

The Effects of Achievement Motivation and Perceived Teacher Involvement in Academic Tasks on the Academic Achievement and Psychological Well-being of Rural Students in the Interior Sabah Division, Malaysia

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Abstract:

This study examines the effects of achievement motivation and perceived teacher involvement on academic achievement and psychological well-being of rural students in the Interior Sabah Division (Beaufort, Keningau, Kuala Penyu, Membakut, Pensiangan, Sipitang, Tambunan & Tenom). We predicted that achievement motivation contributes to both academic achievement and psychological well-being. We also predicted teachers' involvement in students' academic work also contributes to both dependent variables. A total of 1586 students participated in this study from 21 rural schools in the Interior Division Sabah. A questionnaire, divided into four sections, was used to measure all the variables. Section A measured the demographic variables, such as the academic achievement, academic level, age, gender and location; Section B; measured achievement motivation; Section C measured the perception of teacher involvement in students' academic work and Section D measured psychological well-being. Hierarchical regression analyses were used to analyze the data. The study found that achievement motivation contributed 4% to the variance in academic achievement and 16% on psychological well-being. In regards to teachers' involvement in academic studies, it contributed 6% to students' psychological well-being but not in academic achievement. These significant findings may create awareness and bring the matter to the attention of the Ministry of Education, the schools and Parent-Teacher Association. From this study, it is our hope that the Educational Institution may provide more achievement motivational programs to enhance rural students' psychological well-being and academic achievement.

Key words.: Achievement motivation, psychological well-being, rural.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the academic world, students are confronted with different kinds of academic challenges such as completing academic tasks, sustaining good academic results and finding and managing time to study. Besides, academic challenges, students are also confronted with other social problems such as school violence, bullying, vandalism, and family problems, which can cause stress and depression in some students. Stress has been found to affect students' lives, impacting on how they cope with the demands of academic life (Md Yassin & Dzulkifli, 2011).

For rural students, these challenges are more severe due to a lack of infrastructure development and educational facilities, as well as a low of standard living compared to those at urban schools. In regard to rural schools in Sabah, some are located in areas that can only be reached using limited-access road, or even river transport system (Marwan, Sumintono, Mislán, 2012). This can cause severe issues for some students in attending class because of poor access, and these conditions still exist in some rural schools in Sabah.

Apart from these challenges, rural schools in Sabah also face educational challenges, including bridging the wide achievement gaps between themselves and schools in urban (The Report: Sabah, 2011). Overall, Sabah is still backward in terms of education especially in rural areas (Chandran & Geetha, 2009). We assume that one of the elements that contributes to students' low academic achievement might be caused by achievement motivation. A study conducted by Sarangi (2011) showed that rural students showed lower academic achievement compared to urban students. In addition, based on the World Bank (2010) report, there is a disparity of Malaysian students' achievement in Mathematics in year 9 (15 years of age) between urban and rural schools; performance gap between rural and urban schools still exists, although a small percentage, 1.17% (Borneo Post, 2018). Rural students' indeed need more academic assistance, motivation, encouragement and support and teacher involvement to increase their level of academic performance (Md Sawari, Ghazali & Mansor, 2015).

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Despite the barriers that rural students face, governmental agencies, such as the Ministry of Education have put a lot of effort into raising the standards of education in rural schools. As stated by Chandran and Geetha (2009), efforts have been taken by the government to develop the level of education in the rural area of Sabah which was shown by improving the internet coverage in rural schools, introducing the wireless villages in Malaysia (Borneo Post, 2013), and providing more facilities for educational purposes. This was to ensure that rural students could access numerous teaching and learning resources available online; and these should also be accessible by school communities, too (Malhoit (2005). Provision from the government and the implementation of new education technology, however, are still not adequate in lifting academic excellence in rural schools. We believe that psychological elements such as achievement motivation need to be taken into consideration in developing the level of education of rural students.

