

The Role of Social Support in Promoting Academic Motivation- the case of Western Showa Zone High Schools, Oromia, Ethiopia

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***Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine the role of social support in promoting academic motivation in western showa zone Oromia local state. At the same time patterns of academic motivation across demographic variables was identified. Academic motivation is a crucial concern of high school students. Data were collected from randomly selected 1560 students (860 males, and 700 females) through a questionnaire. Findings indicated that most students have moderate and below the moderate score on academic motivation and social support. Social support and age were found to be significantly related to academic motivation. Accordingly, a higher proportion of students who reported to experience higher academic motivation were those who perceive a greater level of social support, younger in age. The result of t-test revealed that there is significant sex difference on academic motivation in which male reported higher academic motivation than female students. The stepwise regression analysis results indicated that social support contributed significantly to promote academic motivation. To improve academic motivation in the students, it was recommended that responsible bodies and organizations should establish different programs and activities that foster social support and academic motivation. Lastly, further study on this issue including other variables was also recommended.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

There are numerous definitions of motivation; as a result, there are many incongruities among researchers over the precise nature of motivation. Among different investigators (Pintrich, 2003,) describe the term motivation as what gets people going, keeps them going, and helps them finish tasks

Despite the broadness of its boundary Academic motivation is a complex phenomenon, partly which stretch beyond the education domain to the broader social context in which the student is located. Academic motivation is researched concept and portrayed by many researchers. For instance, Pintrich and Zusho (2002), explained the term as the internal processes that initiate and maintain activities aimed at attaining specific academic goals.

Even though academic motivation has received much conceptual and empirical focus, finding by (Snyder & Hoffman, 2002) revealed that abundance of high school students lacks academic motivation. Attention has not also given to why students are not motivated to learn.

High school period mostly overlaps with an adolescent period which is characterized by different biological, physical and psychosocial changes. During this time adolescents get in conflict with their parents, siblings and teachers. Because of this they may perceive parental support as unsatisfactory. The period is also the time of identity crises in which adolescents are exploring different options about their futurity. All these changes together may be responsible for the reasons why students are not interested in attending their education.

The decrement in academic motivation during high school period have been discussed by different researchers. For instance, Otis, Grouzet, & Pelletier, (2005) reported that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations decrease across the high school transition. Seemingly Roeser et al. (1998, 2000) described high school age as a period of decline in academic motivation (e.g., interest, value, competence beliefs) and increased negative emotions. The absences of academic motivation potentially lead to feelings of frustration and discontentment and can hinder productivity and well-being

Studies concluded by Goodenow (1993) Levitt et al. (1994), Wentzel 1998) show that adolescents who perceive their parents, peers and teachers as supportive do better in school than those who do not recognize their human agents as supportive.

Different findings show that Academic motivation is strongly influenced by fundamental social actors in the student's environment, such as teachers, parents, or friends.

The power of these social actors can be illuminated using *Self-Determination Theory* (SDT) specifically its subtotal: *cognitive evaluation theory* (CET; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002). The theory present academic motivation as multidimensional in nature, and is comprised of three global types of motivation: intrinsic motivation (learning for enjoyment), extrinsic motivation (learning as a means to an end), and motivation (lack of motivation). The theory posited that social contexts that promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness would improve academic motivation.

Different scholars also revealed that academic motivation can be influenced by contextual and demographic variables such as age, language and cultural background, gender, socioeconomic status, institutional assistance, and financial hardship (Bennett (2003), Elkins, Braxton, & James (2000), Evans (1999) and Tinto (1997).

Most of the research about academic motivation involves predominantly Western. However, it has been recommended that modern education needs cross-cultural studies. Therefore, more empirical research, examining the factors affecting academic motivation on learning outcomes for students across cultures, is warranted.

Although there is growing bodies of research devoted to studying the academic motivation of student's adequate findings were not found on the interrelationships among social support and academic motivation of high school students in Ethiopia. Therefore, this study attempted to determine whether social support with some selected demographic variables are associated with high school student's academic motivation of Western Showa Zone of Oromia regional state.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of social support and some selected demographic factors on academic motivation of high school adolescents, more precisely;

- To assess status of social support and academic motivation of high school students of Western Showa Zone of Oromia region
- To investigate the role of social support on academic motivation of high school students
- To examine academic motivation of students as a function of age and sex
- To recommend possible solutions based on the finding of the study

1.3 METHODOLOGY

Study design

The study was employed a survey study design with quantitative methods of data collection

Study area

The study was conducted in a West show of Oromia regional state which is found the westerly direction of Addis Ababa.

Population

The sources of the population were high school students (grade 9 and 10) provided in West Showa Zone, Oromia regional state.

Sample size and techniques

The sample size was determined to rely on Bluman (2001) assumption which is recommended to take 10-20% of the total population in survey design. In this research, 10% of the population has been taken as sample

Sample and sampling technique

Since it was quite impossible to incorporate all students as participants in the 38 high schools, ten high schools were selected by employing simple random sampling technique (i.e. lottery method).

