

A review of the impact of individual self-acceptance and self-efficacy on academic achievement

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Abstract

Social intelligence has become a hot topic of research today, and the impact of social intelligence on individual academic performance is being widely studied. This study focuses on self-identity and self-efficacy in social intelligence. It reviews their implications for academic burnout to help predict academic achievement and generate methods that may alleviate academic burnout and improve academic performance.

Keywords: Social intelligence, academic burnout, self-identity, self-efficacy

1. Social intelligence

There needs to be a unified definition of social intelligence in psychological research. Still, researchers generally accept that social intelligence differs from the definition of “intelligence (IQ)” in our traditional research. The research on individual intelligence is diverse and has a rich theoretical foundation. For example, researchers such as Gardner have proposed the concept of multiple intelligences, which includes seven types of intelligence: speech intelligence, musical intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, body movement intelligence, interpersonal communication intelligence, and self-awareness intelligence. Afterward, Salovey transferred intelligence to the emotional aspect and proposed the theory of emotional intelligence. This theory suggests that emotional intelligence includes five abilities, namely the ability to recognize one’s own emotions, the ability to recognize others’ emotions, the ability to manage one’s own emotions properly, the ability to self-motivate, and the ability to manage interpersonal relationships (Mayer, J. D.&Salovey, P., 1993). As for social intelligence, there is currently no suitable measurement method to support it, so no complete unified concept and theoretical support can be formed. From existing research, research on social intelligence mainly revolves around three directions, namely measuring individuals’ social maturity characteristics, such as self-affirmation, self-identity, social morality, self-efficacy, empathy, and other social behavioral traits. The second direction mainly measures individuals’ cognitive level, while the third direction focuses on individuals’ social skills (Ivashkevych, E.,&Onufrieva, L. 2018). This article will study self-identity as a representative trait of social intelligence.

1.2 Self-identification

The concept of self-identity was first proposed by Erikson, who believed that self-identity is the development of self-identity, that is, an individual’s subjective experience and perception of internal consistency and continuity (Erikson, B.A.,&Erikson, C.W., 1974). self-identity will answer questions about who I am and what tasks I can accomplish. The measurement of self-identity is based on different research perspectives and has produced various measurement tools. For example, Benio et al. (1986) developed the Self Identity Status Questionnaire (EOM-EIS-2), while Ballstrei et al. (1995) developed the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) based on the process of self-identity. The self-identity scale is widely used in clinical and educational settings.

One crucial concept worth mentioning in self-identity is self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is a positive attitude individuals hold towards themselves and their characteristics, which is based on self-identity and further develops self-identity. After the concept of self-identity was proposed, different researchers enriched its concept in different directions. For example, Ellis proposed the concept of unconditional self-acceptance, which defines self-acceptance from a cognitive perspective. Self-acceptance means that an individual thoroughly and unconditionally accepts themselves, regardless of whether their behavior is knowingly correct or appropriate or whether others approve or respect them. Carson and Langer, on the other hand, place more emphasis on self-evaluation in their concept of self-acceptance. They believe that the most critical aspect of self-acceptance is the ability and willingness to let others see their true selves and conduct appropriate self-evaluation. Individuals are required to objectively and rationally view others’ evaluations and form a reasonable self-evaluation.

Humanistic psychologists, on the other hand, define self-acceptance from the perspective of self-actualization, which means that when a person realizes self-acceptance, they will achieve their maximum potential. In addition, some researchers believe that self-acceptance is not acting according to the requirements of others and society but rather accepting oneself as it is and completing tasks according to one's own wishes.

The measurement of self-acceptance can be achieved using the Expressed Acceptance of Self and Others Scale, which consists of 64 items, of which 36 measures self-acceptance and 28 measures acceptance of others, and has been proven to have good reliability and validity. In addition, the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) can also be used to measure an individual's level of self-acceptance. This scale is based on MMPI testing, but it measures individual personality traits within a normal range. After multiple revisions, CPI has removed mental medicine and health issues and can only be applied to adults without mental illness.

1.3 Self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was first proposed by Bandura, who believed that self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence or belief in the ability to achieve specific behavioral goals in a particular field. It is a pre-prediction of the future state of the upcoming activity and can also affect the individual's dynamic psychological process function in executing this activity. Bandura believes that self-efficacy mainly includes influencing individuals' behavioral choices, determining the persistence of tasks, and influencing people's thinking and emotional response patterns. Research has shown that individuals with high self-efficacy are more inclined to choose challenging tasks, while individuals with low self-efficacy are unwilling to take risks and often behave more conservatively. Research on academic achievement and self-efficacy has shown that academic self-efficacy, as a belief in learning ability, plays an essential role in individual learning activities and is significantly correlated with academic achievement (Pajares & Frank, 1996).

