

Psychological Variables as Correlates of Academic Amotivation of Low Achieving University Students in Moscow, Russia

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Abstract: Academic amotivation is a variable that has been researched on over time. Despite this, factors that really influence the above variable have not reached agreement among researchers. In order to clarify some of these concerns, this study, which adopted a descriptive survey, was designed to investigate the psychological variables as correlates of academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia. Two hundred participants were chosen from the selected universities through stratified random sampling. Their ages ranged between 19 and 28 with mean of 23.14 years ($SD= 7.11$). Three research questions were tested using multiple regression analysis and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A structured questionnaire consisting of demographic section, and measures academic amotivation, learned helplessness and locus of control was used to collect data. The findings revealed that there was significant positive relationships between learned helplessness ($r = 0.212, p < 0.05$); locus of control ($r = 0.510, p < 0.05$) and academic amotivation. The two variables jointly accounted for 66.7% variance in predicting academic amotivation of the students. The independent variables made positive relative contribution to academic amotivation in the following order: locus of control ($\beta = 0.410, t = 5.537, p < 0.05$) followed by learned helplessness ($\beta = 0.110, t = 2.565, p < 0.05$) had relative contribution to academic amotivation of the students. Based on this finding, it is recommended that positive learning styles should be organized to curb academic amotivation. Positive use of locus of control should be encouraged among university students. Also, School Counsellor should intensify their efforts on the training of university students so as to reduce academic amotivation.

Keywords: Learned helplessness, Locus of control, Academic Amotivation

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary, greater emphasis is being placed on academic amotivation. This as a result of universities students are not being encouraged to take up related subjects of interest. Today, one of the most prominent academic problems plaguing today's secondary school students is a lack of motivation toward academic activities. Year after year, for reasons yet to be understood, numerous high school students find themselves in a state in which they do not have the desire to carry out the academic tasks required of them (Green-Demers and Pelletier, 2013). Academic Motivation is the driving force behind student's motivation to learn. It is the need and desire to excel in academic work. Academic behaviours can be seen as intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated or amotivated. But it is usually seen that the youths of today often lacks academic motivation and at the secondary school level, the students reach the adolescence stage which is considered a period of storm and stress and developmental changes which makes their interest and attention divided among many things like peer groups, engaging in entertaining activities like movies, social networking, outings or other everyday activities in the school.

Academic amotivation is the driving force behind student's low motivation to learn. It is the need and desire not to excel in academic work. Amotivation is a situation where secondary school students cannot establish a connection between their actions and the results of their actions there is no motivation, not and the individuals experience amotivation (Reeve, 2014). In this case, secondary school students cannot make an association with the impact of their actions or the impact of their surroundings, and, thus, they cannot be motivated either intrinsically or extrinsically. Therefore, the secondary school students who believes that his actions will not provide a benefit for him does not take any action and falls into the state of amotivation (Tahiroğlu and Aktepe, 2015). Academic amotivation debar secondary school student's motivation to learn. Indubitably, the absence of academic motivation can lead to feelings of frustration and discontentment and can encumber productivity and well-being of secondary school students (Opara, 2008).

Academic behaviours can be seen as amotivated. But it is usually seen that the youths of today often lacks academic motivation and at the secondary school level, the students reach the adolescence stage which is considered a period of storm and stress and developmental changes which makes their interest and attention divided among many things like peer groups, engaging in entertaining activities like movies, social networking, outings or other everyday activities (Opara, 2008). They may also find the academic activities in the schools not engaging and interesting. The word academic amotivation is not accepted for most fields in learning that academic amotivation is not essential to learning and inhibits success. There are many factors that depend on academic

motivation, such as academic motivation is very influent in learning of secondary school students. When the secondary school students are not motivated, students will not take risk in learning or even paying any attention to learning. As a result, academic motivation is not considered an essential element along with lack of capacity in shaping success in learning new in classroom setting.

Apart from the general low achieving secondary school students referred to above, there appeared to be difference in achievement from one school to the other. It may be argued that such variation in academic achievement is unavoidable. Although, the incidence of low academic achievement appears to be more common in public secondary schools, private schools are not free from the declining trend. The consequence of mass failure in public examination is the inability of learners to proceed to higher educational institution. As a result of this low academic achievement, stakeholders in education are curious to know the causal factors associated with the problem. According to Chen and Li (2010), adolescents with depression are vulnerable to low academic achievement (Osiki and Busari, 2012). Also, using information based on a resource allocation model of the effect of a depressed mood on cognition, students with symptoms of depression are predisposed to focus their attention on interfering, irrelevant thoughts, leaving little sustained attention available for cognitive tasks which then leads to low academic achievement or academic failure (Busari and Uwakwe 2011).

