IMPACT OF ACADEMIC GOAL SETTING ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

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Abstract

Students' motivation for learning is largely dependent on how effective their goal settings are in their activities. This study examines the impact of academic goal setting for students' motivation for learning in the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. A descriptive survey of the differential type research design was used in carrying out this study. The population for this study consisted of undergraduates in University of Ilorin estimated at 44,566. A sample size of four hundred and twenty (420) participants was selected using a proportional and simple random sampling technique. The research instrument used was a researcher designed questionnaire titled "Impact of Academic Goal Setting on Students' Motivation for Learning Questionnaire (IGSMLQ)". The instrument was validated by experts in the Department of Counsellor Education while the reliability of the instrument was ascertained through test retest method and a coefficient of 0.85 and 0.90 were obtained for the Parental Involvement Scale and Achievement Motivation Scale respectively. Two main research questions were answered while two null hypotheses were formulated and tested for the study. The data obtained for the study were analyzed using percentages and mean scores. The hypotheses formulated were tested using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that respondents know that learning in school will help them prepare well for the career that they have chosen and they also know the importance of what they are learning to their ambition. It was also revealed that the respondents understand that the more challenging their goals the better they will work and they also engage in task that are of interest to them. The findings show that there were no significant differences in the undergraduate motivation for learning based on gender. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that counsellors should try to motivate both male and female the same way. It was also recommended that counsellor should take academic into consideration when motivating learners.
Keywords: Academic, Goal setting, Learning, Motivation Students

Introduction

Motivation is seen as the person's effort to accomplish his/her duties, dedicating the needed effort and continuing it. Motivation plays a significant role in an individual's educational life and achievement. Motivation reflects in learners' choices of academic tasks, the time and effort allocated to each task and their perseverance in academic tasks. Motivation also enables learners to correctly handle obstacles they come across in the learning process. Wiegfield and Eccles (2011) described motivation as a multidimensional construct and posited that learners who engage in any learning condition have to answer three central questions: Can I do this activity?

Do I want to do this activity and why? and What do I need to do to succeed?. A goal is a dream with a definite plan. In other words, a goal is a behaviour or outcome that a person is consciously trying to perform or obtain. Goals are personally important, within the reach of the individual to achieve it and clearly defined with a specific plan setting and achieving goals (Adara, 2011). If learning were a race, the goal would be the getting to the finishing line. Goal setting, then, is the process for aiming at that end result (Schunk, 2009). Schunk (2009) reported that when he compared the goals of underachievers and achievers, he found that underachievers had no particular goals or they had set goals beyond their reach whereas achievers set realistic, attainable goals that were related to their academics.

Siegle (2000) concluded that more challenging goals among students prompted higher achievement. When students have a role in forming the goals, they take ownership and become accountable toward the goals. Students become even more independent when developing personal goals or ones that are specific only to themselves (Ibrahim, 2017). Once the goals are set, it help to keep both the students and the educator focused on what is most relevant and what can be strived to achieve. Then, when goals are actualized, the students have a sense of accomplishment. Providing students with a goal setting process or guidelines can help them more efficiently set and monitor the progress in reaching the designated goals. Guidelines include stating the goal in written form, making the goals as concrete as possible, conceptualizing the accomplishment of the goal, identifying the steps to obtain the goal, receiving educator feedback as to how they are progressing and communicating what worked and what did not (Nunez, 2011).

From conducting studies on elementary students, Scholes (2001) opined that it is not enough to tell students to "do their best" on an assessment or learning activity. Specific goals are far more effective as a clear performance standard is set. It alleviates a lot of guess work about where to aim. A specific goal is meaningful to the student and is well-defined. In essence, it is clear to anyone. It is also measureable which means that the students know if the goal is attainable, how far away completion is, and when it has been achieved. Locke and Latham (2002) found that goals that use specific standards such as complete twenty problems in one hour are more likely to enhance motivation and learning than general goals such as "do your best." They also noted that in general, difficult goals such as to read a thirty-page chapter in one night boosted motivation better than easier goals such as to read five pages in one night. They attributed this to the students' persistence and greater effort to pursue a more difficult goal. Educators around the United States struggle with students who are disinterested and/or unmotivated to learn and partake in the classroom. One reason for this may lie in a student's motivation or lack of it. Broussard and Garrison (2004) found that mastery motivation, a student's desire and satisfaction with becoming proficient, is a predictor of academic achievement, particularly with third graders. They studied groups of first and third graders and linked higher math and reading grades in third graders to higher levels of achieving their desired goal.

