

Self-Efficacy, Self-Awareness and Parental Involvement as Determinants of Goal Setting Among the Adolescent Youth

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Abstract

This study endeavored to test how self-efficacy, self-awareness and parental involvement affected goal setting among the youth. The study was descriptive and comparative in design in that subjects were measured once and that the variables were compared between subjects in terms of gender. Purposive sampling was done to obtain a sample with adolescents only; the sample consisted of 148 youths, making 31.092 % of respondents all aging between 13 and 24 years. A questionnaire was constructed to test on self-efficacy, self-awareness and parental involvement as determinants of goal setting among the youth. The questionnaire had a reliability of 0.767. Mean ratings of the variables were compared in analysis of the descriptive information of the variables. Results of frequencies and mean comparisons were used to answer the first research question. ANOVA was done to determine whether there was a significant difference in the determinants of goal setting among the youth in terms of gender so as to answer the second question. To answer question three, Pearson correlation coefficient was determined. The results indicate that respondents bear perceived self-efficacy that can influence them positively in goal setting. While self-efficacy and self-awareness emanate from within an individual, parental involvement is an external factor. Nevertheless, among the three variables, it has the highest mean rating as a factor that influences goal setting among the adolescent youths. The study established that there is no significant difference in the determinants of goal setting between male and female youths. Another moderately positive relationship is observed between self-efficacy and parental involvement in goal setting among the youth.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, self-awareness, parental involvement, goal-setting, determinants

1.0 Introduction

As used in this article, a goal is what an individual is consciously trying to accomplish, goal setting involves establishing a goal and modifying it as necessary, and perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs concerning one's capabilities to attain designated levels of performance (Bandura, 1986, 1988). We form habits at early ages, and creating self-belief habits that foster self-efficacy can be encouraged by parents and influential teachers. If self-efficacy is established early on, the youth will be more likely to persevere in the face of adversity and attempt goals that may otherwise have been pushed aside (Pajares, 2006).

The effects of goals on behavior depend on their properties: specificity, proximity, and difficulty level (Bandura, 1988; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981). Goals incorporating specific performance standards are more likely to enhance learning and activate self-evaluations than general goals. Specific goals boost performance by greater specification of the amount of effort required for success and the self-satisfaction anticipated. Specific goals promote self-efficacy because progress is easy to gauge.

Proximal goals result in greater motivation than distant goals. It is easier to gauge progress toward a proximal goal, and the perception of progress raises self-efficacy. Proximal goals are especially influential with young children, who do not represent distant outcomes in thought.

Goal difficulty or the level of task proficiency required as assessed against a standard, influences the effort learners expend to attain a goal. Assuming requisite skills, individuals expend greater effort to attain difficult goals than when standards are lower. Learners initially may doubt whether they can attain difficult goals, but working toward them builds self-efficacy.

Goals are related to affect in that goals set the primary standard for self-satisfaction with performance. High, or hard, goals are motivating because they require one to attain more in order to be satisfied than do low, or easy, goals. Feelings of success in the workplace occur to the extent that people see that they are able to grow and meet job challenges by pursuing and attaining goals that are important and meaningful.

Previous research on goal choice showed that self-efficacy, past performance, and various social influences affect the level at which goals are set.

Wood & Bandura (1989) state that social cognition theory, based on a model of triadic reciprocal causation, emphasizes the interplay between behavior, environmental influences and personal subjective factors including cognition to explain human psychosocial functioning. The role of cognition - that aspect of our mental life involving conscious thought processes (including such key elements as reasoning, problem solving, decision making and evaluative judgments) - is given special emphasis within this conceptual framework. In a description of social cognitive theory, Bandura (1991) argues for the existence of central (cognitive) self-regulation processes which mediate experience and behavior. Bandura suggests that much of human behavior is regulated by forethought, allowing people to behave in a proactive fashion and engage in goal setting, thus channeling motivation. He considers this capacity of self-directedness to be mediated by self-reflective and self-reactive

capabilities which are in a state of constant interplay with environmental influences. It is from such self-reflective and self-reactive capabilities that self-efficacy beliefs are thought to emerge.

To date, self-efficacy has been discussed from the point of view of generative and dynamic influences and its association with performance. An important additional area to consider is the importance of goals - both personal and assigned - and their interaction with self-efficacy and performance. The operation of goals continues to be a central topic in motivation theory. In developing his motivation framework, Locke (1991) proposes that "goals affect action by affecting the intensity, duration, and direction of action", noting the well-documented validity of goal-setting theory. This process has significant implications for the human resource management process in terms of performance actualization.