From randomly, selected high schools participants were selected by employing proportionate simple random sampling.

Table 1: sample of participants

Grade	Population			Total sample size				
	M	F	Total	M	%	F	%	Total
Grade 9	4922	3906	8828	492	10	390	10	882
Class 10	4260	3597	7857	426	10	359	10	785
Total	9182	7503	16685	918	10	750	10	1667

Tools

The data collection device used for this study was questionnaire comprised of three sets of items. The first set consists of the articles concerning demographic characteristics of respondents. The second set contains items about academic motivation which include 28 items. The third set includes 12 questions on perceived adequacy of social support

Procedure

2. Construction

2.1 Academic motivation

The Academic Motivation Scale–high school version (AMS) developed by Vallerand et al., (1992) was adapted and used to measure academic motivation.

AMS is a useful measure of academic motivation and based on SDT, it has 28-item instrument which divided into seven subscales, reflecting one subscale of motivation, three ordered subscales of extrinsic motivation (external, introjected, and identified regulation), and three distinct, unordered subscales of intrinsic motivation (intrinsic motivation to know, to accomplish things, and to experience stimulation

2.2 Social Support

To measure social support Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988) was adapted and used. It measures social support from three sources: family, friends, and a special person, measured on three subscales

2.3 Data analysis

After collection of data, the responses was coded and entered into a computer. The completed and cross-checked data was analyzed by employing the following statistical techniques. First, descriptive statistics (i.e. frequencies, mean, and standard deviation) were used to describe the major demographical characteristics, the patterns of the academic motivation and perceived adequacy of social support of the adolescents. Second, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to check factors correlated to the academic motivation and stepwise (forward) multiple regression analysis was also employed to examine the independent contribution dependent variable on the outcome variable, and independent t-test was also implemented

2.4 RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

		No.	%
sex	Male	860	55%
	Female	700	45%
Grade level	Grade 9	810	52
	Grade 10	750	48

Data was collected from a total of 1560 students in the final analysis. Out of this number, 860(55 percent) were males and the rest 700 (45 percent) were females. On the educational level of the respondents, 810 (52 percent) were grade 9, 750 (48 percent) were grade 10.

Table 3: Status of respondent's academic motivation and perceived social support (N=1560)

characteristics	Category		Total	
			N	%
Academic Motivation	Low	<47	859	55
	Moderate	47-73	370	24
	High	>73	331	21
Social support	Low	<29	854	54.7
	Moderate	29-44	407	26.1
	High	>44	299	19.2

Results revealed that 859 (55%) of participants had a low level of academic motivation, 370(24%) had the moderate academic motivation, and only 331 (21%) had a high level of academic motivation. This finding implies that only a few numbers of students had strong academic motivation. Regarding social support 854 (54.7%) of participant's had low social

support, 407 (26.1%) had a moderate level of Social support, and 299(19.2%) had high social support. From this result, social support provided to the students was small in which only a few numbers of students reported that they receive strong social support.

Correlation between the predictor and outcome variables

To see whether a significant relationship exists between factors and outcome variables, the correlation between variables was computed by using Pearson r.

Table5: Correlation between predictor and outcome variables.

Variables	correlation		
	sex	age	Social support
sex of respondents	-		
age of respondents	.032	-	
Social support	.125**	.148**	-
Academic motivation	.095**	.124**	.905**

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

The above table 5 shows that academic motivation was significantly and positively correlated with social support ($r=.905$, $P<.01$), and age ($r=.124$, $P<.01$). The result also indicated that perceived social support has significantly correlated with age ($r=-.148$, $P<.01$). This show as age increases the perceived adequacy of social support increases within the range of adolescent age

Table 4: Gender Differences on academic motivation

	Sex	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Academic motivation	M	860	52.86	19.40	-3.765	1558	.000	significant
	F	700	49.34	16.90				

The result of t-test revealed that there is significant difference in scores for males ($M=52.86$, $SD=19.40$) and females ($M=49.34$, $SD=16.90$, $t(1558)=-3.765$, $P=.000$ (two-tailed), $P<.05$). This implies that there is significant sex difference on academic motivation in which male reported higher academic motivation than female students. So that sex significantly affects the academic motivation of students.

Table 6: Model Summary of Stepwise Multiple Regression of academic motivation by social support (N=1560)

Model	Variables entered	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Changes in R ²	Beta weight	t-value	Test of significance
1	Social support	.869 ^a	.755	.755	.755	.869	6.93	.000

As shown in Table 6 above, academic motivation profile was significantly related to social support, ($p < 0.05$). The independent contribution of social support to academic motivation was examined, and this variable was significant to academic motivation (social support ($F(1,1558) = 4.82$, $P = .000$). In the regression model of the same table, R^2 change reveals information on the variance in academic motivation explained by social support. So that Social support accounted for about 75.5% of the influence on academic motivation which was statistically significant ($r = .869$, $p = .000$).