Academic motivation is crucial to a student's academic success at any age (Singh, 2011), and past studies (e.g., Amrai, Motlagh, Zalani, & Parhon, 2011; Ekpenyong, Donald, & Joseph, 2017; Kusurkar, Cate, Vos, Westers, & Croiset, 2013; Syed Mustafaa, Elias, Noah, & Roslan, 2010; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2001) have revealed that achievement motivation contributes to students' academic performance. Students who show high in achievement motivation show more effort in figuring out difficult homework and to complete their schoolwork successfully. Motivation has always been considered a central factor in academic achievement (Sarangi, 2015). We have heard about some success stories of rural students gaining success despite their many academic hurdles faced. For instance, the Daily express (2015) reported that more rural schools in Sabah are scoring 100 percent in the national exam (STPM). We believe that one of the psychosocial factors that contribute to the achievement is students' achievement motivation.

Apart from academic performance, achievement motivation may also help to enhance students' psychological well-being. Past studies (e.g., Hassanzadeh & Mahdine, 2013, Lv, Zhou, Guo, Liu, Liu, & Luo, 2016; Singh, 2011) have revealed that there is a relationship between achievement motivation and well-being, including happiness. Students who show high in achievement motivation tend to show positive beliefs about their capability to be successful in academic studies and tend to think positively compared with students who show low in achievement motivation. Achievement motivation defined as a subjective and internal psychological drive, enabling individuals to pursue work they perceive to be valuable and prompting them to reach their goals (Singh, 2011). We believe that students' achievement motivation is geared more towards an individual's efforts in learning and studying at schools. Students' academic achievement relates to their beliefs about themselves. If they think that success is something possible, they will struggle to reach their goals, no matter what obstacles may occur along the way (Md. Sawari, Ghazali, & Mansor, 2014).

Some students, however, might feel depressed and show negative feelings if they cannot achieve their academic goals or fulfill their parents' and teachers' expectations. According to Md Yassin and Dzulkifli (2011), students who are physically and psychologically stable are expected to

perform better compared to those who are not physically fit. Therefore, teacher involvement is also important in supporting and monitoring students' academic progress. This may help students to sustain their academic success and gain better psychological well-being. Teachers who are concerned about students' academic achievement tend to monitor and supervise their students' academic tasks, such as school homework, project and their students' level of understanding of certain subjects. Students who received more supports from their teachers tend to score highly in achievement motivation and this, in turn, may also increase students' academic achievement and psychological well-being. Teachers have a greater influence on their students' motivation than they believe (Hardre, Sullivan & Roberts, 2008). This might be because teacher is the most significant resource in the classroom for student learning as stated by Carpenter (2008). Without the curriculum knowledge and instructional expertise of the classroom teacher, learning would be an impossible enterprise. Teachers also play a huge role in shaping up the future of a nation by influencing students' educational level and their mindset from very early stages (Muniandy, 2017). Teachers who are negative and non-supportive, on the other hand, destroys students' motivation (Dislen, 2013).

In this study, we are interested in understanding the academic phenomena that mentioned in the preceding text. We believe that achievement motivation is one of the key factors that can enhance rural students' academic achievement and psychological well-being. Furthermore, the perceived involvement of teachers in students' academic studies may also help to increase the positive effects of achievement motivation and thus academic achievement and psychological well-being. In this study, we focus on rural students in the Interior Sabah Division since we believe that rural schools play a significant role in helping a nation educate its people as stated by Marwan, Sumintono and Mislan (2012).

We hope the outcome of this study will provide data to the relevant education authorities, such as the Ministry of Education, schools, Parent-Teacher Association, as well as the public. Exploring the effects of achievement motivation on academic achievement and psychological well-being might enhance our understanding of the contribution of achievement motivation and the positive role of teachers in developing academic performance and students' psychological well-being. This could provide essential information to the relevant authorities in improving the standard of academic performance and well-being of rural schools.

II. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

In this study, achievement motivation theory by McClelland (1985) is used as a guideline in conducting the study to examine the effects of achievement motivation on academic performance and psychological well-being. Achievement motivation is one type of motivation that helps to determine how and why an individual has behaved in a certain way and is one of the crucial psychological factors determining future academic success (Kolodziej, 2010). According to this theory, people who show high in achievement motivation tend to be

motivated by difficult, challenging and competitive work situations and not by routine and non-competitive situations. They habitually spend their time thinking about doing things better; they are not motivated by money but in their future achievement (Akrani, 2010).

