



In-school and social factors influencing learning among students enrolled in a disciplinary alternative school



J.S. Herndon^a, Héfer Bembentuy^{b,1}

^a Alternative Learning Center West, Cape Coral, FL, United States

^b Queens College of the City University of New York, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 15 July 2013

Received in revised form 8 April 2014

Accepted 18 July 2014

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Delay of gratification

At risk students

Delinquency

Motivation

Academic achievement

Alternative schools

Drug

Alcohol

Anger management

Peers

ABSTRACT

Under the umbrella of the social cognitive theory and self-regulation of learning, this study examined the associations between free or reduced lunch, gender, deviant behavior, peer influence, school behavior, delay of gratification, academic performance, violence, and substance abuse of one hundred sixty-nine students enrolled in a disciplinary alternative high school. The results of a path analysis revealed a negative association between positive peer influence and deviant social behavior. Peer influence had an indirect and positive effect on math performance by its direct effect on school behavior and indirect effect on delay of gratification. Deviant behavior had an indirect and negative effect on math performance by its direct effect on gratification delay, violent behavior, substance abuse, and school behavior. The results suggest that positive peer associations, willingness to delay gratification, anger management, and avoiding substance abuse are important factors associated with in-school behavior and academic performance, which reflect learners' ability to engage in self-regulation while attending alternative disciplinary school settings.

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Attaining academic success is influenced by learners' behavior, beliefs, and interaction with their social environment (Bandura, 1989, 2012; Bembentuy, Cleary, & Kitsantas, 2013; Zimmerman, 2013; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011). According to the social cognitive theory, learners encode their academic and social contexts in diverse ways. With regard to learning, effective learners set specific goals, monitor their academic progress, and sustain the necessary motivation to overcome any challenges they face in pursuit of their academic goals. Successful students acquire effective self-regulatory and delay of gratification skills, which result in positive academic outcomes such as completion of academic programs and the avoidance of deviant, self-destructive behavior, both in and out of school (Bembentuy, 2013; Bembentuy & Karabenick, 1998). Zimmerman (1998) characterizes these students as self-regulated learners. In contrast, some students who lack the academic skills and motivation for academic subjects and engage in risky, even felonious behavior, are required to take alternative paths in order to complete required academic programs. Zimmerman identifies these students as lacking self-regulatory learning skills.

Today, the alternative paths that some students lacking self-regulated skills often involve internment in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP). The mission of such disciplinary alternative schools is to encourage their students to be in control of their thoughts, actions, motivation, and behavior, and to be agents of positive self-direction while pursuing academic success and responsible social behavior. However, Grunbaum, Kann, and Kinchen (2000) showed that students in alternative schools have a measurably stronger tendency towards violent behavior and substance abuse than students from traditional public schools. Identifying the social, in-school, and self-regulatory factors associated with students' academic performance in a disciplinary alternative education program can help the reintegration of these students back into their regular school settings through a better understanding of the different social and academic changes that take place in these settings.

How students respond to these alternative academic settings depends on their gender, socio-economic status, level of deviant behavior, beliefs, and their ability to delay gratification. Students learn through social interaction and observation of others' positive or deviant behavior (Bandura, 1989, 1997). Often, students emulate the behavior they observe either directly or vicariously in social context (Bandura, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013). To succeed in a DAEP, students must self-regulate their actions and behavior in spite of observing non-ideal social models such as their new peer group. Students referred to an alternative school

¹ E-mail address: bembentuyseys@yahoo.com (H. Bembentuy).

¹ Queens College of the City University of New York Department of Secondary Education and Youth Services Powdermaker Hall 150-P, 65–30 Kissena Blvd., Queens, NY 11367-1597, United States. Tel.: +1 718 997 5158; fax: +1 718 997 5152 (office).

by county and or court orders enter these settings with academic limitations and low willingness to engage in self-regulation. However, these students are not all equal in their degree of knowledge about the school subjects, academic skills, or how they have been influenced by their parents, teachers, and peers.

Consistent with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, the aim of this study is to investigate the associations between deviant behavior, peer influence, substance abuse, violence, school behavior, delay of gratification, and academic performance of high school students enrolled in a disciplinary alternative school setting. Understanding these variable associations is critical to aiding those youths referred to a disciplinary alternative school primarily for incidents of delinquent and deviant behavior. Guided by this goal, the current study provides insights into in-school and social factors influencing students' academic and self-regulatory behavior of learners as they pursue academic goals.

