



**Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development**

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOAL ORIENTATION AND  
ACADEMIC EFFICACY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

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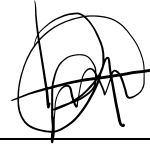
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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOAL ORIENTATION AND  
ACADEMIC EFFICACY ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

DZALIQHA ATHIRAH BINTI PENDEK

This project is submitted  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a  
Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK  
(2022)

The project entitled '**The Relationship between Goal Orientation and Academic Efficacy on Academic Performance**' was prepared by **Dzaliqha Athirah binti Pendek (72199)** and submitted to the Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed 1) to examine the relationship between goal orientation and academic performance, 2) to examine the relationship between academic efficacy and goal orientation, and 3) to examine the relationship between academic efficacy and academic performance. A sample of 60 UNIMAS Psychology students participated in the study, consisting of 18 males and 42 females. Participants completed questionnaires to assess their goal orientation and academic efficacy, both of which were adapted from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning (PALS) scale. Meanwhile, grade point average was used to measure academic performance. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between goal orientation and academic performance. However, there is a significant correlation noted between goal orientation and academic efficacy. Further correlation analysis found only mastery orientation significantly correlates with academic efficacy, while other orientations do not. The last findings showed that academic efficacy had a significant relationship with academic performance and was found to be the only significant predictor of academic performance, out of all variables. The current study provides additional insights on the area goal orientation and academic efficacy and its relationship with academic performance in the context of Malaysian educational settings. Implications of the study and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

*Keywords:* Goal Orientation, Academic Efficacy, Academic Performance.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan 1) untuk mengkaji hubungan antara orientasi matlamat dan prestasi akademik, 2) untuk mengkaji hubungan antara efikasi akademik dan orientasi matlamat, dan 3) untuk mengkaji hubungan antara efikasi akademik dan prestasi akademik. Sampel kajian merupakan 60 pelajar Psikologi UNIMAS yang terdiri daripada 18 lelaki dan 42 perempuan. Para peserta melengkapkan soal selidik untuk menilai orientasi matlamat dan efikasi akademik mereka, di mana kedua-duanya telah diadaptasi daripada skala Patterns of Adaptive Learning (PALS). Manakala, purata mata gred digunakan untuk menggambarkan prestasi akademik. Data dianalisis dengan statistik deskriptif dan analisis regresi linear berganda. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tiada hubungan yang signifikan antara orientasi matlamat dan prestasi akademik. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat kaitan yang signifikan diperhatikan antara orientasi matlamat dan efikasi akademik. Analisis korelasi lanjut mendapati hanya orientasi penguasaan mempunyai kaitan signifikan dengan efikasi akademik, manakala orientasi lain tidak. Dapatan terakhir menunjukkan bahawa efikasi akademik mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan prestasi akademik dan didapati sebagai satu-satunya peramal signifikan untuk prestasi akademik, daripada semua pembolehubah yang dinyatakan. Kajian semasa memberikan pandangan tambahan tentang topik orientasi matlamat dan efikasi akademik serta hubungannya dengan prestasi akademik dalam konteks pendidikan Malaysia. Implikasi kajian dan cadangan untuk kajian akan datang turut dibincangkan.

*Kata kunci:* Orientasi Matlamat, Efikasi Akademik, Prestasi Akademik.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

As students decide to further their studies and progress to a higher educational level, academic performance holds a significant role in students' life. In the pursuit of educational goals, students may encounter highly competitive academic settings and are put under constant performance evaluation. It is inevitable that students experience academic pressure and expect themselves to enhance personal learning experience and academic performance.

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

According to Mansfield et al. (2004, as cited in Kassaw & Astatke, 2017), the identification of contributing aspects to students' academic performance can be significant as it aids in intervening for the improvement of students' educational attainment in higher education. As such, the inquiries to improve academic performance and identify underlying factors that may predict academic achievement have been conducted for decades. Among the myriad of factors, one of the most notable contributors to academic performance is motivation, as motivation is intimately related with learning, and most learning is motivated (Schunk, 2012). Schunk further elaborated that motivation refers to the process of stimulating and maintaining goal-directed behaviour. However, the level of one's motivation cannot be the sole determinant in providing explanation regarding the learner's behaviour and performance. Thus, recent studies have begun shifting their focus onto a relatively new

theory of human motivation, which is known as goal orientation. Anderman et al. (2002) theorized that goal orientation is referred to as students' motives for performing academic related tasks. Goal orientation also offers prediction of students' academic success (Nasiri et al., 2017). Another remarkable factor that may predict academic performance is academic efficacy. Many previous studies suggest a strong correlation between academic efficacy and academic performance (e.g. Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Honicke and Broadbent further declared that higher levels of academic efficacy are more likely to lead to improved academic achievement.

