

Motivational Factors of Albanian Graduate Students Pursuing a Master Degree in Education

Abstract

This study explained the reasons why Albanian students decide to pursue graduate studies, especially a master degree. In this paper, the factors that motivate the students to pursue a master degree in education in different universities in Albania are investigated to create a broader understanding of their purpose in enhancing their academic career. The data are obtained from a close-ended survey in a Likert type scale with adequate validity and reliability. The sample consists of 82 students (female = 70 (85.4%) and male = 12 (14.6%)) who were master degree students studying in the field of education at state and private universities in Albania.

The results revealed that there are no differences in motivation factors for master degrees between male and female students. However, the findings show that there is a significant difference in expecting to earn higher compensation, in finding opportunity for more challenging work, obtaining credentials as regulated by the law and remaining competitive in the field of education between female and male students. At the end conclusions and implications are provided for the higher education institutions and other related instances.

Keywords: Higher Education, Graduate Students, Motivation, Career Enhancement

1-Introduction

Nowadays, graduate education is perceived as a necessity to be completed by obtaining a master degree in the field of interest of the students. Education is a vital tool in achieving the “good life”, and children are taught from the earliest levels of their educational hierarchy to be determined in their studies (Teowkul et al., 2009). Considering Albania, the higher education system is facing many challenges and problems that need to be addressed and overcome by the professors, lecturers, administrators and students. A university degree is no longer sufficient to get a job in any field in Albania. Earning a master degree minimizes the likelihood of unemployment and increases the chance to find a position after graduation. Thus, it is highly recommended for each student to enroll in such education firstly, to complete the second cycle of the studies, secondly, to develop professionally and lastly, to enhance the academic career. One must continually retool one’s knowledge and skills to be employable and competitive in the global market place (Lauzon, 2011).

Education is now increasingly created, promoted, and distributed as a product for tangible returns, with nations and institutions in competition for students and research funding (Lauzon, 2011). Especially, in the field of education there is a lack of qualified researchers equipped with the latest research methods and knowledge about recent studies in higher educational institutions such as universities, research centers and so on. There is also a considerable lack of strategies in the universities on how to provide accurate information about the university students to motivate them to continue their graduate education. As far as it is concerned, motivation plays an important role in the students learning and academic career enhancement. Some studies show that students are influenced by their families, their peers or by environmental factors when they decide to pursue a master degree (Teowkul et al., 2009; Taheri, 2011). However, a certain number of graduate students experience difficulties with coping with the graduate school due to the lack of clarity of interest, not having a clear career plan and occupation before enrolling in graduate school. This is explained by Lin (2011), where she indicates that these students might be under the pressure of the parents, peers or sociocultural factors in deciding to pursue a graduate degree. The motivational factors that influence the students in enrolling into a graduate program, can be classified as: individual,/personal, career oriented and environmental factors

2- Individual Factors

Individual factors play an important role in the student’s motivation to enhance their education. Such factors refer to satisfaction in self-improvement, gaining more respect from others, self-confidence, educational goal and the improvement of English skill.

Motivation is defined as people’s needs and desires that influence their behaviors (Teowkul et al., 2009). Classifications of motivations must be based upon goals rather than upon instigating drives or motivated behavior. The motivations are only one class of determinants of behavior. While behavior is almost always motivated, it is also almost always biologically, culturally and situationally determined as well (Maslow, 1943). People who are highly motivated always try to find ways for self-improvement by getting access to different sources of information and educational programs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to the student development theory, a highly involved student is more likely to devote all the time

and energy to studying (Labosier & Labosier, 2011), academic experience and interacts more frequently with faculty members and the students (Astin, 1999). His work shows that being academically involved is strongly related to satisfaction with all aspects of college life and these students experience considerable satisfaction, maybe because of the institutional rewards due to academic achievement. In another study of Elias and the colleagues (2011), motivational forces such as future time reference, achievement need, learning goals, expectancy values, self-efficacy and self-determination are shown to be strongly associated with academic performance.