1. Theoretical framework

Self-regulation is the essence of humanness (Bandura, 2001). In order to develop, adapt, and change as individuals, an agentic perspective must be adopted in order to intentionally influence one's functioning and gain a sense of control over their circumstances and environment. Being human is exemplified by one's ability to be self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting (Bandura, 2006). For instance, Bandura (2006) posited that there are four core properties of human agency (see Table 1). The first core property of human agency is *intentionality*, which indicates that individuals proactively work towards their desired goals with a commitment to an interdependent plan of action. The second core property of human agency is *forethought*, which involves goal setting through plan visualization and projection of outcomes and effort, which in turn affects current efforts and purposeful behavior. The third agentic property is *self-reactiveness*, defined as self-regulatory processes for monitoring one's advancement towards their desired outcomes. The final agentic property is *self-reflectiveness*, which suggests that individuals are able to engage in self-examination of their own thoughts, actions, feelings, behavior, and personal efficacy. Although Bandura posited that such properties are innately human, some students in alternative schools appear to be less capable than their traditional school peers of activating these core properties effectively in social contexts, either at school or in their communities. On the other hand, some students enrolled in alternative schools are able to change their patterns of behavior and become proactive human agents who act intentionally, with appropriate *forethought*, *reactiveness*, and *reflection*; they tend to be academically successful.

Consistent with Bandura's social cognitive theory, Zimmerman's (2008, 2013) theory of self-regulated learning suggests that learners' thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors influence their academic performance. Students who have high levels of self-regulation have a stronger likelihood of resisting distractions (e.g., delaying gratification) and unfavorable, even deviant behavior that could lead them to veer from their path to achieving their academic goals. Delay of gratification is a component of the self-regulatory system and it is learned by observing and

emulating social models (Bandura & Mischel, 1965). Students' willingness to delay gratification is related to positive academic outcomes and how students control or self-regulate their behavior inside and outside of school has a direct effect on how they delay gratification when confronted distractions (Bembenuity & Karabenick, 1998).

The belief system, behavior, and environment of students referred to alternative disciplinary schools are influenced by the deviant social behavior of their peer groups, which in turn acts as a catalyst for non-compliant behavior, causing a direct effect on in-school behavior by escalating simple acts such as absenteeism into more subversive acts such as violence (Escobar-Chaves, Tortolero, & Markham, 2002), substance abuse (Kollins, 2003), school expulsion, property damage, and repeated contact with the law, which collectively can determine a child's academic success or failure (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999). Studies have shown that there is a direct effect between delinquency and peer group (Gaviria & Raphael, 2001); ability to delay gratification (White et al., 1994); in-school behavior and academic achievement (Ryan, 2001); and tendencies towards violence and substance abuse (Dishion et al., 1999). Studies have shown a direct association between delay of gratification and academic achievement, particularly in mathematics (Bembenuity, 1999).

From the theoretical notions and empirical findings discussed above, the present study applied a quantitative survey methodology to a sample population of high school students enrolled in a disciplinary alternative education school and measured how they perceived themselves in terms of the following constructs: deviant behavior, peer influence, ability to delay of gratification, school behavior, substance abuse and violence. The researchers derived two research objectives. First, the study examined the association between free or reduced lunch, gender, deviant behavior, peer influence, school behavior, ability to delay gratification, academic performance, and susceptibility towards violent behavior and substance abuse among students assigned to a disciplinary alternative educational school. Second, a path analysis investigated the theoretical relations among all the variables to find the best fit for the data to the model.

Specifically, we investigated the direct and indirect effects of the associations between free or reduced lunch, gender, deviant behavior, peer influence, school behavior, ability to delay gratification, academic performance, and susceptibility towards violent behavior and substance abuse among students in the alternative school. We expected that gender, free and reduced lunch, deviant behavior, and peer influence as exogenous factors would have a direct and indirect effect on violent behavior, substance abuse, school behavior, delay of gratification and academic performance as assessed by a state standardized math test.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants were one hundred sixty-nine high school adolescents from an alternative learning school, consisting of a rotating population of students that attend for 45 school days at which time they are reinstated back into their original schools. Seventy-four percent of the participants were male, 26% were females; 60% Caucasian, 13% African-American, 25% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. Eighty-eight percent are on free or reduced lunch. Students were sent to the school by county and or court order for offenses related to drug or alcohol use, violent behavior, court-appointed felonies, and sexual incidents.

The definition of *alternative school*, according to the central database of the U.S. Department of Education, is a public K–12 school that has: a) met certain student requirements that could not otherwise be effectively accommodated; b) offered curriculum differing from the school district norm; c) acted as an extension of an existing public school; or d) existed outside the typical educational groupings of vocational, special and regular public schools. Alternative schools offer a final opportunity for delinquent or students involved in criminal activity to stay in

Table 1
Social cognitive theory' four core features of human agency.

Core of human agency	Description
Intentionality	Forming intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them.
Forethought	Setting goals and anticipating likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate efforts.
Self-reactiveness	Adopting personal standards, monitoring, and regulating actions by self-reactive influence and by doing tasks that result in self-satisfaction and self-worth.
Self-reflectiveness	Self-reflecting on the level of self-efficacy, thoughts, and actions, and by making adjustments if necessary.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6845047>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6845047>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)