

Level of Aspiration, Critical Thinking and Future Anxiety as Predictors for the Motivation to Learn among a Sample of Students of Najran University

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationship of critical thinking and the level of aspiration and future anxiety to motivation to learn among a sample of 81 students from Faculty of Education and Faculty of Engineering at Najran University. Motivation to Learn Scale (Gaber&Al-Marei, 2014), California Critical Thinking Skill Test (CCTST) (2000), Aspiration Level Scale, and Future Anxiety Scale (prepared by the researcher) were used. Pearson Correlation Coefficient showed that there are statistically significant relationship between motivation to learn and the level of aspiration, critical thinking and future anxiety ($P \leq 0.01$). The Regression and Prediction Coefficient (stepwise) was also used and showed that the level of aspiration predicts motivation to learn.

Keywords: Motivation to Learn - Future Anxiety - Level of Aspiration - Critical Thinking

1. Introduction

The proverb "you can lead the horse to water, but you cannot force it to drink" often cited to illustrate the importance of the role of motivation to learn. It is the way to raise the students' desire to involve learning the subject matter, paying attention to the teacher, engaging in learning activities, and concerning it after the lesson ended. The teacher may be able to let students sitting in the classroom and force them to listen, but he cannot force them to learn what s/he teaches. S/he cannot let them preoccupied with the topics outside the classroom because of the closure of their minds due to the lack of ongoing desire to learn, i.e. there is no motivation to learn.

Motivation is one of the basic conditions on which achievement of the learning process objective depends, whether learning methods, thinking styles, or formation or modifying attitudes and values, acquiring information and knowledge, problem-solving skill, or other behavior methods that are subject to training and practice. (Zayed, 2003)

Motivation plays an important role in learning and performance retention, as it is the engine and rudder, without it there will be no learning. The most important functions of motivation, from an educational perspective, is that it generates specific concerns in students, so they accept the practice of multiple cognitive activities. In addition, motivation enables students to accomplish certain learning objectives effectively. It is connected to students' tendencies so s/he pays her/his attention to some activities rather than others, and their needs making some stimuli boosters affect the behavior and urging her/him to work actively and effectively (Nashawati, 1997).

The researcher indicates to that the motivation to learn is related to multiple external and internal factors. The external ones include the qualifications of teachers, their teaching strategies, the classroom physical conditions, learning resources patterns, and objectives and capabilities of the educational institution. The internal factors include the locus of control, thinking methods, the level of aspiration, future ambition, and the level of the learner's intelligence, capacity and readiness. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between the level of motivation to learn and the levels of aspiration, critical thinking, and future anxiety as internal factors of the learner.

There are many studies explored the relationship between internal factors with motivation to learn. Some studies pointed to the relationship between aspiration and future planning, clarified that people, who have the ability to develop future scenarios, have an acceptable level of motivation (Shouashra, 1994).

Schneider (1969), Ismail (1990) and Ali Ibrahim (1993) stated that there is a relationship between the level of aspiration and academic achievement (see Ahmed, 2015).

Goswami&Rahman (2013) pointed that the level of aspiration provides the learner with the stimulus energy that help her/him to have a sense of achievement.

People who have an accepted level of critical thinking, as the researcher can confirm, have the ability to analyze, deduce and evaluate rationally and accurately. The critical thinking helps learners to use and practice thinking skills, such as mental performance in solving problems, manifold thinking, creative thinking, accurate comparison, discussion, originality in the production of ideas ,and scrutinized vision that includes analysis, evaluation, deduction, inferential search, take safe decisions, organization, flexibility, communication skills and smart negotiation with self and others (Almikhadi, 2000).These features are positive factors that affect the motivation to learn and academic achievement. Afshar study pointed to that the level of critical thinking is one of the most influencing factors of motivation to learn and students' academic achievement (Afshar et al., 2014).

The researcher sees that future anxiety may related to the level of aspiration. People who have an accepted level of future anxiety are keener than others to satisfy their learning motives to have a good career. It drives them to do their best and learn more and more to achieve their goals. Anxiety is a natural component of man life, affects her/his behaviors. It is an evidence of her/his humanity, fact of existence, a dynamic factor of personality building, and one of behavior variables. It raises in every challenge situation that man can face in life, therefore it is normal feeling (Elmomany, Naim, 2013).

