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GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE PRESENCE AND EXTENT OF ACADEMIC MOTIVATIONAL ATTRIBUTES, INDEPENDENT STUDY, AND THE PREDICTIVE VALUE ON ACHIEVEMENT AMONGST UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Abstract:

Prior research has highlighted gender differences in academic motivational attributes, and how these predict achievement for each gender. However, not only does a vast amount of inconsistency exist amongst such literature, a lack of studies to date have measured how certain attributes (specifically self-efficacy, active learning strategies, independent study time) predict achievement to a different extent for males and females.

The present study hence expands of prior research and investigates existing gender differences in academic motivation (achievement goal, leaning goal, performance goal, self-efficacy, and active learning strategies) and study habits (hours) amongst undergraduate students. Additionally, it measures how these attributes predict achievement grade (overall %) to a different extent for male and female students.

The study employed a cross-sectional design, and was gathered through a prospective and retrospective questionnaire (including an adapted version of the Motivation towards Science Learning Questionnaire), from a mixed gender sample of 323 final year students belonging to various schools within the University Of Huddersfield.

T-test results revealed small but significant differences, favouring females in achievement goal and study time. Multiple regression analysis revealed that study time, active learning strategies, performance goal and self-efficacy were significant predictors of achievement for males, accounting for 28% of variance in grade, whereas self-efficacy was the only significant predictor of achievement for females, accounting for 14% of variance in grade. Ultimately, through the evaluation of the current methodology, recommendations for future research are made. Future research should continue to explore gender differences in the attributes discussed, but also expand to account for additional factors to lead to a more comprehensive understanding of motivation and achievement. As well as this, findings offer practical implications highlighting the importance of self-efficacy and proposing methods in which higher education institutions can develop to encourage motivation in the particular attributes each gender is lacking.

Keywords:

Motivation, higher education, university, undergraduate, curriculum, achievement, gender differences, study habits, self-efficacy.

JEL Classification: I29, I23