

College Students' Attachment styles and Achievement goals:

The Mediating Effects of Academic Self-concept

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Abstract: Achievement goals have been demonstrated to influence students' achievement-related motivational, affective, cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Moller & Elliot, 2006). Meanwhile, both personal and environmental factors have been identified to be the underlying sources of achievement goals. In the hierarchical model of achievement motivation (Elliot, 1999, 2006), attachment styles and self-concept are supposed to be a relationally based, and a self-based variable of achievement goals, respectively. However, rare studies have examined how attachment style and self-concept are related to achievement goals, particularly the possible mediating role in the relationship between attachment and achievement goals, considering the significant association between self-concept and attachment (e. g. Nishikawa, Hägglöf & Sundbom, 2010). Given that no study has examined the influence of both parent-child attachment and academic self-concept on achievement goals based on the 2×2 achievement goal framework (Elliot & McGregor, 2001), particularly the mediating role of academic self-concept in the relationship between attachment styles and achievement goals, the present study has two objectives. First, it was to investigate the prediction of four achievement goals from both parent-child attachment and academic self-concept. Second, this study investigated whether the relationship between parent-child attachment and achievement goals will be mediated by academic self-concept.

One hundred and eighty-seven university students from three universities in Nanjing (males = 108 and females = 79) voluntarily participated in the study, with a mean age of 21.66 (SD= 1.24) years. Participants' achievement goals, parent-child attachment, and academic self-concept were measured by Achievement Goal Measure - Revised (AGM-R), Descriptions of Parental Caregiving Style (DPCS), and the academic self-concept subscale of Multidimensional Self Concept Scale (MSCS). Results showed that: after the demographical factors were controlled, mother-child secure attachment and academic self-concept were positive predictors of mastery-approach goals. Father-child secure attachment was positive predictors of mastery-avoidance goals. Mother-child secure and father-child avoidant attachment were positive predictors of performance-approach goals. Father-child anxious and mother-child avoidant attachment were positive predictors of performance-avoidance goals, while academic self-concept significantly and negatively predicted performance-avoidance goals. Moreover, academic self-concept played a part mediating role in the relationship between father-child anxious attachment and performance-avoidance goals. Academic self-concept played a full mediating role in the relationship between mother-child avoidant attachment and performance-avoidance goals. Results may have heuristic values to the cultivation of adaptive achievement goals among Chinese university students.