2- Study Problem

Studying motivation factors is vital for teaching and learning process. Motivation is a prerequisite in learning process. Therefore, researchers try to explore the internal 'subjective' factors responsible for motivation to learn, which direct the behaviors to achieve goals related to motives or internal factors that responsible for continuing the behavior to reach the targets.

One of the subjective factors that may be associated with the idea of motivation to learn is the level of aspiration. The level of aspiration is one of the most important factors for students, not only in the field of education but in all life aspects as well, because it is considered the driving force to achieve all her/his objectives (Ahmad, 2015). Motivation to learn is also linked to thinking style, especially critical thinking, and its development provides learners deeper understanding of knowledge of the content that they are learning, because that learning is essentially a process of reflection and thinking. The employment of thinking in learning changes the acquisition of knowledge from an inert process to a mental activity leads to better mastery of knowledge and connect the elements together, which in turn may affect the formation of learners' motivation to learn (Abdul Salam, 2008). Critical thinking helps learners to use knowledge strategies, including the application of problem-solving skills that help her/him to achieve what is intended to of the learning process, which in turn increases the idea of motivation to learn (Paul & Teresa, 2015).

Future anxiety may drives the learner to learn, to avoid failure as we can trace that our students are afraid of failure, so they study hard. Future anxiety is the fright of future that drives the learner to make effort, persevere, and strive in order to have a good career in future. Zaliski (1996) states that when the human being thinks and reflects future, s/he becomes afraid of failure, which can help her/him to plan and work hard to overcome this fear sources and achieve psychological adjustment.

Accordingly, this study aimed to explore the predicted relationship between the level of aspiration, future anxiety and critical thinking and motivation to learn. The research inquiries are:

1. What is the relationship between motivation to learn and the level of aspiration of Najran University students?
2. What is the relationship between motivation to learn and the critical thinking of Najran University students?
3. What is the relationship between motivation to learn and future anxiety of Najran University students?
4. What are the differences of motivation to learn and the level of aspiration, future anxiety and critical thinking due to the faculty specialty (theoretical, scientific)?
5. Can motivation to learn be predicted by future anxiety, the level of aspiration or critical thinking?

3. Study Objectives

This study aimed to explore:

1. The relationship between motivation to learn and the level of aspiration.
2. The relationship between motivation to learn and critical thinking.
3. The relationship between motivation to learn and future anxiety.
4. The differences between students' specialty (theoretical/scientific) due to motivation to learn, critical thinking, future anxiety or the level of aspiration.
5. The predicted relation of motivation to learn by critical thinking, future anxiety and/or the level of aspiration.

4. Operational Definition of the Variables

4.1. Motivation to learn

The internal or external condition of the learner that drives her/his behavior or performance, and directs her/him continuously to achieve certain goal or objective related to learning (Elzoubi, 2003). It is measured operationally by the respondent degree on the Motivation to Learn Scale used in this study.

4.2. Critical thinking

It means the judgment based on systematic analysis, evaluation, deduction, reasoning and induction that leads to problem solving and decision-making (Ingram, 2008). It is measured operationally by the respondent degree on the Critical Thinking Scale used in this study.

4.3. Future anxiety

It is a condition of tension, unsecure and fearing of undesirable changes in future. In its extreme degree, it can be a threatening of something will happen (Sabry, 2003). It is measured operationally by the respondent degree on the Future Anxiety Scale used in this study.

4.4. The level of aspiration

It is an expression of the desire to achieve and improve. It is a level of motivation that overcomes task complexity with perpetual efforts and push one to work toward those goals (Frhana, 2011). It is measured operationally by the respondent degree on The Level of Aspiration Scale used in this study.

5. Methodology & Procedures

5.1. Methodology

Descriptive method is used. It enables the researcher to explore the relationship of motivation to learn and the level of aspiration, critical thinking, future anxiety, the differences between students due to their specialty, theoretical and scientific, and the predicted relationship between motivation to learn and those variables.

5.2. Study population and sample

The study tools were applied on 41 students of Faculty of Engineering, and 43 students of Faculty of Education, Najran University, KSA.

