

# Goal Orientation and Learning Readiness: Evidence Among First Year Students in Selected Kenyan Universities

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*This study, which adopted an ex post facto research design, investigated the relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students in three public universities in Kenya. A sample size of 372 first years from the three universities were obtained using both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The Goal Questionnaire for Students (GQS) and the Learning Readiness Questionnaire (LRQ) were used to collect data. The findings reported Eta squared (.547) which implied that a fairly large proportion (54.7%) of variance in the learning readiness index among the first year students is explained by goal orientation of the students. Results from the study determined that universities should emphasize techniques of performance approach in their guidance programs.*

*Cette étude, qui a adopté une conception de recherche ex post facto, a examiné la relation entre l'orientation vers un objectif et la préparation à l'apprentissage chez les étudiants de première année dans trois universités publiques du Kenya. Un échantillon de 372 étudiants de première année des trois universités a été obtenu en utilisant des techniques d'échantillonnage aléatoire simple et stratifié. Le Goal Questionnaire for Students (GQS) et le Learning Readiness Questionnaire (LRQ) ont été utilisés pour collecter les données. Les résultats font état d'un coefficient Eta carré (.547) qui implique qu'une proportion assez importante (54,7%) de la variance de l'indice de préparation à l'apprentissage chez les étudiants de première année s'explique par l'orientation des objectifs des étudiants. Les résultats de l'étude ont déterminé que les universités devraient mettre l'accent sur les techniques d'approche de la performance dans leurs programmes d'orientation.*

Adjustment to university is a major life transition that not all learners manage successfully. *Adjustment* can be defined as a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tensions, conflict, and meet their needs (Robinson, 2009). Nearly all new students go through an adjustment phase upon entry to a university, with each student varied in their own pace of development (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Santrock (2004) argued that entry into university by first-year undergraduate students involves movement to a larger, more impersonal school structure, plus interaction with peers from more varied geographical, and sometimes, more diverse ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, becoming a first-year undergraduate student after being a final year student at high school replays the top-dog phenomenon that occurred earlier in adolescence where they would transfer from being the oldest and most powerful group of students to becoming

the youngest and least powerful group of students (Grayson, 1989). Students' early experiences of university life can significantly affect their attitudes and self-confidence in their ability to continue their course. Social adjustment is an important component of the overall adjustment to university. It involves being included in the university social culture and being satisfied with university social life, meeting and making friends and forming connections with other students, feeling at ease with others at university, and feeling part of the first-year cohort (Rahat & Ilhen, 2016).

Many high school graduates seem to be underprepared for the demands of university life (Gerald & Hussar, 2010). The formation of social connections among students has been linked to perseverance and retention at university as well as positive academic performance (Wilcox et al., 2005). Thus, researchers have reported that students with a high level of companionship among their peers have a higher level of adjustment to university than students who are without a social group (Sevinc & Gizir, 2014). Similarly, lack of social connections, feelings of loneliness, and social dislocation put students at a higher risk of attrition because they do not have social support in the university environment (Mallman & Lee, 2016). It has also been reported that majority of students drop out of university during or after their first year of study (University World News, 2008). Likewise, research by Knapp et al. (2007) showed that only 35% of undergraduate students graduate within the prescribed time period; and that after six years, only 57% of students finish their studies. Additionally, it has been acknowledged that South African students who drop out of university most likely originate from low-income and less educated families from historically disadvantaged groups (University World News, 2007).

One of the psychological constructs which might affect learning readiness is goal orientation (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). *Goal orientation* refers to the reasons an individual engages in an activity and the goals they set to define success (D'Lima et al., 2014). Similarly, Janssen and Van Yperen (2004) define goal orientation as the perceptual-cognitive frameworks that determine how an individual approaches, interprets, and responds to achievement situations. Therefore, predicting the academic success and adjustment of first-year students in university is of utmost importance to improve and enhance the academic performance of students (Petersen et al., 2010). In the United States, a survey indicated that 38% of students drop out of universities because of financial pressure, but in South Africa the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) found that almost half of students drop out of university in their first year due to financial difficulties, poor career choices, domestic problems, pregnancy, and too much partying (University World News, 2007). These results clearly indicate that the majority of students lost every year in South African institutions are first-year students. In Kenya, most first year students at university have low adjustment to academic programs (Wangeri et al., 2012). Similarly, Okinda (2013) argued that there is low readiness level among Kenyan students, which suggests that their internal environment may hinder efforts to adopt e-learning as a mode of delivery. In this respect, the present study investigated goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students in three selected public universities in Kenya.