Although academic amotivation has received much conceptual and empirical focus, the fact remains that an abundance of secondary school students lack academic motivation (Snyder and Hoffman, 2012). Despite this fact, there has been little focus on the reasons why secondary school students neglect their studies. Moreover, these reasons may have clear categorical distinctions. It is evident that a deeper understanding of academic amotivation is needed (Hidi and Harackiewicz, 2010). Amotivated secondary school students do not seem to have specific purposes and goals and students don't seem to approach ends in a systematic fashion. Amotivated secondary school students simply do not demonstrate the intent to engage in academic activity. Amotivation has been related to learned helplessness, where individuals withdraw effort because of perceptions of incompetence and loss of control. The involvement in an activity is not a result of their will (Ryan and Deci, 2010). Like intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, one can distinguish four different types of amotivated behaviour: (a) the belief concerning the lack of ability to perform an activity, (b) the belief that the adopted strategies will not produce the desired outcomes, (c) the belief that the activity is too demanding for the individual, and (d) the belief that even high effort is not adequate for successful task performance (Ryan and Deci, 2010).

There are factors influencing student academic amotivation on the basis of establishing effective and efficient learning-teaching process in education systems. The studies show many amotivational factors (psychological, social and cultural): Intrinsic and extrinsic directions, parental influence and participation, family history, peer pressure, low self-efficacy expectations, low effort, low value attributed to a relative, Anxiety and poor learning strategies, teaching style and school environment (Singh, Granville and Dika, 2012). For example, it is stated that the school environment causes amotivation when learning when is not accessible, secure, positive, personalized and empowering. Teachers here, of course, play a very important role because they are an integral part of the school environment. Furthermore, lack of participation in the parents' education of the students may have a negative impact on the sense of incompleteness and lack of value for the materials the children read because studies indicate that there is significant relationship between parent involvement and children's academic amotivation and educational development (Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried, 2014).

Learned helplessness is defined as a passive behaviour characterized by an inability to learn, shown by those frequently subjected to stressful, uncontrollable, and inevitable negative events (Seligman and Maier, 2016). Seligman and Maier (2016) defined it as "the interference with escape/avoidance learning, produced in a variety of situations with different types of uncontrollable, aversive events, and in a wide variety of species. Seligman and Maier (2016) observed that the individuals stopped trying to avoid pain and behaved as if it is utterly helpless to change the situation. Seligman and Maier (2016) refer learned helplessness as the psychological state that characterizes people encountering uncontrollable events (Abramson, Metalsky, and Alloy, 2014).

Learned helplessness is a conditioned phenomenon and an exposed to such experiences in the formative years of the personality has a lasting impact on the overall personality of the adolescents (Ademola, 2010). It has been noted that learned helplessness as acquired from one's experiences is carried over to the person's daily of academic life and has detrimental impact on it. The impact may interface with the individual's adjustment with the environment. The inability to control the environment is a powerful native stimulus and may result in sadness, hopelessness, reduced motivation and decrease in the ability to respond in stressful situations. It has also been noted during recent researches that learned helplessness interacts with a numbers of variables; it is affected by different variables and in turn affects them (Khandelwal, 2013).

Learned helplessness is a potential human response to a variety of psychological, physiological, and sociological experiences resulting from the perceived inability to influence the outcomes of events felt to be significant to an individual (Collins, 2016). It is through this response-outcome independence that an individual experiences perceptions of unpredictability, uncontrollability, and frustration. In the face of negative human emotions, individual outcomes are at greater risk of being negatively impacted. Likewise, if individual are not prepared with adequate tools and resources to effectively reintegrate into society, they are at risk for perceiving themselves as being helpless and, therefore, make no attempt to manipulate previous activities that may have contributed to academic amotivation.

The term locus of control originated from Julian Rotter. According to Rotter (1990), locus of control refers to the extent to which someone believes that outcomes are based on his or her own actions or "personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others, or is

simply unpredictable". Secondary school students with more of an external locus of control tend to believe that events in their lives are controlled by external forces over which they have no control, whereas an internal locus of control is the belief that outcomes in one's life are under his/her own control (Rotter, 1990).

Lefcourt (2016) defined perceived locus of control as follows: "Perceived control is defined as a generalized expectancy for internal as opposed to external control of reinforcements" (Lefcourt, 2016). Locus of control is a theory in personality psychology referring to the extent to which couples believe that they can control events that affect them. Locus of control refers to the degree to which a couple perceives that the outcomes of the situations they experience are under their personal control (Hunter, 2012). Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter, and has since become an important aspect of personality studies. One's "locus" (Latin for "place" or "location") can either be internal (meaning the person believes that they control their life) or external (meaning they believe that their environment, some higher power, or other people control their decisions and their life).