2. Academic Burnout and Prediction of Academic Achievement

2.1 Academic Burnout

Fudenberg was the first to propose the concept of burnout. He believed that the phenomenon of psychological and physiological fatigue, reduced efficiency, and negative attitudes towards daily activities such as life caused by prolonged stress on individuals is called burnout. Burnout was first used in the professional

field, and occupational burnout is the most commonly used concept by psychologists. Afterward, the concept of occupational burnout was introduced into academic studies, resulting in the concept of academic burnout. Academic burnout refers to the phenomenon of learners experiencing energy exhaustion, loss of enthusiasm for learning, distance from peers, and negative attitudes toward learning under long-term course pressure. The reasons for academic burnout may be diverse. Based on the emotional value theory, students' evaluation and sense of control over academic tasks and self-abilities may influence academic burnout. When students evaluate academic studies with high difficulty and low self-abilities, they lose control and decrease their sense of self-efficacy. They are more likely to experience academic burnout. The theory of achievement motivation suggests that the main incentives for individual pursuit of success may include the value of success, the likelihood of personal success, and the degree of demand for success. Academic burnout may be due to the decrease in students' evaluation of the value of academic achievements, the difficulty of academic tasks, and a reduction in self-efficacy, resulting in negative emotions such as low sense of achievement and interest depletion. In addition, students' factors, such as their ability to handle stress, may also affect the occurrence of academic burnout. The generation of academic burnout may be closely related to self-efficacy. High levels of academic burnout predict lower academic achievement.

2.2 Measurement of academic burnout

The measurement of academic burnout originated from the early rise of the Mahalanobis Job Burnout Inventory (MBI). Subsequently, as academic burnout gradually separated from the category of occupational burnout and became an independent concept, a scale specifically designed for academic burnout was also created. The Mahalanobis Academic Burnout Scale (MBI-SS) developed by Maslach is the earliest academic burnout scale, which has been localized in multiple countries and has been proven to have good reliability and validity, suitable for use under the cultural characteristics of numerous countries.

3. The relationship between self-efficacy, self-identity, and academic burnout

Freudenberg directly relates the generation of fatigue to an individual's understanding of themselves. He believes that when an individual's self-image deviates from their true self, that body will follow the principle of idealization and adopt different strategies to approach the ideal self

gradually. However, in this process, resource depletion caused by incorrect strategy is a form of fatigue. On the other hand, academic burnout may be a resource depletion situation caused by individuals' inability to achieve self-identity and constant striving towards their ideal selves. Leite (1991) proposed a model on burnout and emotional response, which suggests that burnout arises from irrational self-cognition, which may lead to resource depletion. Therefore, to alleviate such exhaustion, self-acceptance as a part of self-identity has to be mentioned. Self-acceptance refers to an individual's ability to accept everything about their authentic self actively, reasonably recognize positive values, accept their potential shortcomings, and have a reasonable and complete ability to judge themselves (Carson, S. H., & Langer, E. J., 2006). Self-acceptance, as a part of self-identity, is an essential ability that individuals need to possess. In addition, it should be mentioned that academic self-efficacy is the first concept defined by Schunk (2014). He believes that academic self-efficacy is an internal judgment ability of students about their learning ability and potential academic achievements. The higher the level of individual academic self-efficacy, the more confident they are in their abilities, and the more daring they are to choose more difficult challenges to try, often reducing the occurrence of academic burnout. However, the most critical factors affecting academic self-efficacy are self-acceptance and self-awareness. Empirical studies have shown a significant negative correlation between self-acceptance and academic burnout. There is also a negative correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic burnout, and self-acceptance often can negatively predict academic burnout.

