

The Development of Achievement Orientation Instrument (AOI)

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Abstract. Achievement orientation is central to academic performance and high performance in any area of endeavour. It can make the difference between excelling, mediocrity and being an average. As the saying goes, nothing ventured, nothing gained, Genius is ninety - nine percent perspiration. Orienting towards achievement brings its own reward in performance and excellence. The achievement orientation instrument was designed in the light of growing apprehension that students, especially at the secondary school level are not performing as excellently as previous generations of students and that this is equally influencing output and invariably quality of university graduates. The instrument measures achievement orientation.

1. Introduction

Achievement orientation was “culled” out of achievement motivation by psychologists who felt there was a sharp dividing line between “motivation” which many perceive could be intrinsic or extrinsic and achievement orientation’ which many perceive to basically involve steps and “processes” which can either be taken or not taken. That is, there must be a goal to reach and a purpose to fulfil and a map on how to reach the goal and fulfil purpose. One can therefore take necessary steps to reach the goal or fail to do so. One can have positive or negative achievement orientation or, high and low achievement orientation.

The need for an instrument of this nature was borne out of growing concern that the young ones were neither working hard nor desiring to excel in their field as of generations gone by. It was as if the race for materialism that erupted in the Nigerian society “seeped” into the educational sector and students no longer value hardwork but would prefer the easy way out by cheating in various ways. The instrument measures achievement orientation, a component of achievement motivation.

2. Literature Review

Lueptow (1975) found that males tended to be more achievement oriented than females. It was observed that during adolescence period, girls appeared to attune to negative consequences of academic and occupational success. The result is a de-emphasis of intellectual ability and attainment. Another explanation offered by Halperin (1977) asserted that when teachers place great emphasis on academic achievement, girls’ achievement orientation increase while that of boys decrease. However, if the teacher does otherwise, girls’ achievement orientations decrease while those of boys increase.

The contrasting findings suggest that achievement orientation depends on situations and conditions under which the individuals are expected to achieve.

Kelly (1981), Spender and Sarah (1980) and Sutherland (1981) are among other researchers that are of the view that since the mid-1970s,

there has been increasing awareness of the general under-achievement of girls in the United State of America educational system, and of their under representation in mathematics. The same situation can be said of Nigeria.

Osafehinti (1988) studied sex-related differences in mathematics achievement at the secondary school level in Nigeria. Osafehinti found a statistically significant difference on the mean scores for boys and girls on measures of cognitive and affective variables in favour of boys. However, on verbal problems in mathematics, there was no observed difference in their mean scores. That notwithstanding, it was found that boys achievement on verbal problems was better than the achievement of girls. Furthermore, it was observed that girls found mathematics more difficult than boys but all agreed that mathematics is a male oriented subject. The researcher concluded that girls have poor self-concept of themselves and this might have resulted in their manifesting poor orientations to academic studies and this could have been affecting their level of achievement in mathematics .

The findings of Osafehinti lend credence to the results of Armstrong (1981), Keeve (1981) and Shuard (1987). They all found that boys performed better than girls in mathematics. Several reasons were adduced for this (i) parents always accept low achievement in mathematics for girls than for boys, (ii) types of occupations available for a woman in a culture and (iii) the mathematical tasks given to the students.

3. Factors which aid poor achievement orientation.

Such an observation is not peculiar to the Nigerian culture, Sharman and Meighan (1980) noted that role expectations affect students' performance. Many British mathematical textbooks contain role assignments where girls do all the shopping, knit and mend clothes but boys make concretes and play football, and boys usually are given special and scientific toys to play with.

Finally, Achievement orientation is central to academic performance. A basic difference between achievement motivation and achievement orientation is that motivation is

intrinsic while orientation is extrinsic. Achievement orientation involves persistence, long periods of hard work, consistent "play" at what is not understood; all makes a difference to performance.

Mowaiye Fagbemi, (1993) and (1996) found that students from the urban centres not only had higher achievement orientation but also performed better than those from the rural areas, and that achievement orientation was central to academic performance.

The importance of achievement orientation to academic performance and the need to research into the variable led to the development of the achievement orientation instrument by the researcher.

4. Methods / Analysis

The instrument was first pilot tested for usability and reliability in a secondary school within Ilorin metropolis.

A test-retest method was used to determine the reliability co-efficient and the computation result was 0.93, using the Pearson Product Method of Correlation. The second administration was after a period of three weeks. The construct validity was also established for the Instrument. Scoring System – A score of 1 - 4 was given to the response from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). Scoring for positive statement in the items were reversed.

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