## **Literature Review**

Literature on goal orientation and adjustment/learning readiness exists with varied findings in different contexts. A study in South Africa indicated that students perceive themselves as having a stronger mastery goals orientation than performance goals and performance avoidance goals orientations (Ramnarain & Ramaila, 2014). In addition, Umbarger's (2015) study argued that there is positive relationship between mastery orientation and performance orientation with

achievement across grade levels. It has also been reported by a study conducted in Nebraska that performance approach has a significant positive effect on course grades through engagement, but performance-avoidance has a significant negative effect on course grades through lack of regulation (Hazley, 2016). A study from Turkey reiterated that mastery approach goal orientation is significantly positively associated with college students perceived academic self-efficacy beliefs and academic help seeking behaviors (Sakiz, 2011). Another study in Turkey by Demircioğlu (2016) indicated that perceived mastery-approach goal structures predict positively mastery-approach goals, which in turn predict positively challenge-seeking and negatively challenge-avoidance. Phan's (2010) study in Australia also argued that there are temporally displaced effects of mastery and performance-approach goals on academic performance. A study in Switzerland determined that the interaction appeared only among low achievers for whom the pursuit of performance-approach goals predicted greater performance, but only when the test had been scheduled (Mose et al., 2019).

Mouratidis et al. (2018) added that perceived mastery goal structures are found to relate positively to mastery-approach goals, which in turn positively predict end-year grades through challenge seeking. Tercanlioglu and Demiröz (2015) also indicated that mastery goal-oriented students seem to be more persistent when they confront a comprehension problem in English. In the United States, Senko et al. (2013) reported that performance-approach goals facilitate high achievement in the high challenge condition but not in the low challenge condition. Poortyliet et al. (2015) suggested that workers with mastery-approach goals tend to invest in their social work environment by establishing instrumental exchange relationships. On the contrary, Phan's (2014) study from Australia showed that mastery-approach is not a significant correlate of academic outcomes. Similarly, Asplund's (2014) study from Finland also reported that no difference exists between orientation profile and outcomes from mobile assignments, and that students with a positive orientation profile did not get any better results from mobile assignments than students with a negative orientation profile. In Kenya, Ng'ang'a et al. (2018) indicated that all the domains of achievement goal orientation correlated to academic achievement. Similarly, Ireri's (2015) study argued that the highest relationship is observed between performance avoidance among students in Kenya.

The reviewed studies above provide substantial ground upon which the current study is established. It has emerged that some reviewed studies were qualitative in nature and their results had limited generalizations, but the present study being quantitative in nature enhances generalizability of findings. Moreover, some previous studies were descriptive in nature and hence the findings were not conclusive since they lack inferential analysis; however, the present study used inferential statistics which have produced conclusive results. Some of reviewed studies had small sample sizes which weakens the statistical power in the findings reported, but the present study had a relatively bigger sample size, hence, the findings are strong. From the reviewed previous studies, it emerges that some constructs of goal orientation have been studied and their findings indicate that there is limited research on the four goals combined and their influence on learning readiness among new university students. The present study extends knowledge in goal orientations by studying on how the four aspects predict learning readiness among first year university students in selected public universities in Kenya. Thus, by studying all the four constructs as predictors of learning readiness among first year university students in the Kenyan context, the researcher hopes to have filled in a gap left by past research and contribute to knowledge in educational psychology as a discipline and learning readiness among first year students at university in particular.

## The Present Study

The present study investigated the relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students in three selected public universities in Kenya. The research hypotheses were stated as follows:

- Ho1: *There is no significant relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students in three selected public universities in Kenya.*
- Ho2: *There is no significant difference in learning readiness among first year students of different goal orientations in three selected public universities in Kenya*

## Methods

### Research Design

This study adopted an *ex post facto* research design. Kerlinger (1970) defined *ex post facto* research as that in which (a) the independent variable or variables have already occurred, and (b) the researcher starts with the observation of a dependent variable or variables. Thereafter, the effects on the dependent variable or variables is studied regardless of the relationship that exists with the independent variable or variables are studied. Therefore, the *ex post facto* research design is a method of teasing out possible antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, therefore, be engineered or manipulated by the investigator. This design was relevant to the study because there are already first year students in Kenyan at universities who have learning readiness challenges.