Similarly, intrinsic motivation is the motivation that has to do with personal enjoyment, interest or pleasure as opposed to tangible rewards which are extrinsic in nature. According to Williams (2012), intrinsic motivation and autonomous internalization leads to outcomes that are beneficial both to individual and society. Personal goal setting is one form of intrinsic motivation. It can facilitate higher levels of academic participation in students. Lai (2011) found that one method

for affecting students' motivation is through the classroom environment, and in particular, with goal oriented classroom structures. Some experimental studies revealed that teaching low achieving students to set goals for themselves improves their academic achievement and their intrinsic interest in subject matter (Yunus, 2011). When students set and achieve their goals, they are more likely to attain a sense of self-efficacy and become more academically engaged. Decatur, Fitzsimmons, McGee, and Miller (2008) concluded that personal goal setting had a rippling effect. As the students set reasonable goals to achieve and attained them, they were able to establish higher levels of academic engagement and motivation. Their study included three data collection methods of student journals, student questionnaires and letter-grade averages of students. Students began each day with setting a personal goal of their choice. Then, they had to elaborate in their journals on their choice of the goal and how they were to accomplish it. At the end of each day they reflected and wrote about their performance and if they had attained their goal. They were given three questionnaires periodically during the study to derive how many goals they had achieved and their level of motivation about reaching the goals.

Although the evidence for increasing letter-grade averages was inconclusive in the study, it was noted that students became more involved in classroom discussions, turning in homework, being prepared and listening to the teacher during the duration of the study."Goals are central to current treatments of work motivation and goal commitment and one's determination to reach a goal is a critical construct in understanding the relationship between goals and performance" (Klein, Wesson, Hollenbeck, Wright & DeShon, 2001). Goals motivate us to achieve more in life. According to Riding and Grimley (2009), the motivation for learning is differed by gender. One key reason lies in the different approaches adopted by men and women in receiving and process information. Riding and Grimley (2012) suggested that women tend to have a more complete understanding of information than men, since women are willing to spend a longer period of time to process new information and associate the newly received information to existing knowledge. On the other hand, men have a more shallow understanding of new information, but are able process more information than women. This gender difference in motivation for learning is also reflected in the different attitudes towards learning. As opposed to women who prefer exploratory activities, men prefer activities that involve strategy and direct instructions given by the system. In addition, women's tend to adopt autonomous learning, while men see digital as a medium for socializing and skills development. Therefore, in line with this background, this study sought to investigate the impact of gender on academic goal setting on students' motivation for learning in University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Poor motivation and low academic performance of undergraduate students has been a source of concern to parents, students, educators and the society at large. Low academic performance has been attributed to educators' method of instruction delivery, non-availability of teaching materials, students' motivation and other factors (Splaver, 2011). All of these appeared to have been investigated by several researchers yet the problems seem to have remained persistent. If the motivations of students towards learning and academic performances of undergraduate students continue to be poor as it is now, Nigeria may never attain her goal of developing a good education system for the future generation. Different researchers had conducted research on the impact of goal setting in relation to motivation of students in academic environment. Adegboyega (2018) conducted a research on the influence of achievement motivation on Nigerian

undergraduates' attitude towards examination. The findings revealed that majority of Nigerian undergraduates have a high level of achievement motivation, the findings also revealed that majority of Nigerian undergraduates have a positive attitude towards examination and there was a significant correlation between achievement motivation and attitude of Nigerian undergraduates towards examination, the findings also revealed that gender, age, level of study, university and family type had a significant positive influence on undergraduates' achievement motivation and attitude towards examination in Nigeria. Abe, Ilogu and Madueke (2014) investigated the effect of goal setting skills on students' academic performance in English language in Enugu, Nigeria. The findings show that performance in English language was enhanced among participants exposed to goal-setting intervention compared to those in the control group.

