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Investigating the Effective Factors on Students' Academic Engagement through the Schools of Idealism, Realism and Pragmatism

Yusef Farmani[1], Sharareh Habibi[1*], Mehdi Kelantari[1]

1. Department of Educational Management, Rodehen Branch, Islamic Azad University, Rodehen, Iran

* Corresponding author's Email: habibishararh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Academic engagement is a multidimensional structure that consists of various behavioral, cognitive and motivational components. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting students' academic engagement through the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism. The research method was descriptive-correlational and a researcher-made questionnaire based on the qualitative stage of the research was used to collect data. The statistical population of the study included all high school students in districts one and two of education in Urmia, Iran. The research sample was selected by stratified random sampling. Accordingly, 440 students (220 people from each education district) were randomly selected and answered the research questionnaires. Data were analyzed using statistical method of structural equation modeling in LISREL software. The reliability of the developed questionnaire was estimated to be 0.95, which indicated its optimal reliability. Also, based on the results of confirmatory factor analysis and standard factor loads, the measures of the latent variables of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism had a positive factor load that supported the validity of the measures in measuring the structure. As a result, the factor structure of the questionnaire for these variables could be confirmed. In general, the research findings supported the measurement of the structure of academic engagement through the educational schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism. Therefore, the questionnaire can be used to measure academic engagement through educational schools in research and educational contexts.

Keywords: Academic engagement, idealism, realism, pragmatism, confirmatory factor analysis.

Introduction

Educational systems are always looking for factors that affect the academic performance of learners because the growth and development of any society depends on the educational system of that society and guarantees the educational performance of the new generation. Recognizing the factors affecting students' academic performance and motivation creates an appropriate approach to planning educational programs so that the best possible results can be achieved both for the desired educational development and for the students. These factors are many and varied, but one of the most important things that is necessary for learners to learn is academic motivation. While there is considerable evidence of a link between academic motivation and academic performance, less attention has been paid to academic motivation. Academic engagement is defined as the psychological capital of students and their direct efforts to learn and acquire skills and the desire to improve the level of success, which leads to effective participation in school activities, participation in class activities, adaptation to school culture, good relationship with teachers and other students.

Review of research background in the field of academic motivation, while emphasizing the role of various factors on academic motivation such as academic optimism, school well-being, and the

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structure of classroom goals, underscores the undeniable need for a methodical study of this conceptual domain. Therefore, it seems necessary to study the antecedents and factors that create academic motivation, because recognizing the antecedents of academic motivation can both prevent the consequences of failure in the educational environment, and it leads to, by relying on this information and using appropriate methods, a pleasant learning environment for learners.

Academic engagement is a structure that was first proposed to understand and explain academic failure that has been considered as a basis for reformist efforts in the field of education (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). McCain (2017) interpreted academic motivation as the performance of cognitive intelligence and perseverance and participation in purposeful group learning. According to psychological levels, it has been reported that academic engagement means the student's engagement for his/her lessons in school, and it is defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to his / her academic experiences" (Austin, 1991).

Academic engagement can play an explanatory role in academic burnout by influencing other motivational processes of learners. Accordingly, it can be argued that engagement leads to positive relationships with peers, acceptance among peers, social adjustment, and self-efficacy in problem solving and education which has positive psychological and social consequences and will affect academic achievement. On the other hand, low engagement along with reduced self-efficacy and decreased academic motivation leads to learners' reluctance to learn, academic goals and burnout (Stoeber, Childs, Hayward, & Feast, 2011). This concept has been the focus of a large number of researchers in educational settings in recent years (Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002; Perkmann, Salandra, Tartari, McKelvey, & Hughes, 2021). The construct of academic motivation in school also refers to behaviors that are related to learning and academic achievement (Pintrich, 2003). This concept refers to the quality of the effort that students spend on purposeful educational activities to play a direct role in achieving the desired results (Schunk, 1991).