Students with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own academic behaviour and actions. For example, if a student with internal loci of control does not perform as well as they wanted to on academic achievement, they would blame it on lack of preparedness on their part. Or if they performed well on academic achievement, then they would think that it was because they studied enough (Collins, 2016). Those with a high external locus of control believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events. Using the example again, if a student with external loci of control does poorly on an academic achievement, they would blame the teachers teaching strategies or teachers is too difficult. Whereas if they performed well on a test, they would think the teachers was being lenient or that they were lucky (Hunter, 2012). Those with a high internal locus of control have better control of their academic behaviour, tend to exhibit more academic behaviours, and are more likely to attempt to influence other students than those with a high external (or low internal respectively) locus of control. Those with a high internal locus of control are more likely to assume that their efforts will be successful. They are more active in seeking information and knowledge concerning their situation.

Locus of control, a component of social cognition, refers to the degree to which a person feels he or she is in control of his or her surroundings. External locus of control is the perception that external factors such as fate, chance, or influence of powerful others determines outcomes, whereas internal locus of control is the perception that one's own behavior influences outcomes (Osterman, 2009). In order to fill the gaps in the previous studies and add more to the existing literatures, the present study examined the psychological variables as correlates of academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia.

Statement of the Problem

The frequency of academic amotivation among university students in recent times is alarming, causing academic frustration, stress, hopelessness, helplessness and suicidal thought. This increase in academic amotivation has consequently led to an increase in the number of secondary school students suffering from depression, loneliness, aggression, frustration and anxiety disorder. It has been discovered that the rate at which academic amotivation is increasing among senior secondary school students is very alarming and it is a common believe that the increase in number of these distressed students is as a result of incessant of absence of motivation. But with the above submissions, instead of the problems of academic amotivation among students to be decreasing, it is still escalating and leads to drop out of some of these students and at times half-baked students. Moreover, it has also been discovered that background of any student has a strong effect on their academic amotivation towards academic interest and leads to low academic achievement but if the home is not in total support, whether financially, materially, morally is lacking, such a student can be distressed towards academic amotivation and low interest in school work. Therefore, the aforementioned criterion has created a big gap between the student and academic amotivation. There have been several studies on students' study habit, intelligent-quotient, learning styles, teachers' influence and peer influence that triggers academic amotivation among students in developing countries. There is no exception for Russia - little has been done in Russia, specifically in the academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow, Russia, and one of the aims of this research is to fill this research gap. It is on this basis that this study intends to investigate the psychological variables as correlates of academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate psychological variables as correlates of academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia. Specifically, the study:

1. examine the relationship that exist between the locus of control and learned helplessness on academic amotivation among low achieving students in Moscow Russia
2. investigate the joint effects of the locus of control and learned helplessness on academic achievement among low achieving students in Moscow Russia.
3. find the relative effects of each of the locus of control and learned helplessness on academic achievement among low achieving students in Moscow Russia.

Research Questions

- (1) What pattern of relationship exist between independent variables (locus of control and learned helplessness) on academic achievement among low achieving students in Moscow Russia
- (2) What is the relative contribution of the locus of control and learned helplessness on the academic achievement among low achieving students in Moscow Russia?

(3) What is the joint contribution of the locus of control and learned helplessness on the academic achievement among low achieving students in Moscow Russia?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type to achieve the purpose of the study. It is a research study in which, group of people, items or objects is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people. This is used because the researcher is not interested in manipulating the variables

Population

The target population for this study consists of university students in Moscow, Russia. The populations under this study are university students in Moscow, Russia.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Two hundred (200) participants were selected as the sample of this study. It is assumed that the selected samples have common characteristics or elements of the population of the study. Based on this, an inference was drawn and generalization was made on the population of the study. Stratified random sampling was used to select the participants from the study population. This was done by breaking the population of the study into strata according to their socio-demographic characteristics. Also the stratification was done based on classification of participants from their various classes. The participants were broken down into strata that are universities base on their homogeneity group. It was however broken down into universities of which two universities were used.