5.3 Study tools

The following tools were used:

- Future Anxiety Scale, prepared by the researcher.
- The Level of Aspiration Scale, prepared by the researcher.
- The Motivation to Learn Scale, prepared by Gaber & Marie (2014).
- California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST), (2000), translated by Atteya & Gaber (2013).

6. Results & Discussion

6.1. The first inquiry: What is the relationship between motivation to learn and the level of aspiration of Najran University students?

Table 1: Correlation coefficient and statistical significance between motivation to learn and the level of aspiration

Variables	Motivation to learn	Significance
The level of aspiration	0.32	0.01

There is a positive statistical significance relation between motivation to learn and the level of aspiration at 0.01. This result shows that more aspiration, more motivation to learn. The high level of aspiration is the goals that the student sets to her/himself and seeks to achieve in her/his career, academic, or personal life, as they are consistent with her/his reference framework, and depend on the experiences of success and failure. The level of aspiration s/he is able to overcome the obstacles or problems s/he may face during achieving her/his aspiration (goals) (Mansour, 1992).

The researcher believes that the level of aspiration helps the individual to activate her/his potentials and capacities to reach the planned objectives. According to this result, we find that the students who have a high level of aspiration, differentiate others in activate their potentials and capacities to achieve their motivation to learn by perseverance, diligence and follow up their lessons, which in turn contribute to increase their academic achievement. This is indicated by Mahmoud study (2001), which stated that students with high achievement have a high level of aspiration.

The researcher also believes that the high level of aspiration enable the student to achieve her/his education goal. The individuals with high aspiration are clairvoyants, self- confidents and capable to address the obstacles and difficulties .They are aware that their lives and future are of their own making, not result to the conditions or chance. They like competition and thus all those qualities enable them in achieving the motivation to learn.

6.2. The second inquiry: What is the relationship between motivation to learn and the critical thinking of Najran University students?

Table 2: Correlation coefficient and statistical significance between motivation to learn and critical thinking

Variables	Motivation to learn	Significance
Critical thinking	0.27	0.01

There is a positive statistical significance relation between motivation to learn and critical thinking at 0.01. This result shows that the high critical thinking may indicate strongly to the high level of motivation to learn, because the high level of critical thinking contributes effety to achieve motivation to learn and academic achievement. The students with high critical thinking have advanced mental skills, and they keep a high standard of success. The critical thinking enable students to analyze, differentiate, choose and test the knowledge they have. Such potentials enable students to achieve motivation to learn. The critical thinking is a mental process, and by mental interaction between the individual and acquired experiences, they develop the knowledge structures, reach new assumptions and expectations that all increase their level of motivation.

Motivation to learn has multiple factors including mental level, advanced knowledge potentials and critical thinking. This last factor contributes in enhancing the level of motivation to learn, because the high level of critical thinking make the learner capable to deep understand the knowledge content, encourage questioning, inquiring and unacceptance of facts without sufficient investigations, and make the learner participate in learning process positively and actively, so the learner capability to learn is reinforced. S/he becomes able to solve her/his problems and take the right decisions, which led to more developing and creativity (Elmeghesb, 2006).

Phan (2010) study indicated that the critical thinking is related to the level of motivation to learn positively. The critical thinking is related to academic achievement positively (Afshar et al., 2014).

6.3. The third inquiry: What is the relationship between motivation to learn and future anxiety of Najran University students?

Table 3: Correlation coefficient and statistical significance between motivation to learn and future anxiety

Variables	Motivation to learn	Significance
Future anxiety	-0.29	0.01

There is a negative statistical significance relation between motivation to learn and future anxiety at 0.01. This result shows that the high level of future anxiety may reduce the level of motivation to learn. That is may due to that the individual is too occupied with the future, controlled by negative ideas that prevent her/him to carry out life tasks. High symptoms of future anxiety affect negatively, leading to failure and inability to achieve objectives in the future. One of the most negative effects is the individual's sense of loneliness, isolation, insularity within the framework of a certain routine, and lack of flexibility and efficiency. These feelings lead the individual to the inability to proper planning for life situations, and make her/him react negatively and hinder from achieving goals.

