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The Relationship Between Future Orientation, Social Support, and GPA



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Abstract: This study examined future orientation (FO), Social Support (SS), and GPA in college students. FO has been shown to act as a protective factor for adolescents (Alm & Laftman, 2016; Oshri, 2016; Kim & Bassett 2019; Chua & Milfont, 2019). Research is minimal on FO in college students. This study addressed that gap and investigated the relationships between FO, SS, and GPA. Participants were recruited through social media and summer college courses then completed an anonymous online survey. Bivariate correlations revealed FO, GPA, and SS were all positively correlated. Furthermore, a regression analysis revealed that while family support was positively associated to GPA, support from a special person was negatively related to GPA. Implications include informing campus service personnel of these findings so that they may aid students in maintaining a positive level of FO and educate them on how differing dynamics within social relationships can impact their academic performance.

Background

- FO is umbrella term = one's thoughts and feelings about the future (Alm & Laftman, 2016)
 - Cognitive component = degree to which an individual views the future as being internally or externally controlled; extension of time perspective one judges their future with
 - Motivational component = one's perceived values for their future; various life domains such as educational attainment, as well as job and family status.
 - Affective component = feelings of optimism/pessimism about their future (Alm & Laftman 2016)
- Previous research = focused largely on the affective component in children and adolescences, found it acts as a protective factor and promote positive outcomes (Alm & Laftman, 2016; Chen, 2013; Oshri, 2018)
- Research on FO in college student's is relevantly sparse.
- Perceived parental support acts as a protective factor an in terms of optimism (Trommsdorff 1983)
- SS is a buffer between socioeconomic status (SES) and academic performance (Malecki 2006)
- Family support correlates with higher GPA, regardless of economic support (Cheng 2012)
- No research to date has examined FO and SS together as predictors of college student's GPA
- Research Questions: 1) How does FO develop over time for college students? 2) How are FO, SS, and GPA interrelated?**

Methods

- Participants-** 99 students from a comprehensive southeastern 4-year university
 - 70.7% -women, 26.3% - men, and 3% - transgender, 64.6% of respondents identified as Caucasian, 23.2% African American, 8.1% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian, 2% mixed, and 1% other
- Materials-** 4-item FO scale (Crespo & Jose 2013), 12 item Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet 1988), demographics such as age, gender, GPA, credit hours earned, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status
- Procedure-** anonymous online survey

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Figure 1 – Future Orientation Across Classes

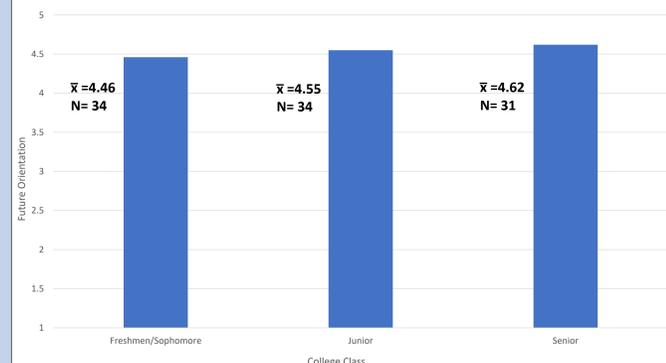


Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics for FO, SS, and GPA

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
FO	2.75	5.00	4.54	.46
SS- Special person	1.00	7.00	5.45	1.38
SS-Friends	2.25	7.00	5.56	1.15
SS- Family	1.25	7.00	5.17	1.39
Total SS	2.50	7.00	5.39	1.08
GPA	2.00	4.00	3.31	.471

Table 2 – Intercorrelations between SO, FO, and GPA

	1	2	3	4	5
1. GPA	-				
2. SS- Special person	-.05	-			
3. SS- Friends	-.01	.61***	-		
4. SS- Family	.26**	.49***	.46***	-	
5. FO	.24*	.28**	.18*	.07	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 3 – FO and SS as predictors of GPA

	GPA ΔR^2	β
Step 1	.11*	
SS Special other		-.19
SS Friends		-.06
SS Family		.38***
Step 2	.08**	
SS Special other		-.28*
SS Friends		.07
SS Family		.40*
FO		.30*
Total R²	.19*	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Results

- One-way ANOVA showed there were no significant differences in FO among classes, $F(2, 96) = .95, p = .39$ (Figure 1).
- Bivariate correlations revealed overall total SS significantly and positively correlated with FO, $r(97) = .22, p = .03$ (Table 2).
- Only significant support source correlated with FO was from a special person, $r(97) = .28, p < .001$ (Table 2).
- For GPA, family SS was seen to positively correlate with GPA, $r(97) = .26, p = .01$, as well as FO, $r(97) = .24, p = .01$ (Table 2).
- A hierarchical linear regression analysis showed family support was a significantly unique contributor to GPA, $\beta = .40, p < .05$ after accounting for significant variance in three sources of SS, $R^2 = .11, F(3, 95) = 3.75, p = .01$ (Table 3).
- After accounting for significant amount of variance from FO, $\Delta R^2 = .08, F(1, 94) = 0.08, p < .001$, support from a special person was revealed to be negatively correlated with GPA, $\beta = -.28, p = .03$ (Table 3).

Discussion

- FO is important to consider on its own because it has been shown to act as a protective factor and promote students' academic success
- Not all sources of social support are equal in how they affect students' academic performance
- Essential for future research to use larger, more representative sample
- Helpful to use more comprehensive scale for FO to include all components
- Important for future research to extend on type of relationship one has with a special person and quality of support they are receiving since it could affect that student's performance in their academics
- Campus service personnel could utilize these findings and try to replicate benefits of family support to promote students' success, as well as incorporate programming to inform students of the effects romantic relationships and FO levels may have on their academic performance

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