### Study Participants

The accessible population comprised 12,000 first year undergraduate students from three selected public universities in Kenya. A sample size of 324 first year students was obtained using both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Out of the sample size of 324 first years, 175 of them were male and 149 were female students. The sample size of 324 was obtained based on the criteria outlined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970); specifically, for quantitative data where the level of confidence is 95%, and the margin of error is 5%, a sample size of 324 is appropriate.

### Research Tools

Two questionnaires, the Goal Questionnaire for Students (GQS), adapted from Elliot and Murayama (2008), and the Learning Readiness Questionnaire (LRQ), adapted from Lemmens (2010), were used to collect data from first year students. The GQS contained 40 items which were separated equally and then systematically organized into four achievement goals (mastery-approach, performance-approach, mastery-avoidance, and performance-avoidance). The GQS is on a 5-Point Likert scale, where 1 = *absolutely disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *undecided*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *absolutely agree*. The LRQ is a 66-item Likert-type self-report measure of psycho-social constructs related to academic readiness (1 = *definitely disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *agree*, and 5 = *definitely agree*). Content validity of the questionnaires was ensured by expert judgement from two educational psychologists from one public university in Kenya. Reliability of

the questionnaires was ensured by the Cronbach's Alpha method and the results indicate that all sub-scales had alpha of above 0.70. Therefore, the Cronbach's Alpha result for questionnaires reveals that the instruments had adequate reliability for the study.

## **Procedure**

Ethical clearance for the study was first obtained from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) in Kenya. To access the selected universities for data collection, permission was sought from the respective office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs. On the day of data collection, the researcher was assisted by the staff from the office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs to obtain the participants. The first-year students who participated in this study were not forced to do so, because coercing someone to participate in the research is considered unethical (Marczyk et al., 2005); hence, the principle of voluntary participation was upheld in this research. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants after which they signed consent forms. The selected students then filled in the questionnaires for about 45 minutes after which they were handed back to the researcher.

## **Data Analysis**

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the quantitative data. Inferential statistics such as Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, linear regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze data. In order to ascertain the type of statistical tests to use in the analysis, the normality of the data was tested through the use of formal test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The results on normality of data show both Kolmogorov-Smirnov (*K-S*) and Shapiro-Wilk test results. The present study used the latter to interpret the normality of the variables because Shapiro-Wilk's (*W*) is recommended for small and medium samples up to  $n = 2,000$ , as suggested by Garson (2012).

*W* is analogous to the correlation between a given data and its corresponding normal scores, with  $W = 1$  when their correlation is perfectly normal. This implies that a significantly ( $p < .05$ ) smaller *W* than 1 means that the normality is not met. Hence, the data is normally distributed when Shapiro-Wilk ( $W$ )  $> .05$ . It is evident that all the variables met the normality condition ( $p > .05$ ) because there were no statistically significant differences noted in any of the variables with their corresponding normal scores. This implies that the normality assumption was not violated, thus inferential analyses was applicable.

## **Results**

### **Return Rate of Questionnaires**

The summary of return rate of questionnaires from the respondents indicated that out of a total of 372 questionnaires administered to the first-year university students, 324 of them were returned for data analysis. This translates to 87.1% response rate. Oso and Onen (2009) observed that while 50% response rate is adequate, and 60% is good, a response rate of above 70% is very good. Based on this claim, the current study's response rate of 87.1% is therefore very good. The recorded high response rate was attributed to the fact that the questionnaires from this study were personally administered to the respondents by the researcher and the assistants. The researcher

also pre-notified the study participants of the intention of the study, told them they would be asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire, and said that the completed questionnaires would be collected shortly afterwards.

### Respondents' Demographic Information

The study sought to investigate the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Demographic information, which explored bio-data regarding the respondents, was considered necessary for the determination of whether the respondents were representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes. The demographic information collected included the gender and age of the first-year students at the universities. The bio-data information of the first-year students who took part in the survey is presented in Table 1.

