

The Effect of Self-differentiation on the Academic Self-efficacy of Exceptional Elementary School Students: The Mediating Role of Academic Achievement Motivation and Goal Orientation

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Abstract

Aim: The present study was conducted to investigate the mediating role of academic achievement motivation and goal orientation in the relationship between self-differentiation and academic self-efficacy of exceptional students. The statistical population of this descriptive correlational research included all the exceptional students of Sabzevar city elementary schools, of whom 205 students were selected as the research sample using convenience sampling method. The data collection tool was Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES) (1999), Midgley et al.'s goal orientation questionnaire (1998), Skowron and Friedlander's differentiation of self inventory (1998), and Hermans' achievement motivation scale (1970). Pearson's correlation test and path analysis were used to analyze the data. The results showed that self-differentiation has no direct effect on academic self-efficacy ($P > 0.05$). However, self-differentiation was indirectly related to academic self-efficacy through achievement motivation and goal orientation, tendency and avoidance ($P < 0.05$). Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the relationship between self-differentiation and academic self-efficacy of exceptional students is not a simple linear relationship, and goal orientation, tendency and avoidance performance can mediate this relationship.

Keywords: *Academic achievement motivation, Goal orientation, Self-differentiation, Academic self-efficacy, Exceptional students.*

Introduction

Students with special needs, compared to their peers, have low academic self-efficacy and poor self-regulation (Niazov et al, 2022). In this regard, the results of Schunk & DiBenedetto's study (2021) showed that students with special needs may have false self-efficacy beliefs. In the meantime, the review of past research such as Ramli & Nurahimah (2020) showed the finding that differentiation skill is one of the fields that is related to self-efficacy, and it is obvious that the perception of self-efficacy is necessary to increase self-differentiation. Considering the relationship between self-differentiation and academic self-efficacy, this research seeks a factor that can mediate the relationship between self-differentiation and self-efficacy. The results of most studies on the relationship between goal achievement and academic self-efficacy shows that mastery goals have a positive relationship with high academic self-efficacy, the use of deep cognitive

strategies, efficient coping with academic problems and failures, high academic progress in general, positive emotions and motivational profile (Frumos et al, 2024; Hosseini & Maleki, 2023). Therefore, in this research, the orientation of progress goals is mentioned as a mediating factor. In addition to the orientation component of goal achievement, achievement motivation can also act as a mediating factor in the relationship between self-differentiation and academic self-efficacy because students with a high level of academic achievement motivation know their personality traits. Furthermore, this knowledge gives individuals an accurate perception of their abilities, which represents their high self-efficacy. Given what was stated, and the role of academic progress motivation and the orientation of progress goals on the academic progress and success of students, the current research is trying to answer the question whether motivation to progress and the orientation of progress goals play a mediating role in the relationship between self-differentiation and academic self-efficacy of students.

Methodology

The statistical population of this descriptive correlational research consists of all male and female students with blindness, deafness or developmental disabilities at elementary school of special education centers in Sabzevar city. The target population was estimated to be 440 individuals based on surveys, and Morgan's table was used to select 205 individuals as the sample. In the present study, Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale (MJSES), the goal orientation questionnaire of Bouffard et al., Skowron and Friedlander's differentiation of self inventory, and Hermans' achievement motivation scale were used in the present study. The obtained data were analyzed in Amos22 and SPSS 22 statistical software.

Results

To evaluate the mediating role of academic motivation and goal orientation, it is necessary to calculate the direct and indirect effects of self-differentiation on academic self-efficacy. Therefore, all the relationships among the variables were investigated based on the conceptual model of the research.