In this regard, Elmomani(2013) refers to that the seriousness of the future anxiety phenomenon is its negative impact on the perception of students, their abilities and their future aspiration. This can make them vulnerable to psychological and behavioral disorders, and the inability to effective adaptation, and this in turn affects the low motivation to learn, which in turn adversely affects their practical and scientific future.

The researcher believes that the increased symptoms of future anxiety of the student, makesher/him unable to plan appropriately for his life ,and you find her/him immersed passively in hopes about future and accompanied by feelings of anxiety, stress and pessimism.The student also is irritable, fast fatigue and continues his daily work difficultly, which affects her/him in interest not to follow-up studies, makes her/him indifferent to her/his academic level, leading to a reduction of motivation to learn. Thus, lower the symptoms of future anxiety among university students contribute to the positive and common sense for the future.The student, then, is aware that the success or failure depends on efforts and perseverance.Therefore, s/he can be able to plan properly, set goals commensurate with her/his abilities and potentials, which in turn contributes to increase motivation to learn because it is the first practical goals that define the future of the learner.

The increased symptoms of future anxiety hinders the learner to do homework, makes her/him indifferent to life and objectives of the future .Mysterious fear of distant tomorrow possesses the individual which can be full of difficulties, negative prediction of the expected events, feeling tense and tight, impaired ability to achieve the goals and aspirations, and a sense that life is not worthwhile, the feeling of insecurity, and discomfort and loss of the ability to concentrate (Sherif, 2005). This in turn may contribute to decrease the motivation to learn among students. This result coincides with Schonwetter study (1995) and Khodadady & Khajavy study (2013) that anxiety is associated with motivation and academic performance negatively.

6.4. The fourth inquiry: What is the differences of motivation to learn and the level of aspiration, future anxiety and critical thinking due to the faculty specialty (theoretical, scientific)?

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations and 'T' value of theoretical and scientific students' scores of motivation to learn ,future anxiety, the level of aspiration and critical thinking domains

Sample Variables	Theoretical Specialty		Scientific Specialty		T	Sign.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Motivation to Learn	57.20	12.41	45.72	12.34	4.14	0.01
Critical Thinking	11.55	3.09	6.22	2.73	-7.82	0.01
The Level of Aspiration	40.62	10.38	24.36	6.12	8.53	0.01
Future anxiety	30.70	16.79	63.20	20.18	8.15	0.01

This table shows that there are statistical significance differences between theoretical and scientific students of motivation to learn for scientific students, of critical thinking for scientific students, the level of aspiration for scientific students, and of future anxiety for theoretical students.

For the differences for scientific disciplines students in the level of motivation to learn, the researcher explains that is due to the nature of experimentation in scientific courses that encourage research, investigation, discovering solutions, testing and watch the results carefully without any complexity. This is reverse to literary courses that experimentation may not be as in scientific topics, which may reduce the motivation to learn at theoretical disciplines students.

In addition, the nature of the topics of both sides; the scientific courses rely heavily on experimentation, realism and scientific certainty, while there are not too many views, unlike the subjects of theoretical and literary courses which are humanitarian issues characterized by multiple points of view, which generates tedious as a result of failure to observe the different learning styles (Al-Marie, 2012).

The reason of the superiority of motivation to learn of scientific disciplines students may be due the nature of the faculty members who engage in teaching strategies that develop the idea of motivation to learn through research, investigation and experimentation .The nature of scientific disciplines do not afford more than one point of view, in contrary to the humanitarian disciplines that have multiple views and theoretical references, which could affect motivation to learn for students of that specialization. That result agreed with the study of Gaber &Al-Marie (2014), but disagreed with the study of Omar (2014) and Sara (2015).

As for the result which shows the presence of individual differences statistically significant between theoretical and scientific students in the level of critical thinking in the direction of scientific specialization, it may attribute to the mental capacity of scientific specialization students that characterized by high thinking skills. The reason may also be due to the capacity of the scientific knowledge of these students who depend on scientific induction and deduction basically, and thus they are scientifically superior in terms of style of thinking. They do not care about traditional methods of recall, but rely on the idea of mental perception and examination depending on the process of logical thinking in their studies, because the logical thinking is based largely on the idea of critique, analysis and evaluation .Such students have been helped by this mode of thinking on reflection and analysis what they are exposed of lessons and topics, rejecting the idea of postulates.

