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Values Attached to Educational Goals, Study Processes, and Educational Motivation

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between educational values and educational goals, student motivation and study processes, and how values attached to educational goals predict motivation and student study processes. 181 randomly selected graduate and undergraduate students from a Midwestern university in the United States were recruited to participate in an online survey. The results demonstrated that values attached to educational goals and perceived educational outcomes have a weak but significant positive correlation with student study processes. In addition, values for educational goals significantly predict student study processes and educational motivation. Thus, it is suggested that educators should enhance personal values for education and develop strategies aimed at building and enhancing students' values for education. Further studies on the values for educational goals and perceived educational outcomes will contribute to the understanding of concepts and theories related to motivation in education and possibly influence student outcomes, such as dropout rates. Teachers and people working in higher education need to understand that students' values of perceived outcomes and goals are relevant components to their motivation in education. Because there are few studies on students' values for educational goals and outcomes, more empirical evidence is imperative to help teachers assist students sustain their motivation in their educational pursuit and improve their study processes.

Keywords: values, education goals, motivation, study processes

1. Introduction

Motivation consists of energy, discreet directions, persistence, and activation of intention (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation is an internal or external impetus that promotes an individual to act toward a goal (Shang-Chang Ting, Wang, & Chou., 2014; Dyer & Parker, 1975). Lack of motivation is known as amotivation (Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006). One factor for amotivation is a lack of values for one goal. However, humans are known to have an inherent propensity to intrinsically motivate themselves towards realization of their goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Literature on motivation suggests that "internal impetus" or intrinsic motivation must always be ignited to enhance realization of goals (Dyer & Parker, 1975; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Legault, Green-Demers, & Pelletier, 2006). Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that motivation needs maintenance and a sustainable support system to guard against disruption.

In studies related to education, motivation towards goals has been researched and conceptualized over the years into two categories: achievement motivation and performance motivation (Ames & Archer, 1988). Empirically, types of goals, such as ability-linked goals, outcome goals, learning goals, mastery goals, task goals, normative performance and performance goal, have different effects on behaviors associated with motivation (Grant & Dweck, 2003). According to Grant and Dweck, learning goals exert a positive influence on intrinsic motivation and performance when individuals encounter prolonged challenges or setbacks. Kaplan and Maehr (1999) suggest that ego goals and task goals trigger one's behavioral patterns. In addition, such goals reflect diverse emotive and coping processes in an individual's life endeavors. However, this study argues that individual's goals are different and can have different levels or kinds of values attached to them. This may further determine an individual's level of motivation to pursue their goals. Thus, this study seeks to examine the values attached to educational goals and perceived outcomes, motivation in education, and study processes of students in higher education.

Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-pons (1992) argue that "goals specify the requirement for personal success". Students often set educational goals. These goals trigger motivation for pursing an education (Kaplan & Maehr, 1999). "Goal setting theory suggests that people are motivated to achieve goals, and their intention drives their behavior" (Locke, 1968). Therefore, it is not wrong to say that students' attitudes and behaviors in pursuing their goals, as well as the values they attach to their goals and perceived outcomes, would have a role in shaping their behaviors, such as study processes. Predominantly, realizing goals is as a result of incorporated motivation (Phalet, Andriessen, & Lens, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Goals are inherent cognitive representations of what an individual is trying to accomplish as well as their purposes, reasons or values for doing a task. Wringe (1998) suggested that "young people are unlikely to integrate themselves positively into adult life—to adopt its values, responsibilities and opportunities—unless life is made more morally acceptable in their terms". In other words, for an individual to pursue a goal, such goals would need to be internally valued. Values attached to goals are internal and are accessible by an individual's concern. Consciously or unconsciously, an individual assesses their goals but the extent to which a goal is evaluated would differ per individual.

1.1 Values Attached to Education and Educational Motivation

Very few studies in education literature have provided evidence between the values students attach to education and motivation in education. One of the few studies has revealed that students are more interested in doing activities for which they value and think they have the necessary competence (Ceballo, McLoyd, & Toyokawa, 2004). Students who value new skills established favorable motivational beliefs (Boekaerts, 2002). According to Ceballo, McLoyd, and Toyokawa (2004), self-perceived academic abilities were significantly linked to adolescents' educational values, which were, in turn, related to school effort. Other researchers observed that students' academic achievement required coordinated interactions between different aspects of motivation (Amrai, Motlagh, Zalani, & Parhon, 2011) and the present study argues that such motivation would be values. Ames and Archer (1988) suggested that motivational structure and instructional strategies should ignite students toward their educational achievement (e.g., high grades, GPA, best in national test, etc.) and their educational goals and values (e.g., professionalism and other core competencies); they also suggested that motivation strategies help develop skills that are self-credited and valued even after schooling.

