Student Goal Orientations and PsychoSomatic Problems - are the findings similar for boys and girls?

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Background

• Motivation is considered a key determinant for educational outcomes

• Students differ in their motivation for school work, in forms and degrees

• Students may have different goals when engaging in learning activities
• Student Goal Orientations show strong associations with school achievement

• School achievement is also strongly related to student mental health

• There may also be a link between Student Goal Orientation and mental health
• In the Goal Orientation Theory students reasons for learning activities are contrasted

• Traditionally the Mastery orientation and the Performance orientation has been contrasted in the literature
Purpose

• To study the overall pattern of the associations between goal orientation and PsychoSomatic health, by contrasting the Mastery and Performance orientations.
Mastery Goal Orientation
A desire to develop competence by improving skills. Learning as much as possible.

Based on the 1998 cohort of the ETF-study

Included items; How often are you trying to do the following in school:
Learn to be smarter
Learn facts
Learn to understand
Learn new things

Response format: Always/almost always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never/almost never
Mastery by Sex – No differences between boys and girls

Mastery
A desire to develop competence by improving skills.
Learning as much as possible.
The proportion of Girls and boys with lower and higher Mastery orientation experiencing severe psychosomatic health complaints (90th percentile of the PSP-scale)

Lower Mastery orientation (50 percent)

Higher Mastery orientation (50 percent)
Performance Goal Orientation

Competence shown by outperforming peers, competition ranking and, grades are important

Based on the 1998 cohort of the ETF-study

Included items; How often are you trying to do the following in school:
Be better than other students
Study so I do not appear stupid
Show the teacher that you are better than other students

Response format: Always/almost always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, Never/almost never
Performance by Sex – Differences between boys and girls

Performance

Competence shown by outperforming peers.
Ranking and, grades and competition

Overall pattern: For each unit increase of performance orientation, the psychosomatic health is worsening more for girls than for boys.
The proportion of Girls and boys with lower and higher Performance orientation experiencing severe psychosomatic health complaints (90th percentile of the PSP-scale)

Lower Performance orientation (50 percent)

Higher Performance orientation (50 percent)
Mastery and Performance dichotomies combined, proportion experiencing severe psychosomatic health complaints (90th percentile of the PSP-scale)
Conclusions

• There is a strong association between student goal orientation and mental health

• The influence of goal orientations on mental health differ by gender

• School based efforts to improve the mental health of students should recognise these gender differences