



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**EFFECTS OF ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION TRAINING
ON A GROUP OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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By

CHUAH KIM LIAN

**Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in the Faculty of
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By

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Chairperson : Habibah Elias, Ph.D.

Faculty : Educational Studies

This study examined the effects of achievement motivation training on a group of secondary school students. The training programme was developed based on activities adapted from the McClelland's tradition. It comprised 10 activities carried out in five sessions with each session lasting two and a half hours. Two Form Four classes were requested from the school authority. A total of 70 subjects (N=70) were randomly assigned into two groups based on the pre-test score of need for achievement measured by the Thematic Apperception Test. Treatment in the form of training was given to the first group of 35 Fourth



Formers, whilst another group of 35 Fourth Formers formed the control group which received no treatment. Findings from the study showed that after training, subjects improved in their achievement motivation, locus of control and academic performance of Mathematics in the intended direction. However, results from Analysis of Covariance did not show that there were any significant differences in need for achievement, locus of control and academic performance in Mathematics between the trained and the untrained subjects.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti
Pertanian Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian daripada keperluan
untuk mendapatkan Ijazah Master Sains.

**KESAN LATIHAN MOTIVASI PENCAPAIAN
KE ATAS SEKUMPULAN PELAJAR SEKOLAH MENENGAH**

oleh

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Kajian ini mengkaji kesan latihan motivasi pencapaian terhadap sekumpulan pelajar sekolah menengah. Program latihan motivasi pencapaian direkabentuk berdasarkan aktiviti-aktiviti yang telah digunakan dalam tradisi McClelland. Program latihan terdiri daripada sepuluh aktiviti yang dijalankan dalam lima sesi di mana setiap sesi mengambil masa dua setengah jam. Subjek kajian terdiri daripada 70 orang pelajar Tingkatan Empat. Selepas ujian pra diberi, berdasarkan skor Ujian Peramatan Tematik, subjek dipilih secara rawak dan dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan, setiap kumpulan berjumlah 35 orang pelajar. Rawatan dalam bentuk latihan diberi kepada Kumpulan Eksperimen. Kumpulan Kawalan tidak diberi rawatan.

Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar yang telah dilatih mengalami kemajuan dalam motivasi pencapaian, lokus kawalan dan Matematik mengikut arah yang dijangka. Akan tetapi, dapatan dari Analisis Kovarians tidak menunjukkan perubahan yang signifikan antara pelajar yang dilatih dan pelajar yang tidak dilatih dari segi motivasi pencapaian, lokus kawalan dan prestasi Matematik.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Learning and success in education have always been of great interest and concern among students, educators, educational psychologists, parents and society at large. When discussing factors influencing academic performance, individual differences in intelligence, demographic variables, parental interest, school facilities, study and teaching methods were being mentioned.

Nevertheless, recent research findings suggest that variables like student motivation, attitudes, perceptions, personality traits have in fact more significant correlational effects on learning and achievement (Nicholls, Cheung, Lauer and Patashnick, 1989; Fyans and Jr. Maehr, 1987; Schutz, 1993). Measures relating to ability, social demographic variables when study in isolation add little to the prediction of academic achievement.

In Malaysia, attempts have been conducted to study the determinants of academic achievement. In the earlier years, Chiam (1976) has indicated that specific self-concept measures are



good predictors of academic performance. Her later study (Ng and Chiam, 1982) supported that academic self-concept has significant though low correlation with academic success.

In a study conducted by Hussein (1979) on determinants of academic performance on lower secondary school students, analysis of the data indicated minimal parental effects as well as teacher press effects in the form of teachers' interest and commitment at this level of education. Findings showed strong student press effects, namely, their previous performance and their status-placement in the different stream settings in school, to achievement in the lower secondary public examination.

Isahak (1988) showed that while socio-economic factors were important contributing factors to pupils' academic achievement, the teacher factor in the form of teacher's expectation of pupil performance seems to be important as a predictor of pupils' achievement in primary schools.

In Rahil's (1991) study, the attempt to determine the predictors of academic achievement had led to the findings that sociometric status, type of school, intelligence and class stream were indeed predictors of academic achievement of secondary school students. In the same study, the importance of some non-intellectual factors in explaining the effects of examination on anxiety has been highlighted.

These studies investigated generally the influences of social demographic variables, self concept, intelligence, school facilities and teacher's expectation upon academic performance.