Unfortunately, the motivation strategies that teachers have utilized over the years do not explore students' original values for education or establish values for education as a foundational motivational tool. The inherent values for education can be an important foundation to successfully motivate students (Shang-Chang Ting, Wang, & Chou., 2014). Ames (1990, 1992) argued that teachers should not lose sight of students' inherent values for education; he emphasized that if educators lose such sight, then students lose sight of other educational goals and other values they may or may not be achieving. Ames further argued that if schools and classrooms are strictly evaluated by how much grade points students achieve, then how students value the process of learning and the improvement of their skills will not be relevant. Educators want students to willingly put forth the necessary effort to develop and apply their skills and knowledge and want them to develop a long-term commitment to learning, even after their schooling (Ames, 1990, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988).

With such desires and expectations, educators should not forget that in an educational setting, students are the consumers. Their consumption of knowledge through any form of institutional education is first assigned an internal worth and value(s). The value (s) they hold in this regard can determine their abilities, desires and effort to demonstrate or acquire new skills/knowledge. McNamee (1994) found that values bond with the idea of an individual's capacity to apprehend significance. It can be subjective and is the direct benefit of an activity and the internal satisfaction associated with an activity. For students at the undergraduate and graduate level, valuing educational goals, perceived outcomes, and long-term goals may be a strong tool to enhance and maintain self-determination towards realization of set goals, since goals are cognitive representations one's perceived valued outcomes (Pintrich, 2000). Valued goals may influence a state of individual stability as well as contextual sensitivity (Pintrich, 2000). Therefore, understanding the role of one's values for goals in enhancing one's interest within an academic context would be necessarily, as it may affect students' choices of study processes.

1.2 Educational Motivation and Study Processes

It is imperative that teachers motivate their students to realize their educational goals and perceived outcomes, especially to motivate their immediate academic goal of succeeding in the program they are pursuing (Stipek, 1993). Study processes students utilize depend on the motivation they hold on. According to Biggs (1982), instrumentally motivated students are more likely to use the reproductive strategy method. Biggs conceived study processes under "three dimensions—utilizing, internalizing and achieving" and determined that each of these has "cognitive (strategies) and an effective (motivational) component" (Biggs J., 1979). However, Choy, O'Grady, and

Rotgans (2012) found that the relationship between academic achievement and study processes is weak. Other researchers found that the goal of demonstrating high ability relative to others (ego motivation) was positively related to perceived value of surface-level strategies. Also, task orientation, defined as the perceived ability or knowledge of the value of deep processing strategies, predicts the spontaneous use of these motivation strategies on different scale level (Biggs, 1982; Nolen, 1988). These are all exemplary findings in education literature reflecting that one's values for goals and outcomes may serve as motivation and influences study strategies.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study examines the relationship between values attached to educational goals, perceived outcomes, educational motivation and the study processes of students. Using quantitative research methods, the present study investigated two basic research questions: (1) What is the relationship between values attached to educational goals and the study processes of students? (2) To what extent do values attached to educational goals predict educational motivation and study processes?

1.4 Hypotheses

H1: Values attached for educational goal(s) and the perceived outcome(s) will be positively related with study processes. The higher the values for goals and outcomes, the more likely one would choose deeper strategies of study processes.

H2: Values attached to educational goal(s) and perceived outcome(s), would significantly predict motivation for education as well as study processes.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Characteristics

Data was collected from a Midwestern university in the United States using electronic surveys developed with Qualtrics software. Only enrolled students of the university were eligible and allowed to participate in survey. Thus, the participants were admonished not to share the survey linked to friends who are not enrolled students of the research institutions.

2.2 Sample Procedure

After obtaining IRB approval for the study, 500 students were randomly selected from the university registration data base, aggregated as an anonymous unified do-not-reply emails, and were used only for this study. The selected students were contacted using this do-not-reply email to voluntarily participate in the online survey designed using Qualtrics software. Participants only access the survey after providing an electronic signature acknowledging their consent for participation. All registered students under university in question, were qualified to be included in the random selection to participate in the study. The data was collected in the spring semester of 2017.

