

Achievement Goal Orientation and Its Relation to Academic Achievement

ÜMMÜGÜLSÜM KORKMAZ

Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi

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Abstract: The present review aims to discuss the achievement goal orientation and its relation to academic achievement. A special attention was given to Turkish motivation studies with mentioning the importance of cultural concept. Turkish motivation studies lacking a recent achievement goal orientation measurement, Elliot & McGregor's (2001) Achievement Goal Orientation Framework that has four goals: performance-approach, performance-avoidance, mastery-avoidance and mastery-approach. Researching these four goal orientations would improve the understanding of student's achievement motives that would affect their success. This review has implications for educators and policy makers that have influence on children's achievement.

 **Keywords:** Achievement goal orientation, academic achievement, motivation.

Başarı Hedef Oryantasyonu ve Akademik Başarı ile İlişkisi

Öz: Bu alan yazım taraması öğrencilerin başarıya yönelik hedef uyumlarını ve bu uyumların akademik başarıyla ilişkisini araştırmaktadır. Özellikle, kültürel anlayışın önemine değinilerek, Türkiye’de yapılan motivasyon çalışmalarından bahsedilmiştir. Türkiye’de motivasyonun akademik başarı ile ilişkisi araştırılırken güncel motivasyon ölçme araçlarından birisi olan Elliot ve McGregor’un (2001) 2X2 Başarı Hedef Oryantasyonu Yapısı kullanıldığı görülmüştür. Bu yapının önemi, motivasyonda çoklu hedefleri benimsemesidir (görev-yaklaşma, görev-uzaklaşma, performans-yaklaşma ve performans-uzaklaşma). Bu dört hedef uyumu çalışılarak öğrencilerin başarısını etkileyen motivasyon durumları daha iyi anlaşılabilir. Bu çalışma, eğitimciler ve program geliştiriciler için öneriler içermektedir.

 **Anahtar Kelimeler:** Başarı hedef uyumu, Akademik başarı, Motivasyon.

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Academic achievement is related to many factors, and one of them is children's achievement goal orientation, which is an aspect of motivation. There are many different aspects of motivation such as intrinsic-extrinsic motivation (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000) or goal orientations (e.g., Elliot & McGregor, 2001). This review specifically focuses on goal orientation aspect of motivation and cultural influence on motivation, particularly studies in Turkey.

In general, goal orientation theory emphasizes two types of goals: mastery and performance. Achievement goal is defined by Hulleman, Schrager, Bodmann, & Harackiewicz (2010) as 'a future-focused cognitive representation that guides behavior to a competence-related end state that the individual is committed to either approach or avoid' (p. 423). This definition differs from the original achievement motivation definitions by including mastery and performance aspects separately instead of including a single achievement factor (Hulleman et al., 2010). Achievement goal theorists defined mastery goals as aiming to develop an individual's competence, and performance goals as demonstrating an individual's competence by outperforming peers (Senko, Hulleman, & Harackiewicz, 2011). Some of the theorists still favor the early version of the achievement goal theory in which mastery goal is counted as the greater achievement provider (e.g., Kaplan & Middleton, 2001). Some of the theorists support the newer achievement goal theory that suggests there are multiple goals that promote academic achievement; not only mastery goals (e.g., Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

Mastery goals and performance goals are differentiated by how the students view ability and by how success and failure are defined (Senko, Hulleman, & Harackiewicz, 2011). Achievement is something that is based on self-fulfillment for mastery goals; and based on outperforming peers for performance goals (Senko et al., 2011). For the mastery goals, students believe that if the learners try harder, the ability can be developed (Dweck, 1986). Controversially, for the performance goal, ability is a set feature (Dweck, 1986).

In addition to single achievement factor for motivation, the early achievement motivation theories focused on 'approach' and 'avoidance' in general rather than separately (Hulleman, Schrager, Bodmann, & Harackiewicz, 2010). For these reasons, the achievement goal conceptions are differentiated more than achievement motivation (Hulleman et al., 2010).

