valence (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). The definition dimension forms the basis of the mastery–performance distinction. Mastery-oriented students define competence according to intrapersonal standards; performance-oriented students define competence according to normative standards. Valence refers to either an approach (approaching a desired outcome) or avoidance tendency (avoiding an undesirable outcome). Crossing the definition dimension with the valence dimension results in four types of goals: mastery-approach (attaining competence defined through personal standards), performance-approach (demonstrating competence by outperforming others), mastery-avoidance (avoiding the loss of one's skills/competence), and performance-avoidance (avoiding being considered incompetent by others).

Despite numerous achievement goal studies, its dimensional structure has rarely been tested. Studies that have used either exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis (EFA or CFA) are able to examine distinctions among different types of achievement goals, but are unable to test the underlying dimensional structure. Moreover, many achievement goal researchers share the inherent assumption “that the working principles of goal theory applied to all students, irrespective of their cultural background” (Zusho & Clayton, 2011, p. 246).

However, the way achievement goals operate in collectivist cultures may be different from that in individualist settings (King & McInerney, 2014; Zusho & Clayton, 2011). Avoidance goals are not necessarily maladaptive in collectivist settings

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because the focus on fitting in with others makes avoidance goals more common (Elliot, Chirkov, Kim, & Sheldon, 2001). Some studies have also found that achievement goals are more highly correlated with each other in collectivist compared to individualistic contexts (Hulleman et al., 2010). Scholars have speculated that in collectivist societies, academic achievement needs to be demonstrated publicly to significant others such as one's parents and teachers because doing well is perceived to be a social obligation and has a strong moral significance (Fwu, Wei, Chen, & Wang, 2014; Tao & Hong, 2013). Academic achievement is not just about pursuing one's personal interests (mastery) but also needs to be publicly demonstrated (performance). In order to gain social approval, students have to show others that they are doing well academically lest they be perceived in a negative light.

The aims of this study were (1) to test the dimensional structure of achievement goals (Study 1) and (2) to examine how achievement goals are associated with key learning outcomes (Study 2) in a collectivist context.

Study 1

Methods

The study involved 588 (338 females) secondary school students from three secondary schools in Metro Manila, Philippines. The average age was 14.15 ($SD = 1.12$). An adaptation of the Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised (Elliot & Murayama, 2008) was used to measure four types of goals: mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance. This questionnaire was rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 6 = Strongly agree). The author administered questionnaires to participants in class with the assistance of school teachers. English versions of the questionnaires were used.

CFA was first conducted to test the four-factor structure of the AGQ-R. In order to investigate its dimensional structure, a multiple-indicator-correlated-trait-correlated-method (MI-CT-CM, Marsh & Hocevar, 1988) model was tested. In this model, the valence dimension (approach/avoidance) is crossed with the definition component (mastery/performance). Both the definition and valence of competence dimensions are expected to have additive effects on the achievement goal factor with each contributing independently to the achievement goal factor. Although the factors within each dimension (e.g., approach and avoidance) are allowed to be correlated, factors across dimensions (e.g. mastery and approach) were not allowed to be correlated as stipulated in the 2×2 achievement goal model.

Results

Descriptive statistics, internal reliabilities, and bivariate correlations are shown in Table 1.

The four-factor model (see Fig. 1) had good fit which indicates that the four types of achievement goals are distinct from each other. The MI-CT-CM (see Fig. 2) model also showed excellent fit, providing support for the dimensional structure of achievement goals.

Study 2

Methods

Secondary students from two public secondary schools in Metro Manila participated ($n = 848$). The average age was 14.64 ($SD = 1.52$). The author administered the achievement goal questionnaires at the start of the school year and administered questionnaires assessing key learning outcomes such as engagement and disaffection at the end of the school year. Students' achievement data from the school records were also obtained at the end of the school year. Final grades were obtained for Math, Science, English, Filipino, and Social Studies which were used to calculate overall GPA. Scores were standardized within each school for the sake of comparability.

The same instrument used in Study 1 was used to measure achievement goals. For the learning outcomes, students' behavioral engagement ("I try hard to do well in school."), emotional engagement ("When I'm in class, I feel good."),

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, internal reliabilities, and bivariate correlations among the four achievement goals in study 1.

	1	2	3	4
1. Mastery-approach goal	–	.443***	.189***	.257***
2. Performance-approach goal		–	.106*	.304***
3. Mastery-avoidance goal			–	.228***
4. Performance-avoidance goal				–
Mean	5.05	4.74	4.03	4.74
SD	.85	.96	1.34	1.15
Cronbach's alpha	.72	.72	.74	.87

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

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