2.2.1 Sample Size

Out of 500 students who got the survey, 217 undergraduates and graduate students attempted the survey. 181 participants (31 graduate students and 150 undergraduate students) provided complete valid response for the study (see demographic result table 1).

2.3 Survey Instrument, Measures and Scaling

2.3.1 The Motivation Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)

Questionnaire instruments were adapted as an instrument in this study to measure motivation of students in pursuing their goals and values in education. The original instrument was established with 31 items to assess student's goals and value belief for a course, and among other dimensions, the instrument measured self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning (Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & Mckeachie, 1993, 1991). This survey has been adapted by many and has consistently been proven reliable with acceptable validity (Cronbach alpha > .05). For the purpose of this study, the only relevant subscale of MSLQ was considered. The items that determined education motivations were further cross-checked with other scholarly works, including that of Karee, et al. (2012), Hsiao-Lin, Chin-Chin and Shyang-Horng (2005), to minimize inconsistency, clarify content, and clarify sentence construction. Items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree).

2.3.2 Study Processes

The Shorten Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) put forward by (Fox, McManus, & Winder, 2001) was adapted to measure goal oriented study processes of students. The 18 items were modified to direct respondent to provide

score base on how they study with the reflect of their realizing their educational goals and perceived future goals. All items listed in the research instrument were assigned a 7-Likert scale point (1 = strongly agree and 7 being strongly disagree).

2.3.3 Statements

To measure the value for *education goals and perceived outcomes*, two statements were applied: (1) *I think I will be able to use what I learn in my program in the future*; and (2) *I always choose to write on topics, I know I will learn something special and useful for my future, even if it requires more work.* Participants were asked to rate this statement on a scale of 7 (1= strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree).

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Data

Figure 1 and Table 1 present the demographic statistical description of the sample population in the study. Most of the respondents were white students (85%). 9.9% of the study samples were international students. About 83% were undergraduates and 17% were graduate students. Interestingly, the participants represented a vast range academic majors (see Figure 1), although education leadership and communication made the majority of the study sample.

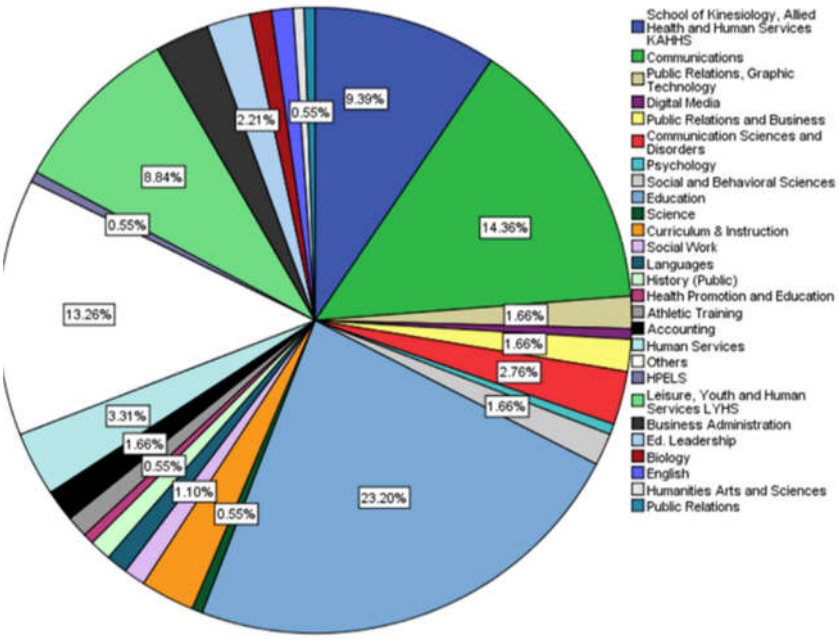

Figure 1. Academy majors of participants in the study

Table 1. Demographic result

Race	Frequency/Percentage	Student's Status	Frequency/Percentage
White	153/85.0	International Students	18/9.9
Black or African American	9/5.0	Domestic Students	163/90.1
Hispanic	4/2.2	Graduate Students	31/17.1
Asian	10/5.6	Undergraduate Students	150/82.9
Other	4/2.2		

3.2 Reliability and Validity

Table 2 and 3 present the reliability and validity test for each subscale. This study observed that, except for surface motive study process, which had a Cronbach alpha = 0.49, all other reliability values were > 0.6, indicating a satisfactorily reliability level of the subscales. Although surface motive had a value below 0.49, this value is considered satisfactory based on the hypothesis that a reduced item scale (from seven to three) will

generally lead to reduction in a reliability score by 0.34 (Fox, McManus, & Winder, 2001).

