

The Role of Academic Motivation and Mastery Goals in Shaping Adolescent Aspirations

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Abstract

This study explores the predictive role of academic motivation and mastery goal orientation in shaping adolescents' work expectations, within the broader context of ecological and personal factors. Drawing on a sample of 193 Greek students (mean age 13.7 years, 56.5% girls), we employed a cross-sectional quantitative design using validated psychometric scales. Correlational analyses revealed strong, positive associations between students' work expectation scores and both motivation ($\rho = .75$, $p < .001$) and mastery goal orientation ($\rho = .74$, $p < .001$). Multiple linear regression analyses confirmed that motivation and mastery goals were the most powerful predictors of students' occupational aspirations, explaining 69% of the variance ($R^2 = .69$) in the total sample. These associations remained robust across both junior and senior high school subgroups. The findings highlight the central role of internal motivational processes over demographic or contextual variables in shaping students' perceived futures. Implications are discussed for school-based career education, early guidance interventions, and policies aimed at fostering adaptive goal-setting in adolescence.

Keywords: academic motivation, mastery goal orientation, adolescent aspirations, work expectations, educational psychology, greek students