Wan Rafaei's studies (1972,1974) brought into attention another crucial personality variable as a determinant of academic success, that is, the achievement motive which is defined as a need to strive for excellence. He investigated the achievement motivation of students from both English and Malay-medium schools and found no significant difference in their mean scores as measured by the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Wan Rafaei and Enshah, 1974).

Further research on the achievement motive was carried out by Habibah (1979). In her study done on primary school children, she reported that pupils who were highly motivated performed better in the Standard Five Assessment Examination. There was a positive correlation between achievement motivation and academic success.

In another study conducted on achievement motivation, Habibah (1991) reported that university students improved significantly in their achievement motivation, locus of control and also some quantitative and creative courses after they had undergone a programme of achievement motivation training.

Achievement Motivation Training

The achievement motive had been widely researched in the West, especially in the United States in the 1960's. McClelland (1961) who postulated the Affective Theory of Achievement Motivation states that individuals with high achievement motivation tend to think and act in ways demonstrating entrepreneurs' spirits or as suggested by McClelland the Spirits of Hermes, a mythological figure who demonstrated energetic, entrepreneurial characteristics (McClelland, 1961). McClelland (1953) stresses that achievement motivation can be 'learned'. He further maintains that an individual's attitude and performance can be improved through developing his achievement motivation. McClelland and his associates (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell, 1953) put all the traits possessed by people of high achievement motivation together in an instructional package and began developing achievement motivation training.

In the 1960's, McClelland (1969) developed a motivation training programme which was aimed at influencing all the theoretical determinants of performance - namely, motive strength, perceived probability of success and incentive value of success. McClelland (1969) then taught achievement motivation training primarily to adults, in particular the businessmen. He had demonstrated successfully the effectiveness of achievement motivation training in a wide variety of cultures.

Following that, achievement motivation training was adapted for the classroom in the late 1960s. McClelland, Rindlisbacher and de Charms (1955) found a low significant relationship between need for achievement and school grade of college students. Other researchers too have found small but significant relationship between need for achievement and academic performance of high school students (Uhlinger and Stephens, 1960). 'Underachievers', on the other hand, appeared to have very low achievement motivation (Burgess, 1957; Gebhart and Hoyt, 1958). Morgan (1966) showed that in equal-ability grouped classrooms, need for achievement was strongly related to grades attained.

Findings from Alschuler's studies (1973) however, did not show clear correlation between achievement motivation training and academic achievement. Nevertheless, the training indicated improvements in achievement oriented activities such as better school attendance, more goal-directed leisure as well as work activities (Alschuler, 1973). Smith (1973) reported that achievement motivation training helped students to expand their goals as well as aided them to realize their potentials more fully. According to Smith, achievement motivation training can be related to career development planning and exploration.

Statement of the Problem

The results of achievement motivation training in education do not seem to have a consistent correlation with academic performance (Alschuler, 1973; McGee, 1980). Nevertheless, it is felt that studies on achievement motivation training should be undertaken because achievement motivation training may work. Findings from Alschuler's studies (1973) and Smith's study (1973) indicated that training increased achievement motivation and achievement oriented activities among the trained students. Training has certainly helped adolescents to have better school attitude and school attendance, to think more seriously about their work habits, their career planning though it did not affect their academic results directly.

In fact, Parker and his associates (1991) examined the relationship between motivation needs and measures of life success. He reported that need for achievement was positively related to success strivings for status, wealth, professional fulfilment and contribution to society. In another research conducted on 122 male and 128 female adolescents in the People's Republic of China, it was reported that there was strong interdependence among achievement motivation, future planning and time management for both genders (Bergen, 1994).

For these meaningful social and practical reasons, it is deemed useful to study if training can increase the achievement

motivation of adolescents. It is thus the intention of this study to examine whether achievement motivation of secondary school students can be increased by training.

Other variables that concern the study are locus of control and academic performance. Findings from several studies revealed that high internals tend to perform better academically than low internals (Reid and Croucher, 1980; Maznah and Choo, 1984). Habibah's study (1991) showed a positive correlation between locus of control and achievement motivation. In addition, Reimanis (1971) found that improvement in an individual's internal locus of control can actually prepare him for better results for subsequent participation in achievement motivation training. Generally, it appears that internals tend to have greater sense of responsibility for the outcomes of their performance.

