

# Multilevel analysis of the relationship between students goal orientation and their perception of parents goal orientation with academic help-seeking

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Research has shown that students face situations in which they cannot meet their needs and need the help of others to do their exercises. The present study aimed to investigate the factors affecting students' help-seeking at both the student and parent levels.

**Methods:** In this correlation study, 400 female the first round of high school students in the seventh and eighth grades in the academic year 2019-2020 were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling from 16 classes in different schools in Yazd. Students completed the Rya and Pintrich Help-Seeking Questionnaire and the Student and Parental Achievement Goal Orientation Questionnaire Midgley et al. In the present study, two-level analyses (student and parents) and HLM software were used to analyze the data.

**Results:** Findings from multilevel analysis and according to the unconditional model revealed that 27% of the variance of help-seeking was explained by family-level factors and 73% by student-level factors, which indicates sufficient variability of the dependent variable between different levels and application, but with the entry of student and family level predictors and examining their relationship with the dependent variable, the rate of explanation in the complete model for student level variables to 6% and the family level to 18% changed. At the student level, the variables of mastery and performance-avoidance goal orientation significantly predicted help-seeking ( $P < 0.001$ ). Parents' mastery and performance goal orientation at the family level was a significant predictor for help-seeking at this level ( $P < 0.001$ ).

**Conclusion:** Due to the positive significance of parental mastery goal orientation, it is appropriate to provide conditions in families for students to emphasize mastery goal orientation and seek help in the face of complex learning tasks.

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## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

One of the self-regulated learning strategies that are essential due to their executive role is the academic help-seeking strategy. Help-seeking is an active effort to use the opportunities available to achieve success. Students not

only reduce academic problems when they need help and demand help but also acquire the knowledge and skills that help them solve problems. Help-seeking behavior has been studied in the research literature under the two

headings of avoidance of help-seeking and acceptance of help-seeking. Avoidance of help-seeking refers to a behavior in which the student who needs help refuses to receive help. Conversely, acceptance of help-seeking refers to a behavior in which the student requests hints (clues) and explanations about the problem's solution, which will help the student solve the problems better. Based on classroom observations, help-seeking behavior is divided into three types: a) partial hints or clues, b) confirmation of previous performance, and c) receiving the answer to the problem from another person. Newman (2000) basically distinguishes between executive help-seeking and instrumental help-seeking (6). Individuals in executive help-seeking prefer that others solve the problem for them. In instrumental help-seeking, the requested assistance is in the field of clarifying problem-solving methods, which leads to mastery of the task and supports the individual's mastery in the future. Goal orientation is one of the motivational theories in which students' academic help-seeking is understood and conceptualized. Goal orientation means a coherent model of beliefs, attributions, and emotions that directs a person's behavior and shows different approaches, engaging and responding to tasks in progress situations. Midgley et al. (2000) considered three types of goal orientation, including mastery goal orientation, performance-approach goal orientation, and performance-avoid goal orientation (29). Mastery goal orientation is associated with academic self-efficacy, striving for success, problem assignment selection, perseverance in the face of difficulties, intrinsic interest in learning, application of deep processing strategies, and higher academic achievement. Such people believe that success can be achieved through effort. Performance-approach goal orientation reflects a focus on demonstrating competence and ability and how an individual's ability will be evaluated compared to others. This type of goal orientation is associated with trying to outdo normative performance,

striving for the best, using social comparison criteria, and avoiding undesirable judgments about ability or low self-esteem. In performance-avoid goal, orientation is the fear of failure and seeming inadequacy that motivates people to strive. In other words, while the person does not want to be the best, he does not want to fail. In addition to the role of individual goal orientation on learning, the perception of parent goal orientation is also noteworthy. Research shows that when students think their parents emphasize new skills, deep learning, and personal growth, they are more likely to achieve these goals, and when faced with negative experiences, they use adaptive coping strategies. Conversely, when students feel that their parents emphasize scoring and displaying abilities, as well as avoid looking incapable, they are more likely to have a performance-approach goal orientation and use maladaptive coping strategies against negative academic experiences. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors affecting students' help-seeking at two levels of student and parent goal orientation.

## Methods

This study was a correlational study. The statistical population of female students in the first round of high school (seventh and eighth grade) in the academic year of 2019-2020 was studying in Yazd. For this purpose, 400 students in 16 different school classes were selected by multi-stage cluster sampling. Students completed the Ryan and Pintrich (1997) Help-Seeking Questionnaire and the Student and Parental Achievement Goal Orientation Questionnaire Midgley et al. (2000). Data analysis was performed in HLM software using the multilevel analysis method.

## Results

Findings from multilevel analysis and according to the unconditional model revealed that 27% of the variance of help-seeking is explained by family-level factors and

73% by student-level factors, which indicates sufficient variability of the dependent variable between different levels and applications. The multilevel analysis method is necessary and valuable for the data, but with the entry of student and family-level predictors and examining their relationship with the dependent variable, the rate of explanation in the complete model for student-level variables to six and family-level to 18 changed. However, the significance of the width tests from the origin and variance between class and within the classroom showed that help-seeking both before the entry of variables and after the entry of two-level variables has sufficient variability. At the student level, the variables of mastery and performance-avoidance goal orientation significantly predicted help-seeking ( $P < 0.001$ ). Nevertheless, the relationship between the performance goal orientation variable and help-seeking was insignificant. Parents' mastery and performance goal orientation at the family level was a significant predictor for help-seeking at this level ( $P < 0.001$ ).

## Conclusion

The student goal orientation and student perception of the parents' goal orientation affect the students' acceptance and avoidance of help-seeking. In mastery goal orientation, the emphasis is on developing new skills and improving the level of ability. Students who choose such a goal for themselves in the face of complex learning tasks while increasing their efforts are more likely to benefit from help-seeking. When students think their parents emphasize new skills, deep learning, and personal growth, they are more likely to achieve these goals. Due to the positive significance of parents' mastery goal orientation, it is appropriate to provide conditions in families for students to emphasize mastery goal orientation and

help-seeking in the face of complex learning tasks.

## Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

In order to comply with ethical principles, participants were informed before conducting the research that participation in the research is voluntary and that there is no coercion for it. Participants were reassured that their private and personal information would be protected and that the results would be interpreted if they wished. In case of any disturbance, the necessary instructions were provided to the participants to follow up. Participation in the research will not incur any financial burden for the participants. This study did not contradict the religious and cultural norms of the subject and society. This research is taken from a research project with the number 01/3522. In addition, the research method has been approved by the Ethics Committee (Ethics ID: 1399.029IR.UT.PSYEDU.REC).

### Authors' contributions

The first author did study design, data analysis, and manuscript preparation, and the second and third authors did data collection and preparation.

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### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.