Hulleman, Schragr, Bodmann, and Harackiewicz (2010) reviewed 243 articles that measured achievement goals in their meta-analysis. Hulleman and colleagues (2010) summarized that a diverse achievement goal measurement and conceptualization existed in the literature. One of the achievement goal measurements is 2X2 Achievement Goal Framework. Elliot & McGregor (2001) formed 2X2 Achievement Goal Framework, which has four achievement goal orientations: performance-approach goal, performance-avoidance goal, mastery-approach goal and mastery-avoidance goal. Performance-approach goal is gaining a positive competence valuation. Performance-avoidance goal is avoiding the negative competence valuation. Mastery-approach goal is gaining success. Mastery-avoidance goal is avoiding failure (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). The findings from empirical research support this division (Senko, Hulleman, & Harackiewicz, 2011). The relation between the achievement goal orientation and academic achievement is discussed in the next section.

Achievement Goal Orientation and Academic Achievement

The existing literature exposes that there is inconsistencies in the relations between achievement goal orientations and academic achievement. While some studies discovered that mastery goal orientations produce higher achievement, some other studies found performance goal orientations produce higher achievement (e.g., Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Trash, 2002; Kaplan, & Middleton, 2002; Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001; Pintrich, 2000). Especially, the early achievement goal theorists argue mastery goal orientation provide greater academic performance comparing to performance goals (e.g., Dweck, 1986). As the researchers continue investigating the benefits of the two goal orientations, some studies found performance goal orientation promote greater educational achievements than mastery goals (e.g., Daniels, Stupnisky, Pekrun, Haynes, Perry, & Newall, 2009). The linkages between goal orientations and academic achievement are not settled yet. Thus, the relationship between goal orientations and academic achievement require further investigation.

Some of the existing achievement goal orientation studies are discussed in the following few paragraphs. Moenica and Zahed-Babelan (2010) studied the relationship between mathematics achievement and mathematics attitude, academic motivation, and intelligence. The sample

of the study was 1670 high school students. The results revealed that mathematics attitude, academic motivation, and intelligence predicted mathematics achievement (Moenica & Zahed-Babelan, 2010).

In another study, Keys, Conley, Duncan, & Domina (2012) used trichotomous goal framework that includes mastery-approach, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goal orientations. Mastery-avoidance goal orientation was left out in this study. The sample was 2231 7th and 8th grade students living in California. Keys and colleagues (2012) found that there was a correlation between all of the three achievement goal orientations and mathematics achievement. Mastery-approach goal orientation predicted mathematics achievement. However, performance-approach and performance-avoidance goal orientations did not predict mathematics achievement (Keys et al., 2012).

In a longitudinal study, performance achievement goal was related and also predicted academic achievement (Daniels, Stupnisky, Pekrun, Haynes, Perry, & Newall, 2009). Three emotions (anxiety, enjoyment, and boredom) significantly mediated the achievement goal orientations (mastery and performance) to predict achievement both in course level and general level (Daniels et al., 2009).

Even though, the relationship between motivation and achievement has been investigated in Turkey, there are no published studies that have examined the achievement goal orientations of Turkish children with the Elliot & McGregor (2001)'s 2X2 Achievement Goal Framework inventory. This review discusses achievement goal orientation and its relation to academic achievement with reporting achievement studies in Turkey.

Academic achievement and achievement motivation for Turkish students

The existing academic achievement and achievement motivation studies with Turkish samples are discussed in this and the following few paragraphs. For instance, Ergene (2011) studied the relationship between academic achievement with test anxiety, study habits, and achievement motivation. Ergene (2011) used 510 high school students as the sample of the study. The Self Evaluation Inventory was used to measure the achievement motivation. Self-Evaluation Inventory is an 18-item

2-subcales (mastery and aspiration) instrument. The study resulted as no correlation between achievement motivation and academic achievement for the Turkish sample. However, there was a significant correlation between achievement motivation and study habits. Study habits had a positive relation to academic achievement. The author proposed that achievement motivation could be mediating factor in his study. This matter requires further investigation.