Instrumentation

Academic Amotivation Scale: Academic amotivation was measured using the academic amotivation inventory scale (AAIS) developed by Vallerand, Blais, Briere, and Pelletier, (1989) will be used to screen the participants in collaboration with the inclusion criteria stated in the study. Academic amotivation scale is a 16-item inventory. Examples of items in the scale include: *“Because, for me, school holds no interest, Because studying is not valuable to me., I don’t like studying”*. Each item was rated on a 4-point scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*). This scale is a summative scale based on the items with cognizance of some items being reversed in scoring. All answers given were scored and added up to indicate the level of academic amotivation among secondary school students, with a high number indicating a greater incidence of academic amotivation. Validity findings of the original version of the scale indicated range from .74 to .85. The internal consistency reliability coefficient was .89. However, the adapted version of the instrument will be re-validated by the researcher and Cronbach alpha will be reported

Locus of control Scale: Multidimensional Locus of Control Scales was developed by Levenson (1973). It consists of 24 items with a response format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Sample items from the scale include: ‘Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability, ‘I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people. The scale was subdivided into three categories namely Internal Locus of Control with items 1, 4, 5, 9, 18, 19, 21, and 23; then add 24; Powerful Others with items 3, 8, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22 then 24 and Chance items 2, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 24. It also has a score between 0 and 48. A high rating on the Internal Locus of Control scale indicates that such an individual have a strong internal locus of control. The researcher reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .71, .81, and .83 for the Internal, Chance, and Powerful Others subscales, respectively. While for the present study, the researcher finds a reliability alpha of 0.66, .44 and .21 for Internal Locus of Control, Powerful Others and Chance respectively. However, the adapted version of the instrument will be re-validated by the researcher and Cronbach alpha will be reported.

Learned Helplessness Scale: This learned helplessness scale was developed by Quinless and Nelson (1988). It consists of 20 items with a response format ranging from Strongly Disagree = SD to Strongly Agree = SA. All the items were adapted for the study. Examples of items in the scale include: *“No matter how much energy I put into a task, I feel I have no control over the outcome, When something doesn’t turn out the way I planned, I know it is because I didn’t have the ability to start with and I cannot find solutions to difficult problems”*. The author reported a split-half reliability of .93 and .47, with a Cronbach alpha of .92. However, the adapted version of the instrument will be re-validated by the researcher and Cronbach alpha will be reported.

Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher visited two universities to seek for permission to administer the questionnaire. The researcher then introduced herself to the students. The instruments were administered among the universities students in Moscow. The researcher began the administration with the help of research assistants among the students in each university. The researcher ensured them of confidentiality as the study did not intend to investigate into their own privacy and the results of the findings will only be used for academic purposes. Questionnaires were distributed among the participants in each of the university and instructions were given to them as to how the questionnaires were administered.

Method of Data Analysis

This section presents the findings. Three research questions were answered using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression Analysis. Pearson product moment correlation statistics was used to test the relationship among the independent variables and the dependent variable while Multiple Regression Analysis was used to analyse the joint contribution and the relative effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Research Question One: What pattern of relationship exists between the independent variables (learned helplessness and locus of control) and the academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations among learned helplessness and locus of control on the academic amotivation among participants

	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Academic Amotivation	43.14	7.11	1.000		
Locus of control	85.22	7.19	.510**	1.000	
Learned helplessness	34.12	7.09	0.212**	-.041	1.000

** Correlation significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 above reveals there was significant relationships between each of the independent variables: locus of control ($r = 0.510$, $p < 0.05$); learned helplessness ($r = 0.212$, $p < 0.05$) and academic amotivation among the participants.

Research question Two

What is the joint contribution of learned helplessness and locus of control on academic amotivation among the study participants?

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis on joint contribution of the variables

Multiple R	= 0.913				
Multiple R ²	= 0.833				
Multiple R ² (Adjusted)	= 0.831				
Standard Error of Estimate	= 3.71435				
Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean of Squares	F-Ratio	P
Regression	23761.043	2	1188.521	491.723	.000
Residual	4759.746	197	24.161		
Total	28520.789	199			

The table 2 above shows that there was joint effect of the independent variables (learned helplessness and locus of control) on the academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow ($R = 0.913$, $p < 0.05$). The combination of the independent variables accounted for 83.1% (adjusted $R^2 = 0.831$) of the total variance in the prediction of academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow. The analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio value which was found to be significant at 0.05 Alpha level ($F = 430.567$, $p < 0.05$). This shows that the independent variables jointly contributed to academic amotivation.

Research Question Three

What is the relative contribution of the variables in predicting academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow?