The information indicated that although the relative majority, or 175 (54.0%) of the freshmen were males, female students were also represented in the study. This is consistent with Belenky and Nokes-Malach (2013), who reported that 40% were males and 33% were females, which implies that there were more male than females among the first-year students registered at the selected universities. With respect to their ages, it was established from the results of the survey that a significant majority of the respondents were younger than 25 years old: 104 (32.1%) participants were under 20 years old while those between 20–24 years of age were 65.4% ( $n = 212$ ) of the students who took part in the survey. However, the mean age of the student respondents was 20.53 years, with a standard deviation of 1.977. This is in line with Lemmens et al.'s (2011) study where the respondent's mean age was 19 years old ( $SD = 0.50$ ), showing that the age difference was very small.

### Correlation Between Aspects Goal Orientation and Learning Readiness

The relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year undergraduate students was assessed using inferential analyses. The null hypothesis is stated as follows:

- $H_{01}$ : *There is no significant relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students in three selected public universities in Kenya.*

Table 1

*Demographic Information of the First Year Students*

Bio-data	Count	Percent	Cumulative percentage
Gender			
Male	175	54.0	54.0
Female	149	46.0	100.0
Total	324	100.0	
Age			
Below 20	104	32.1	32.1
20-24	212	65.4	97.5
25-29	6	1.9	99.4
Above 29	2	0.6	100.0
Total	324	100.0	

Table 2

*Correlation Between Aspects of Goal Orientation and Learning Readiness*

Goal Orientation		Learning Readiness
Mastery-Approach	Pearson Correlation	0.733**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	324
Mastery-Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	0.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	324
Performance-Approach	Pearson Correlation	0.665*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	324
Performance-Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	0.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.502
	N	324

To test this hypothesis, a parametric test, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, was computed, with scores on aspects goal orientation as the independent variable and learning readiness as dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 2.

The correlation results, presented in Table 2, show that there is a significant strong positive correlation ( $r = .733$ ,  $n = 324$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between mastery-approach goal orientation and learning readiness and a significant positive, though weak, correlation ( $r = .219$ ,  $n = 324$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between mastery-avoidance goal orientation and learning readiness. There was a significant positive, moderate, correlation ( $r = .665$ ,  $n = 324$ ,  $p < .05$ ) between performance-approach goal orientation and learning readiness, with high performance-approach goal orientation resulting in to improved learning readiness among the students. Finally, there was no significant correlation ( $r = .037$ ,  $n = 324$ ,  $p = .502$ ) between performance-avoidance goal orientation and learning readiness. Since the p-values obtained were less than 0.05, in the three of the four elements of goal orientation, it can therefore be concluded that the null hypothesis, which stated that “*there is no significant relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students in three selected public universities in Kenya*” has been rejected. Thus, there is a significant relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year students from three selected public universities in Kenya.

**Linear Regression Analysis on Goal Orientation on Learning Readiness**

In addition, to approximate the level of influence of elements of goal orientation on learning readiness, a coefficient of determination was computed using of regression analysis (see Table 3).

From the linear regression results in Table 3, the model reveals that mastery-approach goal orientation accounted for 53.8% as signified by coefficient  $R^2 = .538$  of the variation in learning readiness among the first-year students. It was also evident that mastery-avoidance goal orientation accounted for only 4.8% (coefficient  $R^2 = .048$ ) of the variation in learning readiness

Table 3

*Model Summary on Linear Regression Analysis of Influence of Goal Orientation on Learning Readiness*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Mastery-Approach	.733 <sup>a</sup>	.538	.536	.43420
Mastery-Avoidance	.219 <sup>a</sup>	.048	.045	.62295
Performance-Approach	.665 <sup>a</sup>	.443	.441	.47670
Performance-Avoidance	.037 <sup>a</sup>	.001	-.002	.63801

Predictors: Mastery-Approach, Mastery-Avoidance, Performance-Approach, Performance Avoidance

Table 4

*Group Descriptions on Learning Readiness*

Goal Orientation Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% C.I for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mastery-Avoidance	42	2.4327	.46873	.07233	2.2867	2.5788
Performance-Avoidance	74	3.6115	.55966	.06506	3.4818	3.7411
Performance-Approach	191	3.8007	.36323	.02628	3.8188	3.9225
Mastery-Approach	17	3.8074	.39605	.09606	3.6037	4.0110
Total	324	3.6218	.63747	.03542	3.5521	3.6914

among the first-year students. In addition, performance-approach goal orientation accounted for only 44.3% (coefficient  $R^2 = .443$ ) of the variation in learning readiness among the first-year students. Finally, performance-avoidance goal orientation accounted for only 0.1% (coefficient  $R^2 = .001$ ) of the variation in learning readiness among the first-year students, which is almost negligible.