Self-efficacy beliefs, as noted previously, influence the goals which people set for themselves (personal goals). Normally, however, in an organizational context, people must deal with pre-assigned goals, those goals which are related to productive activity in the workplace. Assigned goals provide a sense of direction and purpose, stimulate action and effort, serve as a standard on which performance capabilities can be measured, and serve as guidelines for developing a sense of efficacy.

The achievement of subgoals (proximal) leading towards major (distal) goals provides a sense of task mastery and competence, supporting the development of strong self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn lead to increased perseverance. Assigned goals influence personal goals through goal acceptance and commitment, and serve to establish normative expectations around which personal goals can evolve (Earley & Lituchy, 1991). The setting of assigned goals has an impact on self-efficacy. Goals which are set too high result in performance failure and can have a negative impact on self-efficacy and future performance, whereas goals which are easily attainable create a false sense of self-efficacy and lead to rapid discouragement in the face of failure. Taking self-efficacy beliefs into account, assigned goals which are challenging yet attainable are considered to lead both to the highest performance levels and conjointly to resilient self-efficacy beliefs (Gist, 1987).

Personal goals are determined in part by self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1991). Self-efficacy beliefs are suggested to influence the choice of, degree of challenge and commitment to personal goals. The interactive and ongoing relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and their influence on personal goal setting, self-evaluation of performance and feedback against such goals, and subsequent adjustment of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goals is a central mechanism ascribed to the self-regulation system of social cognitive theory. Enhanced self-efficacy beliefs lead to the setting of more challenging goals and diminished self-efficacy beliefs lead to more modest goal setting and a more realistic and attainable motivational framework.

1.1 Self-Awareness and Goal Setting

Metacognitive awareness may be defined as the process of using reflective thinking to develop awareness about one's own person, task, and strategy knowledge in a given context. Research findings have supported much of the theoretical speculation about metacognition (Biggs, 1985; Brown, 1978, 1987; Cullen, 1985; Garner, 1987; Kluwe, 1987; Markman, 1977; Miller, 1985; Miller & Bigi, 1976; Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983; Trower, 1980; Weinstein, Goetz, & Alexander, 1988). In general, metacognition has been shown to be

related to students' developmental maturation and domain expertise; conscious control of learning; ability to plan, monitor, and correct errors; transfer of rule learning; and ability to change their own learning behaviors (Brown, 1987).

An implicit assumption in much of the previous work on metacognition is that if students are metacognitively aware, they are also aware of their goals (e.g., Baker & Brown, 1984; Brown, Bransford, Ferrara, & Campione, 1984; Paris, Lipson, & Wixson, 1983). Researchers of goal-setting have also tended to assume that the act of goal-setting, in and of itself, will lead to assessing the task at hand and contemplating appropriate strategies in a metacognitive manner (e.g., Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Locke & Latham, 1990; Schunk & Gaa, 1981).

The suggestion that effective self-regulation is partially a function of explicit goals based on high levels of self-awareness is corroborated by Corno's (1986, 1989) work on the volitional aspects of self-regulated learning. Specifically, Corno suggests that the ability to actualize one's goals for learning, in the face of competing and/or debilitating personal and task-related factors, is a function of volitional resolve that grows with metacognitive awareness.

1.2 Parental Involvement in Goal Setting

Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggests that parenting, which is supportive and provides structure, should foster autonomous goal motivation and goal setting. In this vein, it has been hypothesized that parents' domain-specific support signals the importance of the career task which is likely to be internalized and be reflected in high levels of autonomous motivation (Eccles, 2007; Pomerantz et al., 2007).

Lack of engagement with the career task might also be shared between parents and adolescents (Dietrich et al., in press). As a consequence, those adolescents who admittedly have a career goal may attribute their career goal to the pressure of social norms that prescribe to have career plans with school graduation. In other words, controlled goal motivation is more likely to be the motivation behind their career goal setting. Moreover, it has been suggested that the availability of support can strengthen adolescents' expectations for success in the setting of their career goal (Eccles, 2009; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002), and carrying out goals together can lead to higher effort and progress.

Lack of parental engagement, however, indicates a lack of parental structure (see Farkas & Grolnick, 2010). Without clear guidelines, behavioral expectations, and task-focused feedback adolescents might experience themselves as ineffective in their goal pursuits (Farkas & Grolnick, 2010), reflected in lower attainability appraisals. Lack of structure could also hamper adolescents' ability to plan their goal setting (Farkas & Grolnick, 2010), which might lead to lower goal effort and progress. Finally, parental involvement might impact the strain associated with goal pursuit. One mechanism might be the affective nature of the involvement (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

Involvement can also be seen as a resource that makes it easier to strive for one's goal, which is then reflected in lower levels of goal-related stress (Salmela-Aro 2010). That is, where parents' lack of engagement is high, an important resource is missing and goal setting might be more stressful.