The structure of academic motivation in most studies has been divided into three types: behavioral, cognitive and emotional. There is little research on the effect of emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement on academic burnout and well-being. In a study, Cadime et al. (2016) showed that emotional engagement is associated with school burnout, academic well-being and psychological well-being. In a study by Wang and Fredricks (2014), overall school engagement negatively predicted academic failure. Students who attended classes regularly focused on learning topics, adhered to school rules, scored high overall, and performed better on standardized academic achievement tests. In the research of Mahmodiyan, Abbasi, Pirani, and Shahali Kaborani (2018), emotional engagement had the most negative relationship with academic burnout. Hashemizade Nahi and Mahdiyan (2018) in a study showed that there was a positive and significant relationship between academic engagement and blossoming with positive academic emotions. Also, the results of multiple regression showed that 48% of the total variance of academic emotions was explained by academic engagement and blossom, among which the bliss variable had the greatest effect on academic excitement, and therefore by

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strengthening academic engagement and blossoming, there is a possibility that positive emotion increases students' education.

Sadipour (2017) Showed that the mindfulness training program strengthened working memory and increased students' academic engagement compared to the control group. However, there was no significant difference between work memory and academic engagement in terms of the effectiveness of mindfulness training and it was concluded that mindfulness training program has a significant effect on strengthening working memory and students' academic engagement.

Rihani (2018) in a study examined the mediating role of social cognition in the relationship between intelligence beliefs and academic engagement. According to the results, there was a significant correlation between IQ beliefs. Incremental belief in intelligence had direct effects on energy dimensions and academic engagement, but innate belief in intelligence had no significant effect on any of the research variables. The results of path analysis indicated the significance of the mediating role of social cognition in the relationship between intelligence beliefs and academic engagement. In general, this study showed that social cognition and intelligence beliefs are two of the main factors for examining academic engagement.

One of the basic concepts of the philosophy of education is the application of philosophical views in educational issues. By studying philosophical schools, we not only become acquainted with the thoughts of philosophers and thinkers of education throughout history, but also learn how to apply philosophical ideas and use the thoughts and ideas of thinkers of education in a desirable way. Among the goals of the philosophical school of idealism are the strengthening of intellectual power to understand another truth, the creation of a spirit of humanity, morality and community service, and the development of personality and the modification of physical activity (Kelly, 2010). In the section of “artistic taste" goals, the main purpose of teaching idealism is to create and develop aesthetic taste in students (Fuss, 1968). The belief is that God is the manifestation of beauty; therefore, art should make students aware of him and the realities of the universe. Through art education, students' emotional development becomes possible and their instincts are moderated. In the section of moral goals, the main goal of teaching idealism is to understand moral values and observe moderation in students' talents (Mirzamohammadi, Elieen, & Hassani, 2008). It is believed that general moral laws are all-encompassing and fixed, and their source is God, so the goal of education should be to follow God (Mirzamohammadi et al., 2008). Attention to truth and correctness and spiritual and lasting pleasures are the sub-goals of idealism education. In the section of rational goals, the main goal of teaching idealism is to reach pure truths (ideas) through thinking and applying them in life (Mirzamohammadi et al., 2008). Following other human powers, namely anger and lust, from the intellect to reach perfection, establishing a connection between the individual mind and the absolute mind, establishing inner order and creating peace and hope in life are other goals of rational education in the school of idealism (Mirzamohammadi et al., 2008).

The purpose of education from the point of view of realists is naturally within the material world and the preparation of children and adolescents to adapt to this world. According to realists, children

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should learn a healthy and happy life and the purpose of education should be confronting with the realities of life and people should be born who think clearly and correctly and have good morals and a healthy body (Sajjadi, 1997). Accordingly, the goals of education are:

1- Cultivating the power of intellect, i.e., the highest human power through the study of organized disciplines of science and knowledge;

2- Encouraging human beings to define themselves by formulating their choices in a rational way, to flourish themselves by actualizing their talents for maximum perfection and to integrate themselves by arranging various roles and demands of life according to rational order and dynasty.

