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A Comparative Study on Achievement Motivation Among Students of Professional and Non-Professional Courses

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Abstract: ***The present study examined differences in achievement motivation between students enrolled in professional and non-professional undergraduate courses. Achievement motivation refers to the internal drive that inspires individuals to pursue success, overcome challenges, and attain excellence. The hypothesis (H_1) proposed that students pursuing professional courses would exhibit higher achievement motivation than those enrolled in non-professional courses. A purposive sample of 120 students (60 from professional courses—B.E., B.Tech—and 60 from non-professional courses—B.A., B.Sc., B.Com), aged 20–23 years, was selected. The Achievement Motivation Test (ACMT) by V. P. Bhargava was administered. Data were analyzed using the mean and independent sample t-test. Results revealed that non-professional course students had a higher mean achievement motivation score (M = 19.3) compared to professional course students (M = 16.9). However, the obtained t-value of 1.81 was not statistically significant, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis. These findings indicate that the course type does not significantly influence students' achievement motivation. Educational implications for teachers, counsellors, and institutions are discussed.***

Keywords: Achievement Motivation, Professional Courses, Non-Professional Courses, Student Motivation, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Achievement motivation is a key psychological construct influencing students' academic performance and career success. It reflects a person's inner urge to set and accomplish challenging goals, persist despite difficulties, and attain excellence in their chosen pursuits (McClelland, 1961). In higher education, courses are often categorized as *professional* (e.g., engineering, medicine, management) and *non-professional* (e.g., arts, science, commerce), each differing in orientation, structure, and perceived career outcomes.

Professional programs typically emphasize practical training, competition, and employability, fostering an outcome-driven mindset. In contrast, non-professional programs often promote conceptual understanding, creative exploration, and academic flexibility. The present study investigates whether these differing educational environments contribute to variations in students' levels of achievement motivation.

2. Review of Literature

McClelland (1961) proposed that achievement motivation is a learned drive shaped by environmental reinforcement. Pandey and Tripathi (2011) and Singh (2015) observed that students in professional courses tend to demonstrate stronger achievement motivation due to career-oriented training and competitive evaluation systems. However, Sharma and Rani (2018) found that intrinsic and contextual factors, such as personal interests, family expectations, and peer influence, can mediate motivation levels across disciplines. More recent studies (Das & Menon, 2022; Joseph & Abraham, 2020) have emphasized that self-efficacy and autonomy are equally important predictors of academic motivation, irrespective of course type. The current study revisits these patterns using Bhargava's ACMT within an Indian college context.

3. Objectives of the Study

1) To assess achievement motivation among students of professional courses.
2) To assess achievement motivation among students of non-professional courses.
3) To compare achievement motivation between professional and non-professional course students.

4. Hypotheses

H_1: Students in professional courses have higher achievement motivation than students in non-professional courses.
H_0: There is no significant difference in achievement motivation between students in professional and non-professional courses.

5. Methodology

5.1 Sample

The study employed purposive sampling to select 120 undergraduate students (aged 20–23 years) from various colleges. The sample comprised:

- 60 students from professional courses (B.E., B.Tech)
- 60 students from non-professional courses (B.A., B.Sc., B.Com)

Participants were selected to ensure comparable age and educational backgrounds while representing distinct academic streams.

5.2 Tool Used

The **Achievement Motivation Test (ACMT)** developed by **V. P. Bhargava (1983)** was used to assess achievement motivation. The test measures motivation across areas such as need for achievement, aspiration level, and perseverance. It is standardized and widely used in Indian psychological research, with established reliability and validity.

5.3 Procedure

After obtaining informed consent, the ACMT was administered collectively in classroom settings. Responses were scored as per the manual instructions. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean and independent *t*-test, at the 0.05 level of significance.

6. Results and Discussion

Group	N	Mean	t-value	Significance
Professional Course Students (B.E., B.Tech)	60	16.9	1.81	Not Significant
Non-Professional Course Students (B.A., B.Sc., B.Com)	60	19.3	—	—

The mean achievement motivation score for professional course students (M = 16.9) fell within the average range, whereas non-professional course students (M = 19.3) scored in the above-average range according to ACMT norms. Despite this difference, the obtained *t*-value of 1.81 was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, leading to acceptance of the null hypothesis (H_0).

The findings suggest that the type of course alone may not determine achievement motivation. Instead, internal drives, socio-cultural expectations, and individual aspirations could play stronger roles. Similar results were reported by Sharma and Rani (2018), indicating that both groups share comparable motivational orientations in modern educational contexts. The shift may also reflect increasing competitiveness and career awareness among students across disciplines.

7. Conclusion

Although non-professional course students displayed slightly higher achievement motivation, the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. Therefore, it cannot be generalized that students in professional courses inherently possess higher motivation. The findings underscore that achievement motivation is multifactorial, shaped by individual, familial, and institutional influences rather than course type alone.

8. Implications

For Educators: Integrate motivational teaching practices—such as goal setting, feedback systems, and experiential learning—across all academic programs.

For Counsellors: Provide academic and career counselling that nurtures intrinsic motivation and clarifies personal goals.

For Institutions: Design interdisciplinary exposure, mentorship programs, and internship opportunities to enhance motivation in both professional and non-professional students.

9. Limitations and Future Scope

The study's limited sample size and purposive sampling restrict generalizability. Future research may involve larger and more diverse samples, using longitudinal designs to examine changes in motivation across academic years. Variables such as gender, parental expectations, and socioeconomic background could also be explored as mediators.

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