In this study, we consider the role of parents in directly shaping adolescent goal motivation and appraisals on the one hand. In line with ample evidence on the associations between parental involvement and adolescent outcomes in the achievement and career domains (see, e.g., Eccles, 2007; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Dietrich & Kracke, 2009), we expect that parental involvement will have a positive effect on autonomous goal motivation, higher goal attainability appraisals, effort, and progress.

2.0 Method

The purpose of this study was to test self-efficacy, self-awareness, parental involvement, and peer pressure as determinants of goal setting among the youth.

2.1 Research Design

The study was descriptive and comparative in design in that subjects were measured once and that the variables were compared between subjects in terms of gender. The design was also correlational, in that, the relationships between variables were determined (Stangor, 2014).

2.2 Population and Sampling Techniques

The target population was four hundred and seventy six youth members attending a youth seminar organized by a rural community in Eastern Kenya. Purposive sampling was done to obtain a sample with adolescents only; the sample consisted of 148 making 31.092 % of respondents all aging between 13 and 24 years. The respondents were secondary school students in forms two three and four since the research was done before form ones joined secondary school.

2.3 Research Instrument

A questionnaire was constructed to test on self-efficacy, self-awareness, parental involvement, and peer pressure as determinants of goal setting among the youth. The reliability of the questionnaire was found to be .745 but after deleting item under the stem 'parental involvement' number 7 that reads 'I wish my parents could be more positive about my talents' the reliability raised to .767. The nearer the Cronbach alpha value to one, the better the questionnaire (Alwaimi & Alkasah, 2014). This questionnaire was therefore good and reliable.

Before administration of the questionnaire, the respondents were addressed on what was expected of them, ethical issues, and the importance of the study. The questionnaire was administered to 157 respondents, out of which, 155 returned them completed. The return rate was 98.726 per cent. Nevertheless, during the process of data cleaning, nine questionnaires were rejected; hence 148 questionnaires were dealt with during data analysis.

2.4 Statistical Treatment of Data

After cleaning and organizing data it was entered into SPSS ready for analysis. Before recoding negatively stated statements, frequencies were obtained from data analysis. Then negatively stated statements were recorded. The recoded statements were; under the ‘self-awareness’ were SA3, SA6 and SA 11; those under the stem ‘parental involvement’ were PI7, PI8, and PI11. No statement was recoded under the stem ‘self-efficacy’. Mean ratings of the variables were compared in analysis of the descriptive information of the variables. Results of frequencies and mean comparisons were used to answer the first research question. ANOVA was done to determine whether there was a significant difference in the determinants of goal setting among the youth in terms of gender so as to answer the second question. To answer question three, Pearson correlation coefficient was determined.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Results are arranged according to research questions and hypotheses

The first research question was ‘what are the determinants of goal setting among the youth in terms of the following?’

- a) Perceived self-efficacy
- b) Self-awareness
- c) Parental involvement

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Efficacy	148	1.70	4.00	3.1743	.53492
Self-Awareness	148	1.75	4.00	3.0039	.44014
Parental Involvement	148	1.00	4.00	3.3200	.54240
Valid N (listwise)	148				

The three variables have average mean ratings $\mu=3.1743$ for self-efficacy, $\mu=3.0039$ for self-awareness, and $\mu= 3.3200$ for parental involvement. Analyses done in various studies on perceived self-efficacy among the youth have yielded average mean ratings (Shkullaku, 2013; Gardner, 2014). While some studies show the need for high perceived self-efficacy (Bandura & Locke, 2003), others suggest that too high or too low perceived self-efficacy can be a drawback when setting goals among the youth (Nichol, 2008; Tyugi & Misra, 2011). Therefore, respondents in this research bear perceived self-efficacy that can influence them positively in goal setting.

To Jain, Kumar, and Khanna (2013), the level of self-awareness among adolescents enables them to see where their thoughts and emotions take them. Average level of self-awareness may not be very good for goal setting among the youth, that is, efforts should be made to increase self-awareness among them as this marks the first step in goal setting (Hunt, 2011). An individual with high self- awareness understands what is best for him/her and is aware of the paths to follow to reach the goals. Studies have shown the effect of both self-efficacy and self- awareness on goal setting among the youth (Carroll, 2013; Jimoh & Oyerinde, 2013).