Table 2. Factor analysis for measuring educational motivation

Educational Motivation	Items	Factor Loading			Cronbach alpha
		1	2	3	
Self-Efficacy	Compared with other students I expect to do well.	.76			.85
	I think I will receive a good grade in my classes.	.71			
	I know that I will be able to learn the material for my classes.	.66			
	I expect to do very well in my classes.	.66			
	Compared with others in this class, I think I'm a good student.	.63			
	I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught.	.60			
	I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned in my classes.	.54			
Intrinsic Motivation	Understanding this subject is important to me.		.75		.88
	I think that what we are learning is interesting.		.75		
	I think I will be able to use what I learn, in other things.		.72		
	I think that what I am learning is useful for me to know.		.67		
	I like what I am learning.		.65		
	It is important for me to learn what is being taught.		.50		
Self-Regulated Learning	When I read material for this class, I say the words repeatedly to myself to help me remember.			.61	.74
	I use what I have learned from old homework assignments and the textbook to do new assignments.			.58	
	When I study for a test I practice saying the important facts over and over to myself.			.54	
	I outline the chapters in my book to help me study.			.50	
	When I study for a test I try to remember as many facts as I can.			.50	
	When I am studying a topic, I try to make everything fit together.			.50	
	When I study, I put important ideas into my own words.			.50	
	When I do homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class, so I can answer the question...			.50	

Description: Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Overall, KMO and Barlette's Test Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (.86, $p < 0.000$).

Table 3. Statistical presentation of study process

Study Processes	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach alpha
Surface Motive	I chose my present courses largely with a view to the job situation when I graduate rather than t...	2.72	1.556	.49
	I almost resent having to do further years studying after leaving school, but feel that the end r...	3.20	1.556	
	Whether I like it or not, I can see that further education is for me a good way to get a well-pai...	2.03	1.157	
Surface Strategies	I think browsing around is a waste of time, so I only study seriously, what is given out in class...	3.66	1.651	.73
	I generally restrict my study to what is specifically set as I think it is unnecessary to do any...	3.79	1.574	
	I find it best to accept the statements and ideas of my lecturers and question them only under sp...	3.47	1.512	
Deep Motives	I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction.	3.06	1.598	.77
	I find that studying academic topics can at times be as exciting as a good novel or film.	3.84	1.937	
	I usually become increasingly absorbed in my work the more I do.	3.02	1.481	
Deep Strategies	While I am studying, I often think of real life situations to which the material that I am learni...	2.68	1.294	.72
	I find that I have to do enough work on a topic so that I form my own point of view before I am s...	2.82	1.234	
	I try to relate new material, as I am reading it, to what I already know on the topic.	2.23	1.070	
Achieving Motive	I want top grades in most or all of my courses so that I will be able to select from among the be...	2.19	1.214	.75
	I would see myself basically as an ambitious person and want to get to the top, whatever I do.	2.20	1.178	
	I see getting high marks as a kind of competitive game, and I play it to win.	3.05	1.812	
Achieving Strategies	I try to work consistently throughout the term and review regularly when the exams are close.	2.60	1.375	.64
	I try to do all of my assignments as soon as possible after they have been set.	3.08	1.581	
	I keep neat, well organized notes for most subjects.	2.46	1.377	
Value(s)Attached to Educational Goal(s) and Perceived Outcome(s)				
Value for Perceived Outcome (s)	I think I will be able to use what I learn in my program in the future.	1.82	.992	
Value for Educational Goal (s)	I always choose to write and study topics, which I know I will learn something special and it will be useful for my future, even if it requires more work.	2.74	1.252	

Description: Items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree).