In the process, students develop academic goals that may include the orientation of goals, whether to excel in examinations, do better than others, or comprehend a concept. Coupled with that, students' perceived capabilities of completing academic tasks may be essential in improving students' learning experience and academic achievement. Putting into perspective, the variables goal orientation and academic efficacy can be used to predict and justify one's academic performance. Students' choice of goal orientation may influence the learners' learning tendencies, actions and responses regarding students' academic goals as well as towards the learning content (Nasiri et al., 2017). At the same time, academic efficacy reflects personal belief in students' own capabilities for learning and performing academic tasks. Thus, this may dictate how much confidence the students carry and the amount of effort the students have to exert in order to accomplish learning and assignments.

In goal orientation theory, several types of orientation have been identified by researchers. Most research addresses three types of goal orientation (trichotomous framework); mastery orientation, performance orientation and lastly performance-avoidance approach. As an example, a student may have set their goals to achieve grade

A in every class with the possibility of these reasons; the students want to have a better achievement than their classmates or the students genuinely gear towards mastering the course content. To explain, students with mastery orientation display their interests in developing competence and improving skills and knowledge (Ames in Schunk, 2012). Schunk (2012) added that because this orientation is learning-oriented, behaviour and attention of the learner will be fixated on aspects essential for learning. On the contrary, performance orientation mainly emphasizes on demonstrating competence to obtain recognition from others. As it is performance-oriented, students focus more on getting better achievements than others to appear competent and consequently gain social approval. Another type of goal orientation is performance-avoidance approach, where the learner rather protects their self-worth and avoid appearing incompetent by minimizing efforts (Al-Harthy & Was, 2013). For instance, the learners may reduce their efforts in quizzes or appear uninterested in tasks so as to not be deemed less capable than their peers.

Aside from goal orientation, another variable that will be studied in this research is academic efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to one's perception about their capabilities to learn or accomplish tasks at designated levels (Bandura in Schunk, 2012). In academic context, self-efficacy reflects one's judgment of self-confidence in their capabilities of performing academic tasks. One might question why this is included as one of the variables in the research. The reason being is that self-efficacy influences motivation and achievement (Schunk, 2012). Self-efficacy also has a nature of being situationally specific (Schunk, 2012), that is students may perceive their capabilities differently in various settings. Thus, students who believe they can perform better and have

knowledge of the learning may be more motivated to accomplish given academic tasks and vice versa.

The variables goal orientation and academic efficacy can be used to predict and justify one's academic performance (Nasiri et al., 2017). In a sense, academic efficacy reflects one's belief of their own capabilities for learning and performing academic tasks, whether students' efforts and knowledge will produce fruitful outcomes or otherwise. Academic efficacy also influences one's choice of academic activities (Schunk, 2012). People are capable of regulating their behaviour and controlling their actions in response to achieving personal goals (Nabavi, 2012), and in this case, academic goals. As students practice self-regulatory processes, students develop behaviours that steer them in the direction of attaining desired academic goals, which consequently influences students' sense of academic efficacy. Schunk (2012) also elaborated that students that doubt themselves may avoid attempting academic tasks, whereas those with high academic efficacy tend to participate eagerly in learning and persist in the face of difficulties. Given the students' judgment of academic efficacy, this then may be translated into their choice of goal orientation. Students' confidence in learning and their grasp of academic concepts may influence students' goal orientation, whether it can be learning-oriented, performance-oriented or performance-avoidance oriented. Thus, the most common pattern observed in regards to academic efficacy, goal orientation and academic achievement is that students with higher academic efficacy spend greater efforts in learning and accomplishing tasks, persevere when they encounter a difficulty (Schunk, 2012), have higher academic aspiration (Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992) and are more mastery-oriented (e.g. Suprayogi et al., 2019).



## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Academic performance has been the benchmark of academic attainment and progress through all educational levels. Students get competitive and desire to achieve the standards they have set for themselves. However, the research conducted on goal orientation theory and its relationship with academic performance are found to yield inconsistent findings from past research. More so, these inconsistencies are observed in all three domains of goal orientation framework in regard to their correlation with academic performance. For example, the mastery orientation, which is generally associated with adaptive learning strategies (Schunk, 2012) and positive characteristics of learning, has even generated a non-significant result (Neroni et al., 2018). In addition, while goal orientation research has been conducted worldwide (e.g. Ahmad et al., 2020; Obura, 2019), there is limited studies done about the validation of the topic in the context of Malaysian education settings. In conclusion, it is hoped that this research can contribute to the existing body of research regarding goal orientation, academic efficacy, and its relationship with academic performance in the context of Malaysian education.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

### **1.3.1 General objectives**

The general objectives of the research are as follows:

- a) To identify the level of academic efficacy of UNIMAS students
- b) To identify the type of goal orientation that students adopted and their relationship with students' academic performance
- c) To analyze the relationship between goal orientation and academic efficacy on academic performance

### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

- a) To examine the relationship between goal orientation (Mastery, Performance and Performance Avoidance) and academic performance
- b) To examine the relationship between academic efficacy and goal orientation (Mastery, Performance and Performance Avoidance)
- c) To examine the relationship between academic efficacy and academic performance

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are:

- a) Is there any significant relationship between goal orientation groups (Mastery, Performance and Performance Avoidance) and academic performance?
- b) Is there any significant relationship between goal orientation groups (Mastery, Performance and Performance Avoidance) and academic efficacy?
- c) Is there any significant relationship between academic efficacy and academic performance?

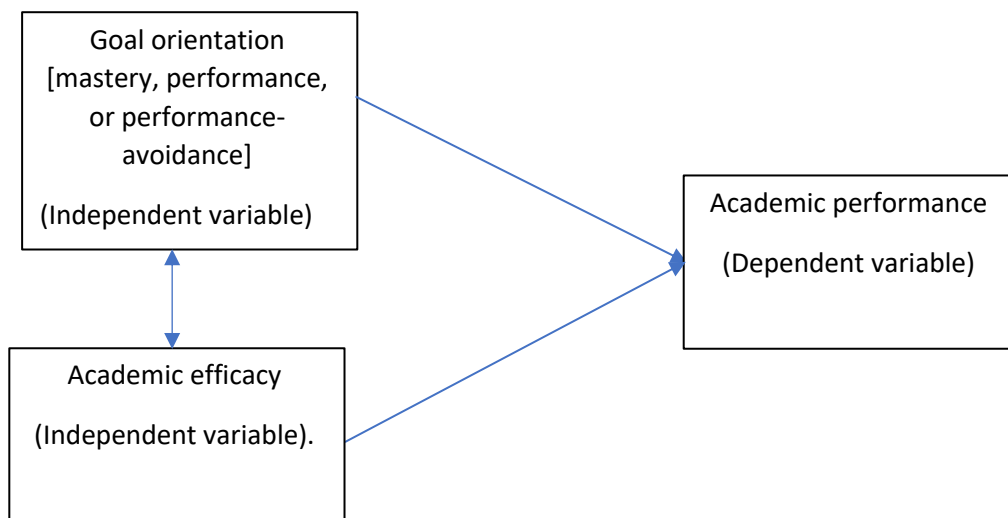
### **1.5 Research Hypotheses**

The hypotheses formulated for this study are:

- a) There is a significant relationship between goal orientation groups (Mastery, Performance and Performance Avoidance) and academic performance

- b) There is a significant relationship between goal orientation groups (Mastery, Performance and Performance Avoidance) and academic efficacy
- c) There is a significant relationship between academic efficacy and academic performance

### 1.6 Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study between goal orientation, academic efficacy and academic performance*

Different types of goals can influence behaviour in achievement situations (eg: Anderman & Wolters, 2006, cited in Schunk, 2012). Thus, depending on goal orientation, students' level of knowledge attainment and retention may differ which then is translated into students' academic performance. In terms of academic efficacy, students who feel competent about learning generally expend greater effort and persist longer than students who doubt their capabilities, especially when they encounter difficulties. In turn, these behaviours promote learning which may then improve academic performance (Schunk, 2012). With such information, it may be possible that

the interaction between goal orientation and academic efficacy will also influence the students' academic performance. For example, Suprayogi et al. (2019) found that high academic efficacy is generally positively correlated with mastery orientation, which then positively affects academic performance.