It studies human and environmental pragmatism in relation to each other. According to this view, man cannot be considered subjugated by events and destiny and he is considered a compelled being. On the other hand, human beings are not completely free in their activities. Humans and the environment affect each other. Man is not completely in control of the environment, nor does he subjugate the human environment. The intellectual aspects of human life enable him to guide changes and developments in the scientific and social fields. Man is not like a machine and his behavior cannot be predicted, but at the same time, he does not have absolute freedom. In the section of "physical" goals of education in the school of pragmatism, we can mention the growth and health of the body. Physical education in this school is related to social education. Through playing with each other, students strengthen their sense of group life and consider it as a ground for performing social tasks during adolescence. In the section on the artistic goals of "taste", the teaching of pragmatism can be mentioned to satisfy the emotional needs and cultivate aesthetic taste in students. Developing communication skills, creating a sense of optimism for the future and the prevailing moral values and paying attention to the principles researched in moral and aesthetic judgments and free expression of thoughts and building self-confidence in students are other goals of art education in the school of pragmatism. In the field of moral goals, the development of the spirit of democracy and the importance of freedom are the main educational goals of pragmatism. Applying rational and useful researched rules and behaviors in the society, experiencing the ethical process by the individual, cultivating self-governing individuals and creating maximum benefit for individuals based on collective wisdom are other goals of moral education in the school of pragmatism. In the section of rational goals, enabling students to reason and judge correctly and solve problems is the most important educational goal of pragmatism. Creating an effective relationship with the environment and influencing it and using reason to predict certain effects and results and controlling the situation are other goals of education in the school of pragmatism (Denzin, 1996).

Based on the results of previous studies and examining the goals and implications of philosophical schools in education, in the present study, the effective factors on students' academic engagement through the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism have been studied and the structure of academic engagement has been generalized according to philosophical schools.

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Material and Method

The research method was descriptive-correlational, using structural equation modeling to analyze the data. The statistical population of the study included 30833 students in the second year of high school in Urmia, which includes all three branches of theory, skills, technical and professional. The sample was selected through stratified random sampling. Before completing the questionnaires, the informed consent form was completed by the participants and they were given the necessary explanations about their right to withdraw from the research at any stage. The research tool was a researcher-made questionnaire that consisted of 19 questions with a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of this questionnaire was calculated by Cronbach's alpha method as 0.95 which indicated its optimal reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling and LISREL software were also used to fit the model.

Results

Confirmatory factor analysis (standard estimation) of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism is presented in Figure 1. The standard factor of confirmatory factor analysis is the strength of the relationship between the variables of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism with its observable variables and evaluates. Based on the standard factor loads of the hidden variables of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism, the measures of these variables have a positive factor load that has supported the validity of the measures in measuring the structure. Therefore, the factor structure of the questionnaire for these variables can be confirmed. The results of the relationships between the measures with the structure are shown in Figure 1.