From the aforementioned studies, it can be concluded that previous researchers have focused on undergraduates achievement in different institutions and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none of the past studies have worked on undergraduates' motivation and goal setting among University of Ilorin Students. It is against this background that the researcher investigated the impact of academic goal setting on students' motivation for learning in university of Ilorin. Hence, this study sought to investigate impact of academic goal setting on students' motivation for learning in University of Ilorin using gender as a moderating variable.

Research Questions
The following questions were raised to guide the conduct of this study.
1. What is the level of undergraduates' motivation for learning in University of Ilorin?
2. What is the academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in University of Ilorin?

Research Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:
1. There is no significant difference in the impact of academic goal setting on undergraduates' motivation for learning in University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in University of Ilorin on the basis of gender.

Methodology
The research design that was adopted for this study was the descriptive survey. The population of the study was all the 44,556 undergraduates of University of Ilorin. According to Research Advisor sample size determination table (2016), the sample size recommended for a sample of this magnitude is estimated at 381 at 95% confidence level and 5% margin error. However, the researcher added 10% percent to the population size to cater for the attrition to make a total of 420. Hence, the sample size of this study was 420 University undergraduates. The proportional sampling and simple random sampling technique were used to select the respondents for the study. The proportional sampling technique was used to pick representatives based on the population of each faculty while simple random sampling technique was later used to randomly select the proportioned number in each faculty.

Table 1: Population of Undergraduates in University of Ilorin based on faculties

S/N	Faculty	Total
1	Clinical Sciences	1062
2	Education	10345
3	Engineering and Technology	3538
4	Environmental Science	1224
5	Management Science	3729
6	Pharmaceutical Science	321
7	BMS	1186
8	CIS	2104
9	Arts	4568
10	Law	967
11	Physical Sciences	3329
12	Social Sciences	3070
13	Life Sciences	3623
14	Agriculture	5270
15	Veterinary Medicine	230
	Total	**44,566**

Table 2: Proportioned Percentage of Undergraduates in University of Ilorin based on faculties

S/N	Faculty	Total	Percentage (1%)	Proportioned Sample
1	Clinical Sciences	1062	10.62	11
2	Education	10345	103.45	103
3	Engineering and Technology	3538	35.4	35
4	Environmental Science	1224	12.24	12
5	Management Science	3729	37.3	37
6	Pharmaceutical Science	321	3.21	3
7	BMS	1186	11.8	12
8	CIS	2104	21.0	21
9	Arts	4568	45.7	46
10	Law	967	9.7	10
11	Physical Sciences	3329	33.3	33
12	Social Sciences	3070	30.7	31
13	Life Sciences	3623	36.23	36
14	Agriculture	5270	52.7	53
15	Veterinary Medicine	230	2.3	2
	Total	**44,566**		**445**

Instrumentation
The research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher known as the impact of academic goal setting on the undergraduate students' motivations of learning in University of Ilorin. The questionnaire was made up of sections four sections (A and B). Section A would be based on the demographic data of the respondents while section B would be based on impact of academic goal setting on the undergraduates motivations for learning. The questionnaire was an adapted four likert format scale which is Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The psychometric properties of the instrument were carried out to establish its worthiness and consistency of measure. The data obtained from the samples was analysed using the descriptive statistics for the demographic and research questions of the respondents respectively while t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance were used to test the formulated null hypothesis, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data collected. The t-test statistical method was used to compare means of two independent variables while Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used in testing and comparing those variables which has more than two means.

Results
The demographic characteristic of the respondents includes their Gender, their age group and their academic levels.

Table 3 Distribution of respondents based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	248	59.0
Female	172	41.0
Total	420	100.0

Table 1 show the gender distribution of the respondents in the study. It showed that of the total respondents, 248 (59.0%) are male while 172 (41.0%) of the respondents are female. This implies that a higher percentage of male respondents participated more in this research.