III. METHOD

Study Design;

The design of the study is a survey. Students were given a set of questionnaire consisting of four sections to measure students' demographic profile (e.g. age, gender, academic year, academic achievement), achievement motivation, teachers' involvement in academic and their psychological well-being. We sought approval from the Ministry of Education to conduct the study in rural schools in Sabah. We then went to each selected school in the Interior Sabah Division to give brief information about the study to the school principal and teachers, who assisted us in delivering the questionnaires to students. The schools list was obtained from the Sabah Department of Education, Ministry of Education.

Participants:

A total of 1586 participants from various secondary schools in rural Sabah took part in this study. Their ages ranged from 15 to 17 years old. The study included male and female students. The majority of them were female, 56.40%, with 43.50% being male.

Instruments:

The questionnaire survey contains four sections.

Section A: Demographic Profile:

There are 18 items in the demographic profile that measured age, gender, ethnicity and level of education and academic performance.

Section B: Achievement Motivation Inventory:

This scale consists of 32 items to measure achievement motivation (Muthee & Thomas, 2009). The response scale provided was: 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The sample items to measure achievement motivation included 'I plan ahead what subjects to study during my free time', 'I always work very hard to be among the best students in my school', and 'Sometimes, I forget to do my homework'. 'The higher the score, the higher student's motivational level. Among the 32 items retained in the final scale, 18 were positively worded and 14 were negatively worded. Items with positive and negative wording were arranged randomly in the final scale. The serial numbers of the items with positive wording are the following: 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32. The serial number of items with negative wordings are: 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25 and 27.

Section C: Perceptions of Teachers Academic involvement:

This scale consists of four items to measure students' perceived academic monitoring and academic support by their teachers (Regner, Loose & Dumas, 2009). The rating scale were made on a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Four items assessed students' perceived academic monitoring: 'My teachers monitor whether I have

done my homework', 'My teachers supervise whether I do my best in academics', 'My teachers monitor my academic outcomes', and 'My teachers supervise whether I make progress'.

Section D: Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Inventory - Short version:

Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Inventory was used to measure the psychological well-being which consists of 18 items (Ryff, 1989). There are 8 negative items (i.e., item no 1, 4, 5, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18). These items are reverse-scored so that higher scores correspond to greater psychological well-being. The response scale provided was: 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Data Screening and Cleaning:

Before the data were analysed, several factors were taken into consideration, such as normality of data and missing values. Possible outliers for each scale were checked using standardized scores or z-scores. Standardised scores in excess of 3.29 ($p < .001$, two tailed test) were identified as potential outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The extremeness of a standardized scores in excess of 3.29 are expected (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, p.67). In this study the total number of participants was 5657. The skewness and kurtosis for the five scales are considered acceptable (i.e. below 2) (see Table 1). The values for asymmetry and kurtosis between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable in order to prove normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010).

Table 1: The Values of skewness and kurtosis for each scale

Scales	Skewness	Kurtosis
Achievement Motivation	.06	.37
Teachers' involvement in academic	-.59	1.21
Psychological well-being	-.14	.44

West et al. (1996) proposed a reference of substantial departure from normality as an absolute skew value > 2 (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). Kurtosis is a measure of the peakedness of a distribution. The original kurtosis value is sometimes called kurtosis (proper) and West et al. (1996) proposed a reference of substantial departure from normality as an absolute kurtosis (proper) value > 7 . The missing values for achievement motivation is 10.98%, academic achievement, 2.05%, psychological well-being, 9% and perceived teachers' involvement in students' academic task is 1.43%. We replace the missing data scores by using the mean substitution (Bollen, 1989).

Data Analysis:

The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 19. The hypotheses were analyzed using hierarchical Regression.

Table 2: The reliability values of each scale (N=1586)

Scales	Number of items	Reliability Values
Achievement Motivation	32 items	.69
Teachers' involvement in academic	4 items	.80
Psychological well-being	18 items	.83

IV. RESULTS

The majority of participants are female, 894 (56.37%) and males, 690 (43.50%) and two participants did not mention their gender. Only 663 participants (41.80%) were involved in outdoor programs, the remaining not involved, 884 (55.74%). Participants were aged 15 to 17 years old.