As evident from previous studies mentioned above, there are positive correlation between the two variables, that is, achievement motivation and locus of control. These variables may be the factors influencing learning and academic success. Hence, a study on achievement motivation and locus of control of students is important for there may be an improvement in the students' academic performance following an increase in the need for achievement after the achievement motivation training.

Academic performance measured in terms of English and Mathematics scores will be another variable under investigation.

Objectives of the Study

In general, this study attempts to assess the effectiveness of the achievement motivation training on a few student variables. The specific objectives of the study are :

- 1) To compare the difference in achievement motivation of the trained and the untrained students.
- 2) To compare the difference in locus of control of the trained and the untrained students.
- 3) To compare the difference in the academic performance of the trained and the untrained students.

Null Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated based on the objectives of the study :

- I. There is no significant difference in achievement motivation between the trained and the untrained students.
- II. There is no significant difference in locus of control between the trained and the untrained students.
- III. There is no significant difference in the academic performance between the trained and the untrained students.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the field of educational psychology as its findings serve to verify if short, intensive achievement motivation training can improve the achievement motivation of a group of adolescents under study.

The findings from the study will provide information to educational planners, administrators, school counselors and teachers if the level of achievement motivation in an individual can be improved through training. These findings may then add to the belief that achievement motivation training is vital and could be incorporated as part of the daily curriculum; or as programme for extra-curricular activities for the development of individual potentials.

Teachers who are aware of the importance and differences in students' achievement motivation will be more sensitive and better able to guide their students to develop or improve through appropriate strategies. They will be able to identify children with low achievement motivation and coach them accordingly. As suggested by de Charms (1969) , if teachers were themselves being given the benefits of achievement motivation training, they would be able to help set up and create learning environment which emphasizes students' attention, participation and accountability. This learning environment promotes achievement

motivation and enhances learning gains. Consequently, students would be able to develop their potentials more effectively.

To the students, the achievement motivation training can actually be beneficial. Findings from previous studies have indicated that achievement motivation training increased the participants' achievement motivation and locus of control (Habibah, 1991). Findings from Smith (1973) and Alschuler's studies (1973) have also shown that the training had helped the participants greatly. After the training, the participants were reported to be more capable of planning and managing their activities. There were also recorded improvements in the participants' school attendance and leisure activities (Alschuler, 1973).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study faces the constraints of both time and financial factors; as such the researcher confines to focus on the effects of a short but intensive motivation training course on a group of students.

As it is an experimental study, the sample size is small. It is the intention of the researcher to convince that achievement motivation of secondary school students can be increased by training. The findings are only applicable to the group of Form

Four secondary school students in a normal government secondary school under study.

This study is also limited to assess the effects of training on adolescents' achievement motivation as measured by Murray's Thematic Apperception Test (1938), locus of control as measured by Rotter's I-E Scale (1966) and academic performance as measured by Mathematics and English results scored in school examinations.

Operational Definition of Terms

Several terms are used in this study and they are defined as follows :

Students/subjects refer to a group of Form Four students of both gender, aged between 15 and 16, from Sekolah Menengah Sungai Besi in Kuala Lumpur.

Achievement motivation training refers to a training package consisting of instructional materials adapted from the McClelland's tradition. The activities are listed below :

- i) Concepts of Motivation
- ii) Motivation Exercise - Ring-Toss Game
- iii) Determining Goals Exercise
- iv) Prediction Exercise
- v) Causes of Motivation
- vi) Attitude Defense Exercise

- vii) Determining Values Exercise
- viii) Admiration Ladder
- ix) Personal & Grade Goal Exercise
- x) Attitudes and Images

Achievement motivation or the need for achievement refers to the student's desire or tendency to strive for some standard of excellence which may be referred to as n-Ach or n achievement. In this study, it is measured by the Thematic Apperception Test (Murray, 1938, McClelland and Atkinson, 1953) or which will be referred to as TAT. Students are asked to write imaginative stories based on pictures given and the stories are scored on achievement imagery. A higher score indicates a higher need for achievement or a higher achievement motivation and a lower score indicates otherwise.

Locus of control refers to the extent to which the students feel they can control the outcomes of their behaviour. An 'external locus of control' would imply a passive belief that outcomes of the events are controlled by outside influences and are independent of one's actions. On the other hand, an internal locus of control is the belief that events can be influenced by personal behaviour. In this study, locus of control is measured by Rotter's Internal-External Scale which may be referred to as RIES or Rotter's I-E Scale. A higher score reflects a more external locus of control whereas a lower score reflects an internal locus of control.