Research Question One: *The level of undergraduates' motivation for learning in university of Ilorin.*

Table 4: Mean and Rank Order of the Level of Undergraduates' Motivation for Learning in University of Ilorin

S/n	ITEMS	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)	Mean	Rank
10	I now know that learning well in school will help me prepare for the career that I have chosen	0.7	23	34.5	59.3	3.52	1st
4	I now know the importance of what I'm learning to my ambition	2.2	2.6	41.4	54.1	3.48	2nd
5	I now have clearer picture of learning task I have planed	1.5	6.4	40.5	51.7	3.44	3rd

14	I am now having total concentrations in my studies	1	6	44	49	3.41	4th
13	I am now learning new things that I never believe I can understand	2.4	11.2	42.1	44.3	3.32	5th
9	I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things related to my studies	2.9	9.8	45.7	41.4	3.26	6th
15	I want to widen my knowledge	1.9	11.2	47.6	39.5	3.25	7th

Table 4 shows the mean and rank order of the level of undergraduates' motivation for learning in university of Ilorin. The table showed that all items have mean values greater than 3.0, this implies that the individual items were mostly agreed upon or strongly agreed upon by the undergraduates in the university of Ilorin. The table also showed that item 10 with rank 1 has the higher mean values. This implies that the respondents agreed ore on the item more than the other items. Item 15 which was rank 7th with a mean of 3.25 implies that the item had the least agreed response among all items. Also, the table showed the percentage response of the respondents on their motivation for learning. It showed that for each item that examined the respondent's motivation for learning, over 75% agreed while less than 25% disagreed. This implies that a high percentage of the respondents agreed that they are motivated for learning while a low percentage disagreed.

Research Question Two: *what is the level academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in university of Ilorin*

Table 5 Mean and Rank order of the academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in university of Ilorin

S/n	ITEMS	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)	Mean	Rank
1	The more challenging my goals are the better I work	1.9	4.3	70.7	22.2	3.68	1st
3	it makes me do task I'm interested in	2.5	4.5	51.2	41.9	3.51	2nd
6	I can handle more challenging tasks	1.2	5.2	37.4	56.2	3.49	3rd
11	I now aim to graduate with an outstanding result	3.1	4	41	51.9	3.45	4th
12	I now want to be among the best students in my level	2.4	2.9	46.4	48.3	3.44	5th
2	I know exactly what results I plan to achieve	3.4	4.8	41	51	3.44	6th
8	I get positive feedback for good performance	1.2	9.3	47.6	41.9	3.31	7th
7	I can now finish the tasks that my colleagues cannot	1	5.7	58.8	34.5	3.28	8th

Table 5 shows the mean and rank order of the academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in university of Ilorin. The table showed that all items have mean values greater than 3.0, this implies that the individual items were mostly agreed upon or strongly agreed upon by the undergraduates in the university of Ilorin. The table also showed that item 1 with rank 1 has the

higher mean values. This implies that the respondents agreed ore on the item more than the other items. Item 7 which was rank 8th with a mean of 3.28 implies that the item had the least agreed response among all items. Also, the table showed the percentage response of the respondents on academic goal setting attitude. It showed that for each item that examined the academic goal setting attitude, over 75% agreed while less than 25% disagreed. This implies that a high percentage of the respondents agreed that they are set academic goals while a low percentage disagreed.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the impact of academic goal setting on undergraduate's motivation for learning in university of Ilorin Nigeria*
Table 7: Mean, Standard Deviation of Academic Goals Setting on Undergraduate's Motivation for Learning

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Cal. t value	Crit. t value	P-value
Academic goal setting	3.63	0.34	419	14.50	1.96	0.000
Motivation for learning	3.17	0.31				

The above table reveals the t-test result of the impact of academic goal setting on undergraduate's motivation for learning. The table showed calculated t-value of 106.68 with a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the chosen 0.05 level of significance, we have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the impact of academic goal setting on undergraduate's motivation for learning in university of Ilorin. Therefore, when the academic goal settings of students increase, there is an increase in their motivation for learning and vice versa.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the undergraduates' motivation for learning in university of Ilorin based on gender*

Table 8: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test result on Motivation for Learning of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	P-value
Male	248	3.38	0.33	418	-0.001	1.96	0.99
Female	172	3.38	0.31				

Table 8 shows the students' independent t-test result of the significant difference in the undergraduates' motivation for learning in university of Ilorin based on gender. The table showed a t-value of -0.001 with a p-value of 0.99, since the p-value is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, there is no enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the undergraduate's motivation for learning based on gender. This implies that undergraduate's motivation for learning in the target study is the same for both genders.