According to the motivation theory, all people in our society have a need for self-respect, or self-esteem which is based upon real capacity, achievement and respect from others. Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world (Maslow, 1943). People feel like they need to be involved in different activities where they can contribute, feel as valued and accepted by the society. Students' perceptions and experiences in an educational setting influence the development of their self-esteem (Harter, 1998; Samdal et al., 1998) and their learning objectives and encourage them to become more effective and self-motivated toward their education. Individuals who aim at achieving their educational goals, take responsibility for their own learning because they want to acquire new skills, improve their competence and increase their knowledge and understanding by putting efforts during this process (Boekaerts, 2002).

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5- Method and Research Questions

Sample

This study was conducted to provide a broader understanding of the purpose of the Albanian students on pursuing a master degree in education. Thus, it was aimed to explore the factors that motivate them while obtaining such an education and what influences them more during this experience. As shown in Table 1, the sample consists of 82 master students including 12 males (14.6 %) and 70 females (85.4 %).

Table 1. Distribution Categories by Gender

Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Male	12	14.6
Female	70	85.4
Total	82	100.0

Research questions

To find out the relationship between the motivational factors with gender, current status, age and demographic information, the following research questions are formulated:

- a- Are there any differences in motivation factors for master degrees between male and female students?
- b- Are there any differences in motivation factors between working and not-working master students?
- c- Are there any differences in motivation factors between group age (20-25) and group age (31-35) master students?
- d- Is there any relationship between parental education level and the students' motivational factors?

Measurement tool

In this study, a close-ended survey was used to obtain demographic information and data about the motivational factors of the participants. The items of this survey were forced choice and a five-point Likert type scale was used to measure the respondent's level of agreement with the motivation factors. The statements included in the questionnaire were clearly stated and aimed at obtaining the needed information about the students' opinion on their motivational factors. The questionnaire consisted of three parts in four pages. In the first page brief information is provided for the respondents about the reason of using this questionnaire and then, demographic information related items are included in the first and the second page of the questionnaire. In the third and the fourth page the third part consists of items including the motivational factors. A Likert type scale is usually used in such questionnaire to measure the respondent's opinion, preference, and subjective reactions (Teowkul et al., 2009).

Validity and reliability.

For the internal consistency and reliability we measured the Cronbach's alpha, which is a method of estimating internal reliability. As shown in Table 2, we received a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.727 for the items. Considering that Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0.6, this questionnaire is reliable.

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.727	16

Data collection.

In this study, 105 questionnaires were sent electronically or personally to the students of three public universities in different cities of Albania. The students were provided brief information about the aim of the study, they were assured confidentiality and they were thanked about their willingness to participate in this study. The survey took about 5-7 minutes to be completed before the lecture time or during the break. Completed questionnaires were collected by the lecturer of a certain discipline in each university and they were returned to the secretary of the department. Totally, 82 surveys were completed and returned to the department.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample. The responses received from this study were coded as -2, -1, 0, 1, 2. The data was analyzed using the independent samples T-test of SPSS for windows to compare the level of agreement of the motivational factors, and check if the difference between the mean values of the test variable for one group differs significantly from the mean value of that variable for the second group with regard to gender and the current work status of the respondents. Bivariate Pearson correlation analysis was computed to find out if there is an association between the respondent's demographic data

and the motivational factors.

In Table 3, it is shown that more than half of the respondents (62.2 %) were between the age of 20-25. The majority of the respondents (54.9 %) were working during the time they conducted their graduate studies.

Table 3. Distribution Categories by Age

Distribution	Frequency	Percent
20 - 25	51	62.2
26 - 30	12	14.6
31 - 35	8	9.8
36 - 40	7	8.5
above 41	4	4.9
Total	82	100.0

Table 4. Distribution Categories by Status

Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Not working	37	45.1
Working	45	54.9
Total	82	100.0

As can be seen from Table 5, the highest level of education of the majority of the parents (54%) is with high school diploma. Only 2% of the respondents had parents where the mother had a master or doctoral degree and the father had a bachelor degree. While, 27 % of the respondents' parents had both a bachelor degree.