In a recent study, the mediating role of motivational beliefs in relation to teacher support, learning strategy use and mathematics achievement was explored (Yıldırım, 2012). The study used Program for International Student Assessment 2003 (PISA) questionnaire and mathematics scores. The achievement motivation consisted of mathematics self-efficacy, anxiety, intrinsic value, and instrumental value. The study revealed that mathematics self-efficacy and anxiety predicted the mathematics achievement. However, the intrinsic value and instrumental value did not predict mathematics achievement.

Verkuyten, Thijs, & Canatan (2001) studied Turkish, Dutch, and one other minority group of adolescents' academic motivation live in Netherlands. The study discovered that Turkish adolescents' academic achievement was predicted by both individual motivation and family-influenced motivation that are related to each other (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Canatan, 2001). Turkish adolescents' achievement motivation is highly influenced by their family (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Canatan, 2001). According to Verkuyten and his colleagues (2001), when the family motivation of Turkish adolescents was high, the task-goal orientation was also high, which leads to better academic achievement. The authors also found that there was no statistically significant difference between Turkish and Dutch individual motivation.

In summary, the relationship between achievement goal orientation and academic achievement is well established in literature. However, the studies revealed inconsistent results for the specific goal orientations (performance-approach goal, performance-avoidance goal, mastery-approach goal, and mastery-avoidance goal). Therefore, further research is needed in this area. Specifically, even though motivation studies appear for Turkish students, Elliot & McGregor's (2001) 2X2 Achievement Goal Framework, which includes performance-approach goal, performance-avoidance goal, mastery-approach goal, and mastery-avoidance goal

orientations, has not been studied for its relation to achievement yet, except one dissertation (Korkmaz, 2014). Korkmaz (2014) investigated the effect of achievement goal orientations to fifth grade student's Mathematics and Language Arts final grades. She found that none of the achievement goal orientations predicted academic achievement. Mastery-approach goal orientation and both Mathematics and Language Arts achievement were statistically significantly correlated. Since mastery-approach is the goal orientation for gaining success, investigating why this unique goal orientation was the only statistically significant correlated orientation would be important. The relationship between achievement goal orientation and academic achievement considering Turkish culture needs to be studied to provide better education and to develop high achievers.

Achievement Goal Orientation and Culture

Existing literature on culture and motivation is presented in the following paragraphs. Especially in the Western cultures, performance-avoidance and mastery-avoidance goals are associated with high anxiety, disengagement, and low achievement (e.g., Wolters, 2004; Van Yperen, Elliot, & Anseel, 2009). The multiple goal framework, however, casts doubt those indications, and assumes that students might benefit from performance goals more than mastery goals; students can have both mastery and performance goals; and students benefit having both mastery and performance goals (Senko et al., 2011). Cultural effects on motivation studies were examined in a recent literature review (Kimmel & Volet, 2010). Kimmel & Volet (2010) argued that the goal orientations have similar patterns across cultures. Further studies are needed to understand the effect of culture on motivation.

In a study, Somuncuoglu and Yildirim (1999) examined mastery, ego-social and work avoidant goal orientations and their relation to learning strategies. The study collected data from 189 undergraduate students in 1996 using a questionnaire that authors created. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The authors found that mastery orientation ($M=3.88$, $SD=.83$) was the dominant goal orientation, and ego-social orientation ($M=2.53$, $SD=.80$) was somewhat high for the Turkish undergraduate students among the three orientations that they measured. There was a positive and statistically significant correlation between mastery orientation and deep cognitive strategy,

as well as metacognitive learning strategy. There was a positive and statistically significant correlation between ego-social orientation and surface cognitive strategy. The authors suggested that because students' culture emphasizes the importance of social approval of success, a large number of students had mastery and ego-social orientations mix.