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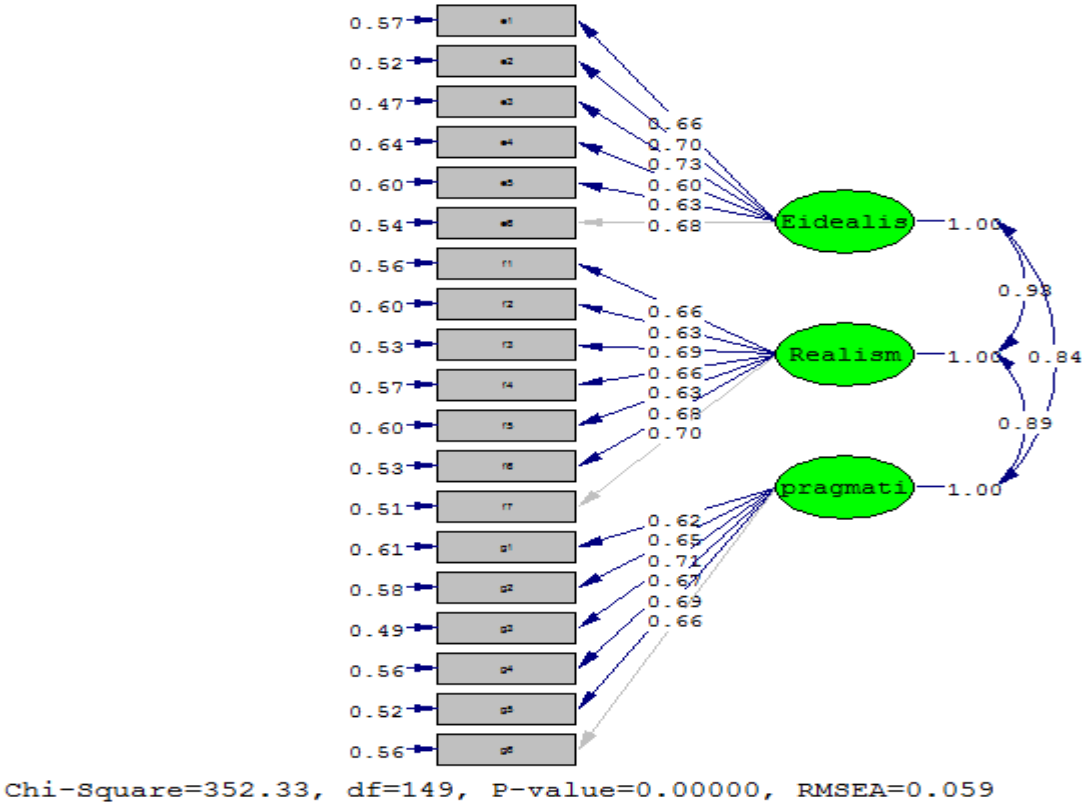


Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (beta coefficients) of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism in the standard estimation mode

After calculating the standard factor load, a significant test should be performed. In fact, the model of significant numbers is presented to know whether the relationship between hidden variables (structures of schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism) and observable variables is significant or not. Figure 2 shows the model of significant numbers or T-Value, the significance of the relationship between each of their observable variables (questionnaire items) at the 95% confidence level, and if its value is less than the absolute value of 1.96. It means that the relevant group is not able to measure its variable. Therefore, according to the results of confirmatory factor analysis and a significant number of items, it can be concluded that all items of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism have a positive factor load and the value of t is calculated more. It is 1.96 and. It indicates the validity of the items in measuring the structures of the educational schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism.