Table 3: Demographic profiles of participants (N=1586)

Variables	Number	%
Gender		
Male	690	43.50
Female	894	56.37
Missing	2	.13
Age		
15 Years	1127	71.10
16 years	426	26.90
17 years	23	1.50
Missing	10	.60
Districts		
Beaufort	312	19.70
Keningau	275	17.30
Kuala Penyu	125	7.90
Membakut	86	5.40
Pensiangan	167	0.50
Sipitang	93	5.90
Tambunan	268	16.90
Tenom	260	16.40
Academic Achievement		
Failed all subjects	79	4.98
Pass but unsatisfactorily (Mostly grade D)	1042	65.70
Pass (with grade C and D)	281	17.71
Pass with satisfactorily (A and B)	169	10.66
Excellence	15	0.95
Involvement in Outdoor Programs (outside schools)		
Yes	663	41.80
No	884	55.74
Missing	39	2.46

A two stage hierarchical multiple regression was conducted and academic achievement as the dependent variable. Achievement motivation was conducted at stage one of the regression. The teachers involvement was entered at stage two. The hierarchical multiple regression at stage one, achievement motivation contributed significantly to the regression model and accounted 4% of the variance in academic achievement $F_{(1,1584)}=66.17, p=.00$. While teachers involvement did not contribute to academic achievement. The two independent variables contributed to 4% of the variance on the academic performance.

For the other two stage hierarchical multiple regression where psychological well-being as dependent variable, at stage one, results showed that achievement motivation contributed significantly and positively to psychological well-being, $F_{(1,1584)}=298.85, p=.00$. Achievement motivation contributed 16% of the variance on psychological well-being. While, at stage two, teachers involvement contributed significantly 6% on the variance of the psychological well-being $F_{(1,1584)}=222.64, p=.00$. Together the two independent variables accounted 22% of variance on psychological well-being.

Table 4: Hierarchical regression analyses with teachers' involvement in academic as a moderator of the effects of academic self-efficacy on academic achievement and psychological well-being

Predictors	Academic achievement			Psychological well-being		
	ΔR^2	β	sig	ΔR^2	β	Sig
Step 1 Achievement Motivation	.04	.20	.00	.16	.20	.00
Step 2 Achievement Motivation Teachers involvement in academic	.00	.19 .01	.00 .00	.06	.30 .26	.00 .00

V. DISCUSSIONS

The effects of achievement motivation towards academic achievement and psychological well-being:

Academic Achievement: Our study showed that achievement motivation contributed to academic achievement. This finding supported our prediction as well as past studies (e.g., Ekpenyong, Donald, & Joseph, 2017; Kusurkar, Cate, Vos, Westers, & Croiset, 2013; Syed Mustafaa, Elias, Noah, & Roslan, 2010) that achievement motivation may increase students' academic performance. Achievement motivation is an essential element that contributes to academic performance. For this study, academic achievement is defined as working hard, never quitting a task or assignment, and spending more time on school work and not wasting time doing nothing. The study showed that, despite being in rural areas, rural students showed a high intensity and desire to perform well in their academic, which may be caused as by

their achievement motivation. We believe that students' achievement motivation may provides them lives purposes and academic goals as stated by Dislen (2013) that motivation provides students with a purpose and direction to follow.

Students with high in achievement motivation tend to be less involved in examination malpractice and can see the realization of educational goals (Sivapakiam & Nalinilatha, 2017). This might explain why students with higher scored in achievement motivation scored highly in academic performance. They are more focused and have a sincere interest in achieving their academic goals and are not involved in academic cheating at schools. Furthermore, students who scored highly in achievement motivation persevere more and are more determined to achieve their academic goals which is in line with Dornyei (2001,p.317), who says that 'motivation is what gets you going, and determines where you're trying to go'.

Psychological well-being: In this study, academic achievement motivation also contributed to psychological well-being. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Hassanzadeh and Mahdinejad, (2013), who found that motivation inspires people to progress and progression will help to make people happy, especially if they working toward things that make them happy. In regards to the effects of achievement motivation on psychological well-being, we assume that students who scored highly in achievement motivation showed high in psychological well-being because they can clearly visualize the right path to achieve their academic goals, which may lead them to more positive feelings. This can be explained by Leyden's study (2003), which found that human mood can affect the visual cortex, i.e., part of the brain responsible for sight and information processing. The study revealed that people in a negative mood did not process all of the images in pictures, missing substantial parts of the background. In contrast, those in a good mood saw everything (Leyden,2003). Achievement motivation thus can form a basis for a potentially good life; people who are oriented towards achievement, in general, enjoy life and feel in control (Singh,2011).