Cansever (1968) studied with 282 late-adolescents and found that the following three conditions bring higher achievement: the army officers' children who are strictly disciplined, the youngest siblings who are dominated by elders, and students from strict educational school systems. This recommends that Turkish youths needed external force. Cansever (1968) also suggested that a democratic educational system had a positive effect on Turkish female, whereas without promoting motivation or achievement for Turkish male.

In a cross-cultural study, Phalet & Claes (1993) studied individualistic and collectivistic value orientation for personal achievement motivation in Turkish (n=309 living in Istanbul and n=100 living in Belgium) and Belgian (n=481 living in Belgium) adolescents. There was no statistically significant difference between Turkish and Belgian adolescents' achievement motivation. However, the study revealed that the personal motivation beliefs of the Turkish adolescents tied highly to social group, especially to family (Phalet & Claes, 1993).

In summary, the literature suggests that achievement goal orientations are affected by culture. Specifically, Turkish individuals' motivation characteristics are affected by their culture. Literature suggests that highly controlling environments produce high achievement for Turks.

Discussion and Conclusion

Literature documented that both performance goal orientation (e.g, Daniels, Stupnisky, Pekrun, Haynes, Perry, & Newall, 2009) and mastery goal orientation (e.g., Keys, Conley, Duncan, & Domina, 2012) correlated with academic achievement. A recent study that was conducted using a Turkish sample suggests that motivation of students could be mediating factor to academic achievement (e.g., Ergene, 2011). The effect of achievement goal orientations on achievement has not been studied yet in Turkey except one study (Korkmaz, 2014). Achievement goal orientations do not predict academic achievement for Turkish students,

or achievement goal orientations would relate to academic achievement with a different sample from Turkey (Korkmaz, 2014). Importantly, results need to be interpreted carefully. More research is needed on the achievement goal orientations of Turkish children, including those living in rural and urban areas (Korkmaz, 2014).

Previous research in other cultures (e.g., Keys, Conley, Duncan, & Domina, 2012) found a relationship between mastery approach and Mathematics achievement. As Verkuyten, Thijs, & Canatan (2001) found that individual and family-oriented motivation related academic achievement, what kind of affect Turkish culture provide on students' achievement goal orientations would be an interesting topic for further investigation.

This review provides a conceptual understanding of the achievement goal orientation concept that leads to many future studies about achievement goal orientation of Turkish students, such as: What are the main goal orientations of Turkish students? What kind of orientation would help Turkish children achieve? Knowing the Turkish students' achievement goal orientation would make difference on their academic life. Teachers would prepare class activities, and policy makers would prepare a curriculum considering how students are motivated to achieve academically.

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[Bu çalışma, doktora tezine dayalı olarak üretilmiştir.]

İletişim:

Ümmügülsüm Korkmaz

E-posta: ugkorkmaz@gmail.com

APPENDIX A

Elliot & McGregor's (2001) 2X2 Achievement Goal Orientation Questionnaire

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all true of me	Not true of me	Neutral	True of me	Very true of me

1. My goal this semester is to get better grades than most of the other students.

2. It is important for me to do well compare to other students.

3. I want to do better than other students this semester.

4. I just want to avoid doing poorly compared to other students this semester.

5. The fear of performing poorly this semester is what motivates me.

6. My goal this semester is to avoid performing poorly compared to the other students.

7. I am afraid that I may not understand the content of my classes as thoroughly as I'd like.

8. I worry that I may not learn all that I possibly could this semester.

9. I am definitely concerned that I may not learn all that I can this semester.

10. Completely mastering the material in my courses is important to me this semester.

11. I want to learn as much as possible this semester.

12. The most important thing for me this semester is to understand the content in my courses as thoroughly as possible.