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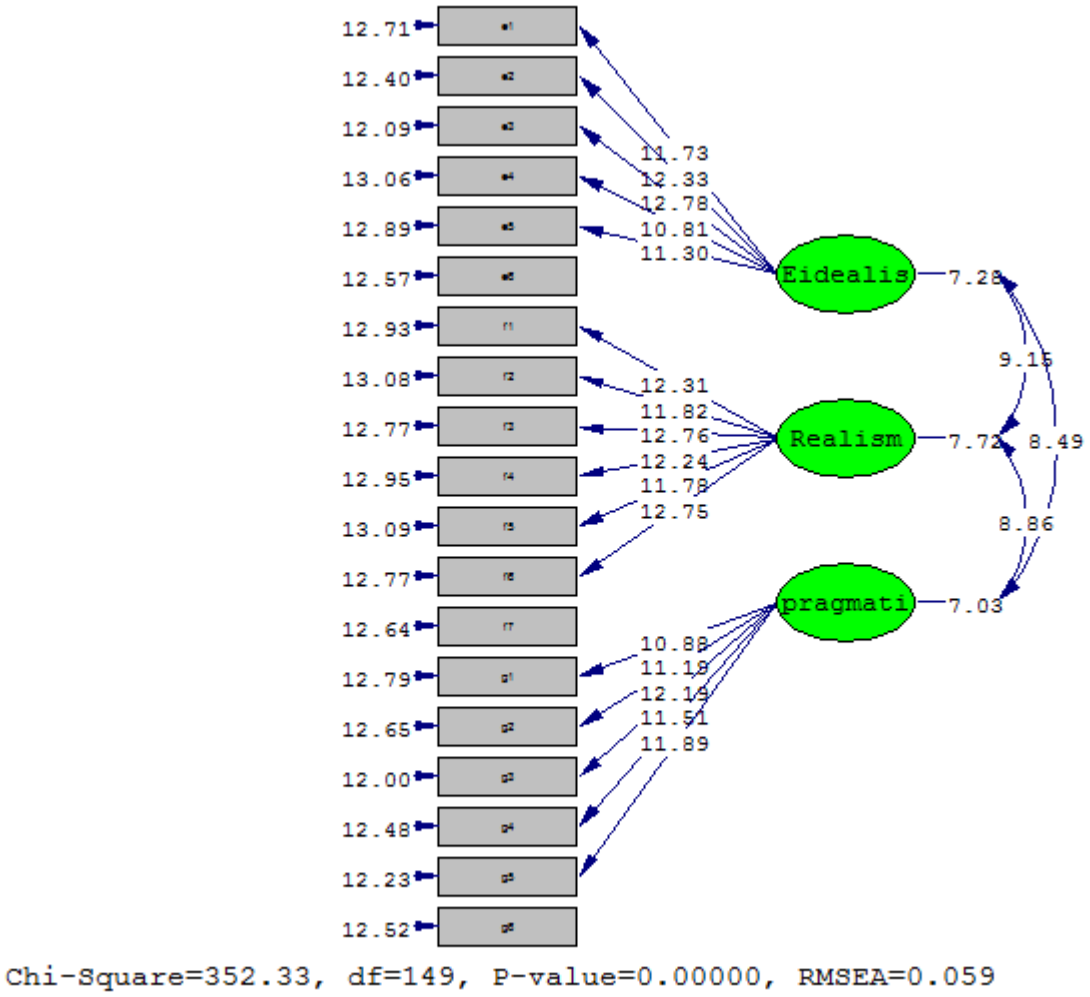


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis (t values) of the ideal schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism

Discussion

Based on the standard factor loads of the hidden variables of the schools of idealism, realism and pragmatism, the measures of these variables had a positive factor load that supported the validity of the measures in measuring the structure. Therefore, the factor structure of the questionnaire for these variables can be confirmed. According to the results, it can be concluded that all items of academic motivation have a positive factor load indicating the validity of items in measuring academic motivation.

One of the key factors influencing students' success is the concept of passion. Sharatmadari (2008) has considered one of the principles of education as the same motivation or creation of passion in the educator and has pointed out that "He should be interested, pursue a certain goal during learning, feel the need to learn what he wants. Therefore, teachers should make the interest and desire of students the starting point of their work. The structure of academic engagement in the academic process of the

student's life is one of the most important components in successfully facing the academic, professional, family and social challenges that every young person faces in achieving their dreams and goals. Accordingly, special attention should be paid to the elements affecting the student's success. The findings showed that the questionnaire developed based on the philosophical schools of realism, idealism and pragmatism has good validity and reliability to measure the structure of academic engagement in relation to these philosophical schools and this questionnaire can be used for research and educational purposes. The present study has some limitations that should be considered in generalizing the results. Lack of access to resources and related research records on the subject of policy-making and students' academic engagement due to philosophical schools and educational plans and delimiting the sample of research to high school students in Urmia are among the most important limitations.

Accordingly, it is suggested that the present study be conducted in other provinces and cities and its results be compared with the findings of the present study. Also, based on the findings of the present study, it is suggested that practical teaching of courses be done by specialized teachers based on a subject-oriented curriculum. It is also suggested that students be educated around the subjects of their interest and that educational planners take students' interests into account in planning future curricula. Taking advantage of participatory teaching methods is another suggestion of this research. Interested researchers are suggested to study the influence of philosophical schools on the academic engagement of high school students, comparing Islamic philosophers with Non-Muslim thinkers in the field of education.

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