### Overall Influence of Student Goal Orientation on Learning Readiness

The study sought to establish whether there was any significant difference in learning readiness among first year university students with different goal orientations, as measured by a learning readiness questionnaire and a goal orientation questionnaire. This was tested by use of a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), which tested the null hypothesis that

- *Ho2: There is no significant difference in learning readiness among first year students of different goal orientations in three selected public universities in Kenya*

Goal orientation is the independent variable, but the overall learning readiness index is the dependent variable. Goal orientation was categorized into four groups (Group 1: Mastery-Approach Goal; Group 2: Performance-Approach Goal; Group 3: Mastery Avoidance Goal; and Group 4: Performance-Avoidance Goal). The mean average response of the sampled students in each type of goal orientation was computed to help classify them into their possible goal orientation type. The results in Table 4 shows group description for overall learning readiness scores got by each group of goal orientation.

From the results of description summary in Table 4, it is revealed that students who exhibit



mastery-approach orientation had higher mean ( $n = 17$ , mean = 3.80, standard deviation = .396, and standard error = .096) in learning readiness index than the other groups. Mastery-avoidance group had the lowest learning readiness index ( $n = 42$ , mean = 2.43, standard deviation = .468, and standard error = .0723). However, the results were further subjected to hypothesis testing using ANOVA. The ANOVA model used is:

$$H_0: \bar{x}_1 = \bar{x}_2 = \bar{x}_3 = \bar{x}_4$$

$$H_a: \bar{x}_1 \neq \bar{x}_2 \neq \bar{x}_3 \neq \bar{x}_4$$

Where  $\bar{x}_1, \bar{x}_2, \bar{x}_3,$  and  $\bar{x}_4,$  being the samples means of learning readiness for the four different groups of goal orientations. The significant level (p-value) is set at 0.05, where if the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis which stated that “*there is no significant difference in learning readiness among first year students of different goal orientations*” is rejected and a conclusion reached that there is indeed a significant relationship between the two variables. If the p-value is greater than 0.05, it would be determined that a statistically significant relationship does not exist. Given that a statistically significant difference was established, the hypothesis  $H_0: \bar{x}_1 = \bar{x}_2 = \bar{x}_3 = \bar{x}_4$  is rejected. Hence, the alternative hypothesis  $H_a: \bar{x}_1 \neq \bar{x}_2 \neq \bar{x}_3 \neq \bar{x}_4$  is accepted and the conclusion reached is that student’s goal orientation has significant influence on first year students’ learning readiness for university education. However, given the fact that a significant difference was established, it was necessary to further find out which group was significantly different from which other group. This was done by computing a post-hoc Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test.

### Tukey Honestly Significant Difference Test

The statistical significance of the differences between each pair of groups was provided in the table of multiple comparisons, which gives the results of the post-hoc tests (Table 5).

The finding of the study indicated, as demonstrated in Table 5, that the overall learning readiness mean score for mastery-avoidance ( $M = 2.43$ ;  $SD = .468$ ) is significantly lower from the mean score of the other three groups of goal orientations. The level of learning readiness of the mastery-approach goal orientation group did not significantly ( $p = .938$ ) differ with the performance-approach goal orientation group and performance-avoidance goal ( $p = .331$ ).

### Evaluation of the Effect Size

The importance of the finding is established by calculating the effect size, which is also called the strength of association. Effect size indicates the relative magnitude of the differences between the means. In other words, it helps to describe the amount of the total variance in the dependent variable (learning readiness) that is predictable from knowledge of the levels of the independent variables (goal orientations type). The Eta squared measuring the effect size in ANOVA results is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{\text{Sum of squares between groups}}{\text{Total sum of squares}} \text{ was } 0.547.$$

The calculated Eta squared (.547) implied that a fairly large proportion (54.7%) of variance in the learning readiness index among the first-year students is explained by goal orientation of the students’ significant difference in learning readiness index with other groups.