3.2 The mediating effect of self-efficacy on academic achievement

Research has shown that academic self-efficacy is a mediator between self-regulation skills and academic achievement. Zimmerman et al. (2016) used path analysis to demonstrate the existence of a mediating relationship. At the same time, the study also found that even if individuals have a high level of psychological resilience, they have good adaptability and regulation ability. Still, without a high level of self-efficacy, in difficult situations, even with a high level of psychological resilience, individuals will still experience academic burnout, because the impact of psychological resilience and regulation ability on individual academic burnout will gradually lose effect with the difficulty of the task. Self-efficacy plays an essential role in such situations. Academic self-efficacy is a mediating effect between individual achievement motivation and academic achievement, which has also

been proven through empirical research. A mediation study conducted by Pinrich et al. in 1990 on 173 middle school students demonstrated that self-efficacy plays a driving role in cognitive activities. Students with higher levels of self-efficacy are often more willing to choose complex challenges to help them achieve academic success.

In contrast, students with low academic self-efficacy tend to choose a stable approach. Such students do not pursue high academic achievements and tend to follow not making mistakes. Therefore, they believe that high academic self-efficacy can predict higher levels of academic achievement. Meanwhile, academic self-efficacy also mediates academic burnout and academic achievement. An empirical study of 265 high school students has shown that academic self-efficacy plays an important role in the predictive relationship between exam-induced academic burnout and academic achievement.

3.3 Factors influencing academic self-efficacy on academic achievement

Academic self-efficacy has been proven to positively predict individual academic achievement, but many factors also influence this predictive effect. Firstly, the difficulty level of the task is an important influencing factor. Previous research has shown that in simple tasks, where there is no individual difference and all students have sufficient ability to complete the study, the role of academic self-efficacy will be weakened. For complex tasks, where not all students have sufficient ability to meet and need to bear certain risks, the level of academic self-efficacy has a good role in predicting such academic achievements. However, some researchers hold a negative attitude, stating that self-efficacy has a better predictive effect in simple tasks. Researchers who hold this view believe that the success of simple learning tasks is often unexpected for individuals. Therefore, it does not cause overestimation of difficulty, making it easier to judge one's abilities. The predictive power of self-efficacy is also higher. In addition, when the task involved is complex, individuals often find it difficult to grasp the traits and abilities required accurately. Therefore, individuals may overestimate or underestimate the difficulty of the task. When individuals overestimate the task's problem, they choose conservative strategies. However, when individuals underestimate the task's test, they may become overconfident and more likely to lead to resource depletion. In such cases, The predictive ability of academic self-efficacy may decrease.

In addition to the task's difficulty, time is also an essential factor affecting prediction. Some researchers believe that the time interval between academic self-efficacy and the

presentation of academic achievements may also affect the predictive effect of academic self-efficacy. They think that learning behavior is regulated by the efficacy beliefs possessed during learning rather than persistent efficacy beliefs. Therefore, the larger the period, the lower the predictive ability of academic self-efficacy. However, there are exceptions to this impact. Researchers believe that academic self-efficacy still has an excellent predictive effect if the task is not consistent during this process but presented as many different tasks, and individuals need to adjust their sense of efficacy constantly. However, some researchers hold a negative attitude. Some studies have found that the impact of academic self-efficacy on academic achievement is little influenced by time, and strong self-efficacy can even predict corresponding behavior five years later. Therefore, researchers believe that time is not a factor affecting the prediction of academic self-efficacy, but instead whether self-efficacy will change over time and whether significant setbacks have occurred over some time; considerable success and other influencing events are necessary to analyze the impact of time on the predicted results of efficacy.

4. The application of self-efficacy and self-identity improvement in academic performance

4.1 Research on academic self-efficacy and self-identity for academic achievement

Research on academic self-efficacy at home and abroad mainly focuses on exploring the causes and influencing mechanisms. Sociology, educational psychology, and clinical psychology all have different research perspectives. Among them, educational psychology pays more attention to the impact of other factors on academic achievement. In contrast, clinical psychology focuses more on improving academic self-efficacy and promoting self-identity formation. Based on existing research, both self-identity and academic self-efficacy can predict academic achievement to a certain extent. However, as mentioned earlier, this predictive relationship is complex and can be influenced by many factors. Therefore, self-identity and self-efficacy often exist as mediating factors. Thus, the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic achievement is not a simple positive correlation, and multiple factors must be considered. The improvement of academic self-efficacy and self-identity level, as well as the improvement of self-acceptance ability, significantly affect academic achievement and ability level. Researchers conducted group counseling on self-acceptance, and the results showed that when individuals' self-acceptance ability improved, their learning ability

and academic burnout level showed significant changes, specifically manifested as an improvement in individual academic knowledge and a decrease in academic burnout level. Therefore, it is feasible to consider improving an individual's academic performance through social intelligence traits such as academic self-efficacy and self-acceptance.

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