Journal of Applied Science

While self-efficacy and self-awareness emanate from within an individual, parental involvement is an external factor. Nevertheless, among the three variables, it has the highest mean rating as a factor that influences goal setting among the adolescent youths. When a comparison on the variables mean was done the following was obtained;

Table 2
Comparison of means

Parental Involvement

Brought Up By	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Both parents	3.3152	107	.54735
Mother Only	3.3693	32	.52092
Father Only	3.2020	9	.59920
Total	3.3200	148	.54240

The lowest mean comes from adolescents brought up by fathers only, followed by that of those brought up by both parents and the highest is obtained from those respondents brought up by mothers only as shown in table 2 above. Similar results were obtained by Baharudin et al (2010) who found that fathers who are single parents are slightly less goal oriented while dealing with their adolescent children than their female counterparts.

The second research question: Was there a significant difference in the determinants of goal setting among the youth in terms of gender?'

To answer this question, we tested if there was any significant difference in the determinants of goal setting among the youth in terms of gender.

Table 3
Independent samples test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Self-Efficacy	Equal variances assumed	1.673	.198	.377	146	.707	.03335	.08840	-.14136	.20806
	Equal variances not assumed			.381	145.938	.704	.03335	.08747	-.13952	.20622
Self-Awareness	Equal variances assumed	.275	.601	1.259	146	.210	.09110	.07238	-.05195	.23415
	Equal variances not assumed			1.268	145.894	.207	.09110	.07185	-.05089	.23309
Parental	Equal variances assumed	1.586	.210	-.997	146	.320	-.08911	.08938	-.26575	.08753

Journal of Applied Science

Involvement	Equal variances assumed	not			-1.012	145.062	.313	-.08911	.08808	-.26320	.08499
Peer Pressure	Equal variances assumed		.028	.868	-.646	146	.519	-.06317	.09777	-.25641	.13007
	Equal variances not assumed				-.646	143.639	.519	-.06317	.09772	-.25632	.12999

In table 3 above, all p values for the three variables are greater than the alpha value ($\alpha = .05$). $p = .707$ for self-efficacy, $p = .210$ for self-awareness and $p = .320$ for parental involvement. Therefore, the hypothesis above is accepted confirming that there is no significant difference in the determinants of goal setting between male and female youths. Similar observations have been made by other researchers on similar perceptions between male and female respondents on self-awareness, self-efficacy, and parental involvement (Yazachew, 2013; Shkullaku, 2013; Gardner, 2014). While studying relationship between self-efficacy, academic achievement and gender, Yazachew (2013) observes that both male and female students have similar self-efficacy, they differ in academic achievement.

Question three asks: Is there a significant relationship between determinants of goal setting among the youth?

HO: There is no significant relationship between determinants of goal setting among the youth

Table 3
Correlations
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

		Self-Efficacy	Self-Awareness	Parental Involvement
Self-Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	1	.542**	.404**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	148	148	148
Self-Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.542**	1	.292**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	148	148	148
Parental Involvement	Pearson Correlation	.404**	.292**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	148	148	148

There is a moderate positive relationship between self-efficacy and self-awareness (r=.542). This is consistent with a study done by Sahar and Abas (2012) whose Pearson correlation shows a moderately positive relationship between self-awareness and self-efficacy (r=.7) though the relationship is slightly stronger than that of this study. Jimoh and Oyerinde (2013) reveal a strong relationship between self-efficacy and emotional knowledge (self-awareness) (r=.996).

Another moderately positive relationship is observed between self-efficacy and parental involvement in goal setting among the youth (r=.404). On a different note, the study by Jimoh and Oyerinde (2013) reveals a strong relationship between self-efficacy and parental involvement (r=.994). As explained by Jimoh and Oyerinde (2013), parental involvement

greatly determines goal setting behaviors among the youth. Most other studies are consistent with this finding in this study; that a positive relationship exists between self-efficacy and parental involvement (Gardner, 2009; Caroll et al, 2013). Another weak positive relationship is established between self-awareness and parental involvement ($r=.292$).

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As revealed in this study, self- efficacy, self- awareness, and parental involvement are important factors that influence goal setting among adolescent youths. According to the respondents, these factors affect the way they set their goals in life. From the findings, respondents bear average levels of self- efficacy and self- awareness, which are favorable for effective goal setting. The respondents are therefore good in setting their goals in life. Parents' involvement in goal setting of the respondents was found to be average. Male and female adolescents were found to have similar levels of self- efficacy, self- awareness, and parental involvement. Further, the three determinants of goal setting among adolescent youths were found to be correlated. Moderate relationships were established between self- efficacy and self- awareness and between self- efficacy and parental involvement. The relationship was found to be weak between self- awareness and parental involvement.

This study is suggestive, as such; it recommends new avenues of research to investigate same or similar variables using urban adolescent youths.

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