Table 3: The relative contribution of each of the Independent Variables to academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Remark
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	4.449	3.314		1.343	.000	Sig
Learned helplessness	.322	.041	.229	4.561	.000	Sig

Locus of control	.545	.067	.410	5.537	.000	Sig
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a Dependent Variable: academic amotivation

Table 3 indicates the contributions of each of the independent variables to the prediction of academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow. In terms of magnitude of the contribution: locus of control contributed most to the prediction of academic amotivation among low achieving university students in Moscow ($\beta = 0.410$, $t = 5.537$, $p < 0.05$) followed by learned helplessness ($\beta = 0.229$, $t = 4.561$; $p < 0.05$)

Discussion of Findings

In response to the research question one which asks what pattern of relationship exists between the independent variables (locus of control and learned helplessness) and the academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia. Which states that there is no significant relationship between school locus of control and academic amotivation of low achieving university students, was rejected. It was found that there was significant relationship between locus of control and academic amotivation. This finding is in line with the finding of Phillips (2008), indicated a positive correlation between internal locus of control and academic amotivation. Individuals who are psychologically imbalance have low enduring sense of personal control (Adams, 2010). Witmer and Sweeny (2012) pointed out that individuals with a sense of external locus of control are more likely not to collect information about academic tasks and this will debar them on increasing academic amotivation. Uslu (2009), it was found that the academic amotivation of students with internal locus of control is higher than the students with external locus of control. Study carried out by Canbay (2007) on ‘the relationship between locus of control and academic amotivation of students. The findings also revealed that students with locus of control feel lack of motivation from the learning more than the students with external locus of control

The second variables found that there was significant relationship between learned helplessness and academic amotivation. This is consistent with an assertion by Bodrova and Leong, (2008) found that learned helplessness plays a role in helping students move to the next level on academic amotivation. Particularly, learned helplessness leads students to realize their difficulties and what they do not know because difficulty in learning allow adolescent fixated to academic amotivation. Phillips and Matthews (2014) who found that learned helplessness could act as a negative factor that could increase academic amotivation among students. A study by Wentzel (2008) found that learned helplessness provide motivational influence on students’ academic amotivation. This study is supported by the findings by Quomma and Greenberg (2014) who found that high learned helplessness from these sources would lead to academic amotivation.

Research Question Two

In response to the research question two which asks whether there is any joint effect of the independent variables on the academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia. The result shows that there was joint effect of the independent variables (locus of control and learned helplessness) on academic amotivation. The combination of the independent variables accounted for 83.1% of the total variance in academic amotivation. The analysis of variance of the multiple regression data yielded an F-ratio value which was found to be significant. The ANOVA results from the regression analysis also attests to the causal effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables; hence, the rejection of the null hypothesis. In line with this finding, a combination of variables like learned helplessness and locus of control has been observed by Pajare and Adegbite (2008) on academic amotivation while the combination of variables like locus of control and demographic factor have also been observed by Finn and Allen (2012) on the academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia.

Research Question Three

The result of the third research question on the relative effect of each of the variables has also been significant. In all academic work as a whole, it is revealed that the degree of locus of control and learned helplessness is very relevant to an actualization of the academic amotivation of low achieving university students in Moscow Russia. This finding is corroborated by the study of Simon (2017); Adika (2019) who found that the above variables have independent effect on the academic amotivation of low achieving university students.

Conclusion

This research work has established that, there is a positive relationship between locus of control and academic amotivation. Positive relationships were also found between learned helplessness on academic amotivation of students. The independent variables, when combined together had positive effect on academic amotivation. This study has provided more details to the existing information on the academic amotivation as a factor that required immediate solution. From this template, it becomes clear that various strategies should be design to access the issue of academic amotivation in different schools, attention should also be given to the identified means or factors through which the researcher has been able to identify that can affect the academic amotivation of university students through the type of locus of control and learning styles. Hence in Russia, the school should not only be responsible for the shaping of the academic amotivation but also the home from which individual student(s) originated from should be examined intensively. Nonetheless, there is need for replication and refinement of this work in the future.

Recommendations

In Nigeria, though many governmental and non-governmental agencies, school administrator, parents, educationist, counsellors, researchers and the policy maker have sprung up to assist in combating the issue of academic amotivation in various schools at all level, but is surprising to note that much has not been achieved. Based on the findings of this study it is recommended that:

- ✓ It is obvious that universities should have guidance services with a competent counsellor to counsel students who do not pay adequate attention to their children and wards' education and those students experiencing academic amotivation challenges in schools.
- ✓ There is need for personal social, group counselling and individual counselling in schools where students with challenged homes are counselled. And students should develop positive self-concept in life to assist them in reducing academic amotivation.
- ✓ There should be provision of appropriate counselling intervention programme and improvement in guidance and counselling services through expansion of counselling centres in universities, and above all, it is recommended that counsellors themselves should be encouraged to attend workshops and conferences on counselling so that they may be conversant with the new trends in counselling practices.

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