The effects of perceived teachers involvement in students academic on academic achievement and psychological well-being:

Academic achievement: We predicted that teachers' involvement in students' academic work may contribute to students' academic performance. However, this was not shown in our study. We still consider it possible, however, in that involvement may contribute to students' academic achievement depending on certain circumstances. For instance, some students at the secondary level, teenagers, might show less preference for their teachers being more involved in their academic tasks, such as teachers monitoring homework completion or academic outcomes. They might feel lack of autonomy if their teachers supervise their academic work as a result of they desire for more autonomy and sense of responsibility (Santrock, 2007). In addition, some students might feel pressured by social expectations added to by teachers (Marie & Sakac,2014). This external factor is related to lower levels of learning motivation and lower academic grades. Besides social expectation, students' cognitive abilities to understand the content of learning might

also be one of the possible factors to explain why teachers' involvement in academic tasks did not contribute to students' academic achievement. In this study, however, we did not examine the cognitive abilities of rural students.

Another factor that could also explain why teacher involvement did not contribute to academic achievement might be because some teachers merely focus on academic perse. According to Carpenter (2018), teachers have to demonstrate prosocial behavior since this can be a powerful tool in promoting student achievement and positive change initiatives, in addition to their curriculum knowledge and instructional expertise (Carpenter, 2018). Teachers who are willing to go beyond formal role responsibilities, in other words, seek to actively be involved in organisational citizenship behaviour, play a key role in school effectiveness and improvement (Muniandy,2017). For instance, some teachers are willing to provide free revision to students and to spend more time assisting students in their work projects without hesitation. According to Landa, Trentham and Schaer (1985) rural teachers seem to be somewhat less concerned with teacher load than do urban teachers. Quality teachers are not only the persons who possess a degree in education but the ones who can also demonstrate the skills that can cater for students' learning need and different learning styles (Malhoit,2005).

Psychological well-being: The study showed interesting findings and supported our hypotheses that the more students perceived their teachers' involvement in academic work, the higher their psychological well-being. This may reflect Wang et al. (2007), in that "students can blossom or wither because of the affects, behaviours, and methods of a particular teacher" (Wang et al, 2007, p17). We cannot deny that the teacher's role, particularly in rural areas, plays a major role in students' psychological well-being. Some students in rural areas might receive a lack of attention or support from their parents due to a lack of understanding how parental awareness can contribute to their children's academic success. Therefore, support from teachers is a prime source that can enhance students' psychological well-being. This is because teachers are the first most important point of contact in a student's life (Whitaker,2004).

Teachers' involvement in academic tasks, such as monitoring academic progress and supervising work, as measured in this study may increase students' trust in their teachers and, in turn, may build strong relationships between teacher and students. When students perceived the close and positive relationships with their teachers, they are more inclined to trust and like them (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The relationship between students and teachers in rural contexts is often different from the student-teacher relationship in non-rural settings (Harder, Sullivan & Roberts, 2008). In a small community of rural schools, students and their families are more likely to interact with teachers and their families during community events and social gathering (Flora, Flora & Fey, 2003). Closeness in the relationship refers to the extent of warm, reciprocal interactions, with the student turning to the teacher for comfort in times of stress (Gallagher, Kainz, Vernon-Feagans, & Mayer,2013).

The main role of teachers, as we all know, is to provide knowledge to students, but we believe teachers nowadays also play various role in developing students' academic

performance and well-being. Hargreaves (1994) agrees: "Good teaching is charged with positive emotion. It is not just a matter of knowing one's subject, being efficient, having correct competencies, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy" (p.835).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

We hope that the outcome in this study will give better information of the actual conditions of rural schools in the Interior Sabah Division and the effects of achievement motivation on students' academic success and psychological well-being. The study provides insights into the important role of teachers in enhancing students' psychological well-being and academic achievement. Our findings may provide data for relevant authorities, such as the Ministry of Education, the Schools and Parent Teacher Associations. It is our hope that the Educational Institution will provide more professional development programs to rural teachers to help them improve rural students' academic achievement. In the future it would be interesting to examine other possible factors that might contribute to students' academic performance and well-being, such as a positive school environment (e.g., well-equipped libraries, laboratories and classroom), parental involvement and academic self-efficacy in lifting students' academic performance and well-being, elements may help students to perform better in their academic and future career.

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