Research Paper

Predicting Academic Avoidance Based on the Meaning of Education, Academic Self-Efficacy and Academic Stressors

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Abstract

Aim: This study has been conducted with the aim of predicting academic avoidance based on the meaning of education, academic self-efficacy and academic stressors. The present research is a descriptive correlational study in which 255 high school and vocational school students in Khusf County were selected through random sampling method in the academic year 2019-2020 and were studied based on four scales of the meaning of education, academic self-efficacy, academic stressors and academic avoidance. The stepwise regression analysis results demonstrated that among the ten meanings of education, profession in the first step and stress in the second step, academic performance in the third step and also among the dimensions of academic stressors, failure and self-imposed stress in the fourth and fifth steps significantly predict 37% of the variance of students' academic avoidance.

Keywords: Meaning of education, Academic self-efficacy, Academic stressors, Academic avoidance

Introduction

Failure to attend school (related to academic avoidance) has consequences. Among other things, it affects learning and development (Carroll, 2010) and puts young people at risk of school dropout (Crystel et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to identify the factors affecting academic avoidance. According to Finning et al. (2017), a wide range of individual and external factors are associated with school attendance problems (e.g., academic avoidance). One of the individual factors is the meaning of education. The

meaning of education refers to the internal implication of education for the learner and education may be considered by some students as a way to achieve a profession and for others as a source of pressure (Henderson-King & Smith, 2006). Further, one of the individual factors that has a protective role in school dropout (related to academic avoidance) is academic self-efficacy (Brun et al., 2019). Academic self-efficacy is defined as students' belief and self-confidence in their ability to succeed in academic tasks (Gore, 2006) and is recognized as a valid predictor of academic outcomes (Ikman et al., 2019). Among the external factors, one can refer to academic stressors. Stress, especially academic stress, is applied to the feeling of increasing need for knowledge and at the same time, the individual's perception of not having enough time to achieve the desired knowledge and the individual's evaluation of experiencing inconsistencies between situational demands and intrapersonal resources (Godzella & Baloglu, 2001). Due to the limited studies in this field, the purpose of this study is to predict academic avoidance based on the meaning of education, academic stressors and academic self-efficacy.

Methodology

This research is a descriptive correlational study in which 255 high school and vocational school students in Khusf County were selected through random sampling method in the academic year 2019-2020 and were studied based on four the following scales:

A) **Meaning of Education Questionnaire**: This questionnaire was designed by Henderson-King and Smith in 2006 to assess the meaning of education, which consists of 86 items and measures ten components. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales of the meaning of education were as follows: profession (0/78), independence (0/69), future (0/63), learning (0/80), self (0/77), next step (0/44), social (0/79), the world around (0/76), stress (0/69), liberation (0/61) and the whole scale (0/94).

B) **Academic Stressors Questionnaire**: This questionnaire was developed by Godzella (1991; cited in Gadzella & Baloglu, 2001). In the present study, the questionnaire reliability coefficients were obtained through Cronbach's alpha to be 0/87, 0/73, 0/70, 0/56, 0/76 and 0/71, respectively, for the whole scale and subscales of failures, conflicts, pressures, changes and self-imposed stress.

C) **Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire**: This questionnaire was developed by Mazaheri and Sadeqi in 2015 to measure students' academic self-efficacy. In the present study, the questionnaire reliability coefficients

were obtained through Cronbach's alpha to be 0/92, 0/86, 0/85 and 0/70, respectively, for the whole scale and subscales of academic performance self-efficacy, academic skills self-efficacy and future academic self-efficacy.

D) **Academic Avoidance Questionnaire**: This scale was developed by Khormaei and Saleh Ardestani (2015) and contains 21 items. In the present study, the questionnaire reliability coefficients were obtained through Cronbach's alpha to be 0/95, 0/90 and 0/91, respectively, for the whole scale and subscales of academic aversion and school avoidance.

Results

This study was performed on 255 senior high school students in Khusf County. To investigate the main research hypothesis (there is a significant relationship between the meaning of education, academic stressors and academic self-efficacy with academic avoidance), stepwise regression analysis was used, the results of which are reported in Table (1).

Table 1: Results of stepwise regression analysis of the relationship between the meaning of education, academic stressors and academic self-efficacy with academic avoidance

Pattern	Steps	Predictor variables	R2	R2 change	F	Df	Sig.	Beta	T	Sig.
Stepwise	1	Profession	0/15	0/15	43/51	253	0/001	-0/38	-6/60	0/001
	2	Profession	0/28	0/13	48/45	252	0/001	-0/42	-7/74	0/001
		Stress						0/36	6/76	0/001
	3	Profession	0/34	0/06	43/17	251	0/001	-0/36	-6/89	0/001
		Stress						0/34	6/75	0/001
		Academic performanceself-efficacy						-0/26	-4/88	0/010
	4	Profession	0/36	0/01	34/33	250	0/001	-0/35	-6/56	0/001
		Stress						0/33	6/30	0/001
		Academic performanceself-efficacy						-0/23	-4/32	0/001
		Failure						0/13	2/34	0/02
	5	Profession	0/37	0/01	28/67	249	0/001	-0/32	-5/84	0/001
		Stress						0/32	6/15	0/005

Academic performance self-efficacy	-0/23	-4/37	0/026
Failure	0/17	2/93	0/004
Self-imposed stress	-0/11	-2/06	0/04

According to Table (1), the results suggested that in the first step, the variable of profession as the strongest predictor variable alone predicts 15% of the variance of academic avoidance. Considering the significance level, the role of this component of the meaning of education in predicting academic avoidance can be explained (f= 43/51, df= 253, p <0/001). In the second step of this analysis, the variable of stress as another strong variable after the variable of profession entered the equation of academic avoidance prediction, which with its addition, the predictive power increased to 28%. Considering the significance level, the role of this component of the meaning of education in predicting academic avoidance can be explained (f= 48/45, df= 252, p <0/001). In the third step, the variable of academic performance as another strong variable after the variables of profession and stress entered the equation of academic avoidance prediction, which increased the predictive power to 34% (f= 43/17, df= 251, p <0/010). The results also indicated that in the fourth step, the variable of failure as another strong variable after the variables of profession, stress and academic performance entered the equation of academic avoidance prediction, which increased the predictive power to 36% (f= 34/33, df= 250, p <0/030). Finally, in the fifth step of this analysis, the variable of self-imposed stress as another strong variable after the variables of profession, stress, academic performance and failure entered the equation of predicting academic avoidance, which increased the predictive power to 37% (f= 16/75, df= 294, p <0/001).

Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed to predict academic avoidance based on the meaning of education, academic stressors and academic self-efficacy. The results of this study revealed that among the ten meanings of education, profession in the first step and stress in the second step, academic performance in the third step, and also among the dimensions of academic stressors, failure and self-imposed stress in the fourth and fifth steps significantly predict students' academic avoidance.

Finally, based on the obtained results, it is suggested that workshops be held to develop meaning and self-efficacy of students as well as teachers as an effective and important member in education and an important step be

taken to reduce academic avoidance. However, since this research was limited to self-assessment tools, it is recommended to conduct qualitative research to complete the results and achieve a deep understanding of students' opinions in this area, using more diverse tools (such as observation and interview). Moreover, the obtained results are limited to this statistical population; therefore, it is suggested to consider a wider population in future studies.

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