3.3 Findings

Using a Pearson correlation analysis, the result showed that there is a weak but positive and significant correlation between values attached to perceived educational outcomes and educational motivation ($r = .32$, $p < .000$). Likewise, there was a significant relationship between value for perceived outcome and study processes ($r = .36$, $p < 0.000$). The results also revealed that there is a positive correlation between the value students attach to their goals, educational motivation ($r = .31$, $p < 0.000$) and study processes ($r = .36$, $p < 0.000$). Student's perceived outcome value(s) were significantly correlated to the study goal values ($p < 0.01$). This implies that as value for educational goals increases, the study processes also positively improve and as well as their motivation for educational pursuit. This leads to the acceptance of Hypothesis 1. Table 4 below presents the relationship between the various study processes student apply in pursuing their education, the value they attach to the perceived educational outcome, and their educational goals and motivation. This study observed that value for educational goals and perceived outcomes were significantly and positively corrected at a 95% confident interval ($r = .172$) which implies that the higher the value for educational goal, the higher the value for perceived outcome. It was revealed that the higher one's Value for Perceived Outcomes (VPO) and Education Goal (VEG), Deep Strategy (DS), Achievement Motive (AM), Achievement Strategy (AS), Education Motivation (EM) were significantly positive with correlation scores range between (.302 to .317, $p < 0.01$) (see Table 4). Deep Motive (DM) has negative but insignificant correlation score of -.043 with VPO but positive and significant correlation score of .200 with VEG. This implies that students are more likely to apply deeper strategies and motives of study processes. Although this correlation values is weak, there is a strongly significant relationship between most of the variables as expected (see Table 4).

Table 4. Correlations between values attached to Educational Goals (VEG), Perceived Outcome and Study Processes

	VPO	VG.	SS	SM	DM	DS	AM	AS	EM
VPO[a]	1								
VEG[b]	.172*	1							
Surface Strategy (SS)	-.152*	-.149*	1						
Surface Motive (SM)	.174*	-.022	.368**	1					
Deep Motive (DM)	-.043	.200**	.051	-.058	1				
Deep Strategy (DS)	.336**	.412**	-.166*	.133	.054	1			
Achievement Motive (AM)	.302**	.107	.281**	.301**	-.036	.133	1		
Achievement Strategy (AS)	.333**	.246**	.019	.155*	.174*	.249**	.306**	1	
Education Motivation (EM)	.317**	.306**	-.069	.137	.082	.360**	.318**	.367**	1

[a] Value for perceived outcome (s) (VPO) is measure with one item (I think I will be able to use what I learn in the under my program in the future).

[b] Value for educational goal (s) (VEG) is measure with one item (I always choose to write and study topics, which I think I will learn something special and it will be useful for my future, even if it requires more work).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Using linear regression analysis, this study observed that value for perceived outcome and educational goal value significantly contributes study processes ($F_{117} = 16.804$, $R^2 = .160$, $p < 0.000$). This implies that the both independent variables predicted 16% of the sample's study process, with perceived outcome alone predicting overall study processes by 28.6% ($\beta = .286$, $p < 0.000$, $t = 4.082$, mean = 2.94, SD = .739) and goal value predicting overall study process by 23.4 % ($\beta = .234$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 3.352$, mean = 2.74, SD = 1.252). Therefore, this study suggests that students' value for perceived outcomes in education is significantly predicts their study processes.

The study also revealed that the value attached to perceived outcomes and educational goals significantly

contributed to motivation in education (R^2 = .166, F_{177} = 17.573, p < 0.000) with the former influencing motivation by 27.3% (β = .273, p < 0.000, t = 3.912, mean = 1.82, SD = .599) and the later by 25.9% (β = .259, p < 0.000, t = 3.714, mean = 2.74, SD = 1.252). Overall, when comparing the mean score for both perceived value for education outcomes and value for education goals, the result shows that the student's value for their perceived education outcome increases educational motivation more than the value for their educational goals. Hypothesis 2, is accepted.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study was designed to examine the role of the value students attach to their educational goals and perceived outcomes on study processes and educational motivation. The results showed that motivation and study process are significantly related with students' values of education and their perceived outcomes. These findings suggest that educators should develop strategies that enhance students' values in education. Boosting intrinsic and personal values for education will be profitable to education institutional stakeholders and students. This study agrees with Wringe (1998), who suggested that when a student's values for education are stimulated, he/she will develop a better profitable study processes which are self-regulated, clearly defined, and effective. Teachers have the power to motivate their students to realize their educational goals and perceived outcomes (Stipek, 1993). More saliently, teachers have the power motivate students' immediate academic goals of succeeding in the program they are pursuing. However, the present study suggests student success might be facilitated more deeply by understanding the original values students' attach to their education.

Further studies on the values student's attach to their educational goals and their perceived outcomes will be of great importance to the education field, providing additional understanding to the motivation concepts and theories related to education. Teachers and people working in higher education need to understand that students' values of perceived outcomes and goals are relevant components to their motivation in education. However, the present study only showed a relationship and cannot make any decisive claims on how teachers and people working in higher education should intervene.

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