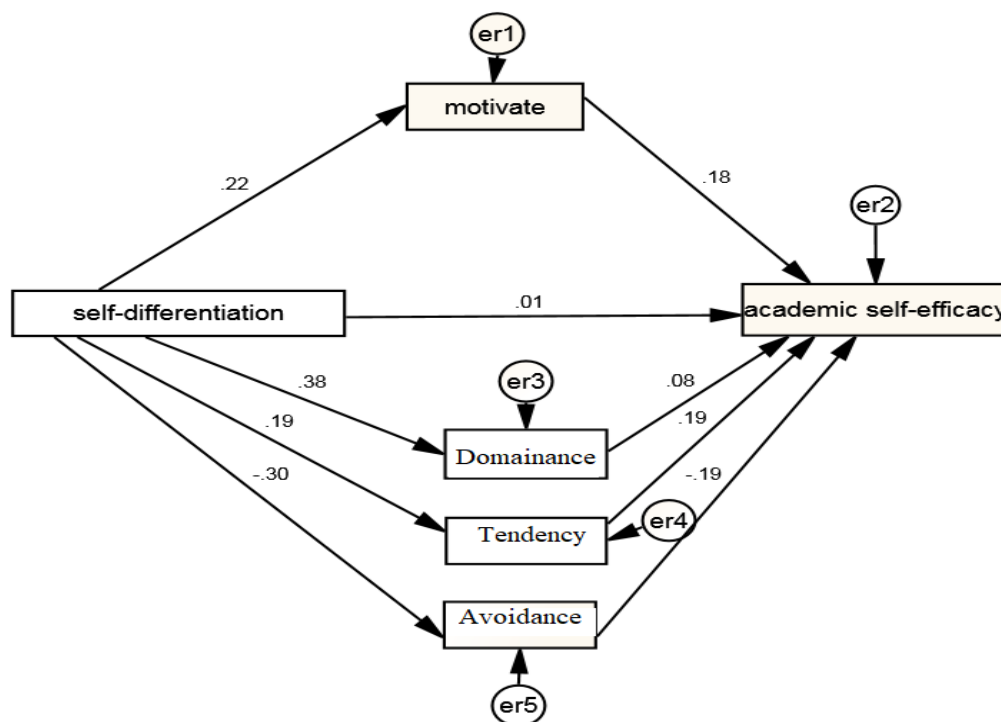


Figure1. Structural equations according to the conceptual model and the relationships among the variables

Based on Figure 1, path analysis for direct and indirect effects is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Direct and indirect standard coefficients

predictor variable	Mediator	Criterion variable	Direct effect	indirect effect
Self-differentiation	Academic motivation	Academic self-efficacy	0.01	0.04*
Self-differentiation	Tendency orientation	Academic self-efficacy	0.01	0.04*
Self-differentiation	Dominance orientation	Academic self-efficacy	0.01	0.03
Self-differentiation	Avoidance orientation	Academic self-efficacy	0.01	0.06*

($P < 0.05$ * $P < 0.01$ **))

The direct effect of self-differentiation on academic self-efficacy was 0.01, which was not significant at the 0.05 level. The direct effect of self-differentiation on academic motivation was 0.22, which was significant at the 0.01 level. The direct effect of academic motivation on academic self-efficacy was 0.18, which was significant at the 0.05 level. The direct effect of self-differentiation on goal orientation was 0.19 for tendency, 0.38 for dominance and -0.30 for avoidance, which was significant at the 0.05 level. The direct effect of the orientation of the tendency and avoidance performance goals was 0.19 and -0.19, respectively, which was significant at the 0.05 level. Finally, it was concluded that self-differentiation was indirectly related to academic self-efficacy through achievement motivation and goal orientation, tendency and avoidance.

Discussion and conclusion

Findings of the present research reveal that motivated students attend to the teacher with great enthusiasm, enjoy practicing and perseverance, and feel good about having a close relationship with their teacher. They do their best to gain a complete understanding of the lesson concepts in order to satisfy their teachers. With a little reflection, one can understand the effect of academic achievement motivation on students' self-differentiation. Students with high differentiation, like students with motivation for academic progress, are also aware of their emotions and are able to thoughtfully assess the situation. These students have the ability to grow independently in intimate relationships and can be in deep relationships, and keep their peace and comfort (Skowron and Dendy, 2004). As a result, students with high levels of motivation for academic progress and differentiation know their personality traits, which gives them an accurate perception of their abilities, which represents their high self-efficacy. In addition, since students with goal orientation use deep learning strategies and usually have internal goals and motivations, they show less anxiety in challenging learning situations. In the face of difficult tasks, they are more stable, do not give up easily and have a higher self-confidence (Gutman and Midgley, 2000). In such a structure, effort and progress are valuable, mistakes are considered a part of the learning process, and grades are not given much importance. Learners who have a learning orientation welcome challenging tasks and make a lot of effort to improve their skills and learning. Considering the effects of the orientation of progress goals on academic self-efficacy, it is suggested that administrators of exceptional schools have a structured plan to guide students' progress goals with the cooperation of teachers and parents. Also, based on the compiled theoretical foundations, it is possible to design an educational package to improve students' self-efficacy, which can be followed up through experimental research.

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