Table 5. Crosstabulation of Maternal and Paternal Education Level

		Paternal Edu. Level			Total
		Elementary/Middle	High School	Bachelor	
Maternal Edu. Level	Elementary/Middle	3	1	0	4
	High School	1	32	11	44
	Bachelor	1	8	22	31
	Master/Doctoral	0	1	2	3
Total		5	42	35	82

6- Results

The results revealed that there were no significant differences between male and female graduate students in the motivational factors (personal development, career enhancement, career switching and environmental factors) for pursuing a master degree in education. However, as can be seen from Table 6, male students differed significantly from female students on “Getting promoted to a higher position” ($p = .036$); “Fulfilling family’s expectation” ($p = .019$); and “Acting in accordance to social values” ($p = .064$). The statistical

analyses showed that there were no significant differences also between not working and working students in the motivational factors. No differences in the motivational factors were found also between age group of (20-25) and age group of (31-35) of the master students. As shown in Table 7, the students who belonged to the age group of (31-35) significantly differed from the students of age group (20-25) only on “Remaining competitive in the field of education” ($p < .05$) and in “Providing opportunity for more challenging work” ($p < .05$). Bivariate Pearson correlation analyses showed that there was no association between maternal education level and the motivational factors of the graduate students. On the other side, a positive correlation was found between paternal education level and the students’ motivation in “getting promoted to a higher position” ($r = .33$, $p = .003$) and “remaining competitive in the field of education” ($r = .28$, $p = .012$).

Table 6: Comparison of Female and Male Master Students on Motivational Factors ($n = 70$ females and 12 males)

Variable	M	SD	t	df	P
Get promote			-2.17	43.4	.036
Female	1.47	1.03			
Male	1.83	0.39			
Fullfil Fam Exp			-2.56	20.75	.019
Female	.40	1.62			
Male	1.33	1.85			
Act to Social V			-1.96	20.28	.064
Female	.76	1.47			
Male	1.42	1			

Table 7: Comparison of Categories of Age of Master Students on Motivational Factors ($n = 51$ students btw (20 – 25) years and 8 students btw (31 – 35) years)

Variable	M	SD	t	df	P
Rem Comp Edu			-5.62	49	$p < .05$
20 - 25 years	.88	1.41			
31 - 35 years	2	.00			
Opp Chall Work			-4.19	50	$p < .05$
20 - 25 years	1.41	1			
31 - 35 years	2	.00			

7- Conclusions and Implications

This study was conducted to reveal the motivational factors of the students who pursue a master degree in the field of education. It was found that there are no differences between male and female graduate students and working and not working master students in the motivational factors in pursuing a master degree in education. The results showed that the need “to get promoted to a higher position”, “to fulfill family’s expectations” and “to act in accordance to social values” was more evident for male graduate students than for female graduate students. Maternal education level had no effect on the motivational factors of the

graduate students. While, paternal education level had a strong influence on the students motivation in “getting promoted to a higher position” and in “remaining competitive in the field of education.” As a limitation of this study we can mention the small number of respondents, which might have had an impact on the results. Another limitation can be the fact that we did not include a formal qualitative dimension to the data collection process to obtain more information about the motivational factors from the respondents.

In the light of the findings of this study some implications about education related institutions and high instances are worth to be mentioned. Such motivational factors can function as reinforcement for the graduate students where these factors can remind them their purpose of starting such a program. Arnes (1990) states that students get more involved in learning when they get more support from the teachers who encourage them to succeed academically and have high expectations for their success. It takes everyone’s goal-oriented and mission-driven efforts to achieve students’ success (Teowkul et al., 2009; Yu-Nu, 2011). Together with the efforts and commitment of the faculty members, administrators of educational institutions and the students in working hard to achieve success can also facilitate every other aspect of life of both the students and the university’s staff.

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