### **1.7 Significance of Study**

This research highlights the study of academic efficacy and goal orientation along with their effects on students' academic performance. To date, this research area is more concentrated and focused in other parts of the world and not so much in Malaysia. Hence, the findings of this study will serve as an additional resource to the currently existing yet limited resource available in Malaysia, and especially in Sarawak. Furthermore, a comparison with other literatures can be made whether the theory of goal orientation in the context of Malaysian educational settings and culture can be validated or rather provides otherwise research finding. If there is a significant relationship between the variables, then an approach to improving academic performance could be made based on goal orientation theory and ways to increase academic efficacy. The learning techniques and content should be revised and adapted to heighten academic efficacy while also promoting an effective goal orientation adaptation among students which may aid in improving students' academic performance.

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

### **1.8.1 Academic efficacy**

**Conceptual Definition:** Academic efficacy refers to personal beliefs about one's ability to learn and perform academic tasks at a certain level (Bandura in Schunk, 2012). Academic efficacy is displayed in the way that students evaluate their intrapersonal skills that may be useful in academic settings, and their capabilities to utilize these skills into achieving academic success. While it is important that one knows what to do, academic efficacy reflects the individual's attitude towards what they are capable of doing (Schunk, 2012). For example, a student may avoid undertaking a project that is beyond the scope of their skills and knowledge. This may be because they doubt their capabilities to perform the project successfully.

**Operational Definition:** In this study, students' academic efficacy will be measured by the academic efficacy subscale adopted from Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley et al., 2000). It will assess students' perception of their competence to perform academic assignments through their evaluation in the Likert scale.

### **1.8.2 Goal Orientation**

**Conceptual Definition:** Goal orientation theory explains how the type of goal the student practices influence their learning engagement and approach towards achieving the goal (Svinicki, 2005). Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy in McCollum and Kajs (2007) further described goal orientation as students' expectation regarding their goals (i.e., specific, desired product) and why the goals are significant to them. There are 3 most common types of goal orientations; mastery, performance, and performance-avoidance

orientation. For example, a student may fulfill their academic assignments because they are genuinely interested in learning (mastery oriented).

**Operational Definition:** The nature of this component is to analyze whether the student applies mastery goal orientation, performance or performance-avoidance orientation. The finding of their goal orientation may explain their learning approach and consequently predict their academic performance. Students' goal orientation will be evaluated through the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) as well (Midgley et al., 2000).

### **1.8.3 Academic performance**

**Conceptual Definition:** Academic performance refers to a student's level of achievement in terms of academic work. Academic accomplishment is influenced by a student's ability to adapt to their circumstances, intelligence, aptitude, and the intensity of their impulses and motives, which serve as the driving force behind their actions (Alam, 2018). Academic performance, according to Trow, as cited in Alam (2018), is defined as the ability to acquire knowledge and the degree of competence regarding school duties as measured by grades or scores gained through standardized examinations.

**Operational Definition:** As previous research have stated, students' academic performance can be influenced by their goal orientation. Academic performance is an essential component in this study to observe whether a certain type of goal orientation is more beneficial or there is a conflicting finding where there is no relationship between goal orientation and academic performance. In this case, academic performance will be measured through students' latest GPA.

## **1.9 Summary**

This chapter provides the background of the research and justifies the importance of exploration regarding goal orientation and academic efficacy as predictors of academic performance, especially in the Malaysian education settings. The chapter also elaborates the significant components of the research such as research objectives, research questions, hypotheses and terms definition. The conceptual framework of the research is also briefly discussed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The study of goal orientation has grown gradually since the past few decades after its emergence under the social-cognitive theory as well as in educational psychology. However, there is a lack of research done in the context of Malaysian education settings. The literature review will explore goal orientation theory and academic efficacy concept while also discussing the relationship between the two independent variables on academic performance.

#### 2.1 Goal Orientation

##### 2.1.1 Goal Orientation Theory

Goal orientation theory illustrates a relatively new conception of motivation. According to Anderman et al. (2002), goal orientation represents students' motives in terms of students' engagement with academic tasks. Students' choice of goal orientation towards their education may dictate the learners' learning tendencies, actions and responses in learning circumstances (Nasiri et al., 2017). Different goal orientation may foster different response patterns and outcomes. Students' goal orientation tendencies may influence students' behaviour and attitudes towards academic activities, which subsequently shape the learners' strategies and approach towards learning. In recent years, more research has distinguished goal orientation into a few types of framework; dichotomy framework, three-goal framework, four-goal framework, and five-goal framework. For the present study, the well-known three-goal framework adopted from Elliot and Harackiewicz (1996), also generally coined as the