Table 5

*Tukey HSD Test by Multiple Comparisons*

(I) Types of Goal Orientation	(J) Types of Goal Orientation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% C.I.	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Mastery-Avoidance Goal	Performance-Avoidance Goal	-1.17875*	.08327	.000	-1.3938	-.9637
	Performance-Approach Goal	-1.43794*	.07346	.000	-1.6277	-1.2482
	Mastery-Approach Goal	-1.37461*	.12390	.000	-1.6946	-1.0546
Performance-Avoidance Goal	Mastery-Avoidance Goal	1.17875*	.08327	.000	.9637	1.3938
	Performance-Approach Goal	-.25919*	.05902	.000	-.4116	-.1068
	Mastery-Approach Goal	-.19587	.11593	.331	-.4953	.1035
Performance-Approach Goal	Mastery-Avoidance Goal	1.43794*	.07346	.000	1.2482	1.6277
	Performance-Avoidance Goal	.25919*	.05902	.000	.1068	.4116
	Mastery-Approach Goal	.06333	.10909	.938	-.2184	.3451
Mastery-Approach Goal	Mastery-Avoidance Goal	1.37461*	.12390	.000	1.0546	1.6946
	Performance-Avoidance Goal	.19587	.11593	.331	-.1035	.4953
	Performance-Approach Goal	-.06333	.10909	.938	-.3451	.2184

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Dependent Variable: Overall Learning Readiness

## Discussion

The study examined the relationship between goal orientation and learning readiness among first year undergraduate students at three selected public universities in Kenya. The findings indicated that a student's goal orientation has significant influence on their learning readiness for university education. The finding of the study also showed that the overall learning readiness mean score for mastery-avoidance is significantly different (lower) from the mean score of the other three groups of goal orientations. The level of learning readiness of the mastery-approach goal orientation group does not significantly differ with performance-approach goal orientation group and performance-avoidance goal. The findings also demonstrated that a fairly large proportion of variance in the learning readiness index among the first years is explained by goal orientation of the students' significant difference in the learning readiness index with other groups. This finding is inconsistent with Ramnarain and Ramaila (2014), who found a stronger mastery goals orientation than performance goals and performance avoidance goals orientations. In addition,

Umbarger (2015) determined that positive relationships between mastery orientation and performance orientation with achievement which differ across grade levels. Similarly, Hazley (2016) argued that performance approach has a significant positive effect on course grades through engagement, but performance-avoidance has a significant negative effect on course grades through lack of regulation. Phan (2010) reported that there are temporally displaced effects of mastery and performance-approach goals on academic performance. Mouratidis et al. (2018) concurred that perceived mastery goal structures are found to relate to mastery-approach goals, which in turn positively predict end-year grades through challenge seeking. Finally, Ng'ang'a et al. (2018) also agreed that all the domains of achievement goal orientation correlated to academic achievement.

On the contrary, Phan (2014) indicated that mastery-approach was not significant correlate of academic outcomes. Similarly, Asplund (2014) concluded that no difference can be found between orientation profile and outcomes from online assignments since students with a positive orientation profile did not get any better results from online assignments than students with a negative orientation profile. In addition, Senko et al. (2013) found that performance-approach goals facilitated high achievement in the high challenge condition but not in the low challenge condition. The implication of this finding is that goal orientation is important in determining student academic success in institutions.

It can be concluded that a fairly large proportion of variance in the learning readiness index among the first-year students is explained by the goal orientation of the students. The model reveals that mastery-approach goal orientation accounts for highest of the variation in learning readiness among the first-year students. This is followed by performance-approach goal orientation, then mastery-avoidance goal orientation, and the least is performance-avoidance goal orientation. Based on the current study findings, it can be concluded that the university has a big role in facilitating the successful transition of first year university students. Thus, universities should emphasize a techniques of performance approach in their guidance programmes. This is because the study found the performance approach goal to be a significant predictor of learning readiness. Future studies could focus on longitudinal designs to study the role of achievement goals among students over time.

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