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 The status of academic motivation and social support

The present research found that the majority of the students had either a low or moderate academic motivation, only a few students had moderate and high academic motivation. Such findings would be in support of other studies on academic motivation. For instance, (Snyder & Hoffman, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2002) suggests that Although academic motivation has received much conceptual and empirical focus, the fact remains that an abundance of high school students lacks academic motivation.

In support of this finding Green-Demers & Pelletier (2003) also reported that 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. The result also revealed that only a few students had a high social support, but most of the students had either a low or moderate level of social support.

3.2 The association between academic motivation and social support

The result from Pearson correlation shows there was statistically significant positive relationship between social support and academic motivation ($r = .905$, $p < 0.01$). This implies as the level of social support increase students become more motivated to learn.

The present finding agreed with different researchers. For instance, (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2002) reported as academic attitudes and behaviors are strongly influenced by key social agents in the student's environment, whether these are teachers, parents, or friends. (Reeve et al., 1999) also revealed those students who perceive their social support networks (e.g., parents and teachers) as supporting and fuelling their autonomy and competence are more intrinsically motivated at school.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate that academic motivation in the student is determined by demographic and social factors. Among demographic factors students sex and age are the most consistent correlates of academic motivation. Social factors are also related to academic motivation. Finally, as the strength of the associations, as indicated by the values of the regression coefficients, social support is the strongest determinants of academic motivation.

3.3 Gender difference in academic motivation and social support

The result of independent t-test shows significance difference between male and female on academic motivation and social support in which man scored significantly higher academic motivation and social support than women.

In supporting this finding mulgeta Atnafu (2012) revealed that males scored higher than females in intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, motivation and social support; and women more top scored higher than men in alienation from the school. Agreed with this finding Anderman & Anderman, (1999) also reported that boys show a greater degree of academic extrinsic motivational orientation than girls. In Ethiopia females had not been receiving adequate support as males; they were economical, socially and politically exploited. Currently, even though Ethiopian government guaranteed them human and democratic rights, most of the time societal attitude towards female's equality has not been fully changed. This may influence girls in school and other social activities and it may make them as they perceive as they are not getting adequate support which affects their academic motivation.

In contrast to this finding Boggiano, Main, and Katz (1991) showed that females possess a more academic motivation than males. Results of Mecca & Holt (1993) also shows that girls show a greater academic motivation than boys and Gottfried (1990) revealed that there is no gender difference in academic motivation.

3.4 The association between age and academic motivation

In the present study, the result from Pearson correlation shows there was statistically significant positive relationship between age and academic motivation ($r=.124, p<0.01$). This result implies academic motivation for the junior student is lower when compared with their seniors in age. The minimum age in this research is 14 (roughly in middle/early adolescence) which characterized rapid biological, cognitive and socioemotional changes. This time is characterized by adolescent-parent conflict and also school problems. These factors may lead to low academic motivation in early adolescent than a late teen. Finding shows that high school students also report being disconnected from school and teachers (Willms, 2003).

4. Conclusion

The primary objective of the present study was to assess the role of some selected factors, specifically, the role of social support and selected demographic variables in promoting academic motivation in western showa high schools.

The result depicted that students were closer to the lower level in both academic motivation and social support. The result also revealed the significant positive relationship between social support and academic motivation. Age is significantly positively correlated with academic motivation. The result shows students who were lower in age reported less academic motivation and perceived adequacy of social support. The arise from t-test also exposed significant gender difference in academic motivation and social support. The gender gap in academic motivation in which males scored higher than females may be produced from gender gap observed on perceiving social support which shows men were significantly scored higher in seeing adequate social support than women.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions made above, the researcher forwards the following suggestions:

1. Social support is the strongest contributor in the academic motivation of students. Therefore, family, friends, relatives, government institutions, NGOs and other significant

persons and agencies better to understand the importance of social support in promoting academic motivation.

2. Students with lower social support had lower academic motivation. Therefore, a recommendation has been forwarded to educational institutions like Ambo University, other governmental and NGOs to provide family counseling for student's family and students to promote social support and academic motivation.
3. Cooperative learning in which students gain psychological and social support from each other should be encouraged through providing training to students and teachers
4. Teachers should motivate their students through using different motivational techniques and emphasis also better given to female students
5. Students who are involved in school-relevant activities including extracurricular activities are most likely to be motivated to learn (Finn, 1989). So that student should be encouraged to participate in different extracurricular activities
6. Parents, teachers and friends also play a large part in students' feelings of affiliation, fostering academic motivation and well-being when their relationships are warm, supportive, and constructive (Green-Demers & Pelletier, 2003). As a result parent involvement in teaching learning process should be encouraged and awareness should be created to parents on developmental characteristics of students and how they support their students.
7. Further finding also suggested by giving attention to other possible factors and different methods

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