Discussion

The study showed the gender distribution of the respondents in the study. It showed that of the total respondents, 248 (59.0%) are male while 172 (41.0%) of the respondents are female. The study also showed that level of undergraduates' motivation for learning was high, for example, the students know the importance of what they are learning to their ambition, they have clearer picture of learning task they have planned, they having total concentrations in their studies, they are learning new things that they never believe they can understand, they experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things related to their studies and final, they want to widen their knowledge. There is a strong relationship between learning and motivation. According to Abraham Maslow when the need for love and belongingness are met, individual can then focus on higher level needs of intellectual achievement. At this, the stage urge to learn increases.

The study further showed a high level of academic goal setting attitude among the undergraduates in the University of Ilorin. For example, the more challenging their goals are the better they work, goal setting makes them do task they are interested in, they aim to graduate with an outstanding result, they have goals of wanting to be among the best students in their level, etc. According to Funmilayo and Adeleke (2009), setting academic goals is one of the important factors that help students to achieve academic success. They argued that when students set academic goals, it helps them to have a target of what to achieve.

Hypothesis one which aimed to investigate the impact of academic goal settings on student's motivation for learning was rejected. This implies that when students set academic goals, it helps improve their motivation for learning. This is supported by Dalton (2011). Who found out that motivation for leaning is associated to the students' attitude of setting academic goals. Dalton also found that most students that don't perform well the reason due to their low learning motivations which is because of their inability to set goals. The positive impact of academic goal setting on students' motivation for learning is due to the fact that when there is a goal, there is always a corresponding motivation to achieve that goal

The study revealed that undergraduate's motivation for learning in the University of Ilorin is the same for both genders. This is in line with the findings of Samuel & John (2004) who examined how the cooperative class experiment (CCE) teaching methods affect students' achievement in Chemistry. They found that there was no significant difference in gender achievement between the experimental and control groups, but girls had a slightly higher mean score than boys did. The researchers also pointed out that there was no significant difference in achievement between boys and girls exposed to CCE method, both performed significantly better than those taught through conventional lecture method. The obvious reason for this finding is that every student wants to achieve good grades in their academic, regardless of their gender.

Conclusion

As a result of the evidences from the data analysis, interpretation of results and discussion of the findings of this study, the following conclusion were drawn: the academic goal setting of students in the University of Ilorin is high. From this, it is evident that the students in the University of Ilorin have a positive goal setting attitude. Also, students have high desire to be successful academically hence they set goals that will help them achieve their academic success. Even

though the students do not know what the future holds, they feel obliged to set goals so they can live according to their own goals and not by chance. The motivation for learning of the students in the university was also shown to be quite high. This indicates that not only are the student goal setters, they are also motivated to learn. This is obviously because setting academic goals comes with the motivation to learn. Students believe that one other way to help them achieve academic success is by being motivated to learn. It was also revealed that students' motivation for learning is the same for both genders. In addition, there was no significant difference found in the academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in university of Ilorin based on gender. Furthermore, there was no significant statistical difference in the academic goal setting attitude of undergraduates in university of Ilorin for all academic levels. In addition, there was no significant difference found in the academic goal settings of students based on their age.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:
1. From the result obtained, it was discovered that students have high academic goal setting attitude. Therefore, educators, counsellors, parents and guardians should implore prospective students to have academic goal settings and to also encourage current students to continue and improve their goal setting attitude.
2. Since the students' motivation for learning was also shown to be quite high, it is advised that parents, educators, guardians and counsellors should encourage students that are not motivated to set goals that will motivate them to learn well I order to enhance their learning skills.
3. Parents, educators, guardians and counsellors should also bring out plans that will help them improve the students' academic goal setting attitude and their motivation for learning
4. Since it was revealed that academic goal setting attitude and motivation for learning is the same for both male and female students; parents, educators, guardians and counsellors should treat students the same when trying to encourage them for academic goal setting attitude and motivation for learning.
5. Since it was shown that academic goal setting attitude has an impact on students' motivation for learning; parents, educators, guardians and counsellors should always encourage students to focus on setting goals as it automatically helps increase their motivations for learning.

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