It may also due to the strategies used in teaching the literary disciplines' students that do not encourage them to think critically, thus it may be the reason for the decline of literary disciplines students comparing to scientific disciplines students in the level of critical thinking. That result agreed with the study of Salem (2010) and study of Al-Marie& Nofal (2007) while disagreed with the study of Ascol (2009).

As for the significant statistical differences between literary and theoretical disciplines' students in the level of aspiration in the direction of the scientific disciplines' students researcher explains that it may be due to the common sense of the goals, capacities and capabilities of those students, and to their awareness of secure career or professional ranks. It may also be due to that those students have chosen specialization as their own desires. This may be due to that the scientific disciplines' students can plan their future appropriately and have the ability to choose the appropriate objectives that are compatible with their personal and mental abilities, unlike theoretical disciplines 'students where the total scores is the ruler in the selection of their specialization. Scientific disciplines' students may also have the proper perception regarding the ability to change by knowing that the individual himself and his capabilities and potentials are the real reason for the excellence and not the circumstances or chance. Such students are able to take responsibility because of their mental abilities and the nature of the courses they teach and therefore realize well the reasons for success and failure. In addition, there may be a role for the family in encouraging scientific disciplines 'students because

they are distinct disciplines due to social and cultural outlook. That result disagreed with Barakat study (2009) and Alqtnani study (2011).

As for the significant statistical differences between the theoretical and scientific disciplines' students in the level of future anxiety in the direction of theoretical disciplines' students, it indicates that the theoretical disciplines' students have more symptoms of future anxiety than scientific disciplines' students have. This can be explained by that such students think about what awaits them after graduation, they may not find a suitable job, and they may be dominated by the idea of the difficulty of getting a job as a result of the large number of graduates in these colleges, making theoretical faculties' students worried about securing financial job and situation. Such students also think that if they found a job, it might be of low salary, or what they have learned does not fit the needs of the labor market. This makes the student lives in constant worry about financial and job status after graduation. Because of this future anxiety about the profession, the value of university education has become low in eyes of many, and the university degree is no longer a close passage to a fulfilling and soft life. This makes many students suffer a decline in the level of optimism, leading to increase the symptoms of future anxiety.

In this regard Sherif (2005) refers that the literary disciplines do not keep pace with changes in the labor market and cannot secure career, which is what makes the student more worried about his future. In addition, the theoretical disciplines' students depend on the state to provide job opportunities. The nature of contemporary society emphasizes the increasing demand for scientific disciplines and community negative to the graduates of literary disciplines .All these factors may contribute to increase future anxiety of literary disciplines' students. That result agreed with the result of Alhashimi (2001), Alazzawi (2002) and Sherif (2005) studies, while disagreed with Elmomani (2013) and Msawy (2012) studies, which indicated that there are not individual differences in future anxiety due to academic specialization.

6.5. The fifth inquiry: Can motivation to learn be predicted by future anxiety, the level of aspiration or critical thinking?

Regression coefficient and gradual prediction (stepwise) were used. There is a model predicts the motivation to learn by the level of aspiration.

Table 5: Model of regression coefficient and gradual prediction of the motivation to learn by the level of aspiration

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
Constant	39.405	4.270	-	9.222	.000
Level of Aspiration	0.371	0.124	0.322	3.22	.000

Multiple regression equation of the model:

Dependent Variables (Motivation to Learn)= Constant+ B for (Level of Aspiration)x value of Level of Aspiration.

Example: if it is assumed that one student received a score of 50 on the Level of Aspiration Scale, her/his score of Motivation to Learn will = 39.405 + (0.371 x 50)

$$= 39.405 + 18.55$$

$$= 57.99$$

According to this result, it can be said that the level of aspiration predicts the motivation to learn, that is because the individual aspiration enables her/him to achieve learning objectives.

Achievement aspiration is believed to be one of the driving forces for the development of a concept or idea and yours is like a virus to spiritual people to be competitive, work hard and causes more resistance. Educational aspirations relating to the early presentation of their own academic abilities and the highest level of education of individuals expected to achieve (Furlong & Cartmel, 2005).

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