The Performance Goal Orientation and Learning Goal Orientation Scales

According to Dweck (1989), two different types of goals can be identified. Performance goals are goals in which a person strives to obtain competence in a task either to gain favorable judgments or to avoid negative judgments from other people. Learning goals, on the other hand, are those goals in which a person strives to gain competence in a given activity in order to understand something new or to increase his or her level of understanding/ability about that thing (see also Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Heyman & Dweck, 1992).

On the positive side, performance goals can be very motivating, especially where the client experiences success early in the goal-attainment process. However, research has found that performance goals can also have a negative impact on performance. Performance goals can reduce performance when a task is very complex or the goal is perceived as highly challenging and the client is not skilled or is low in self-efficacy. Moreover, performance goals can induce cheating behaviour and reluctance to cooperate with peers in in situation which are highly competitive or important in terms of outcome (Midgley, Kaplan, & Middleton, 2001).

In the latter case, learning goals may be better alternative for increasing task performance (Seijts & Latham, 2001). Learning goals are associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation, which in turn is associated with optimal performance (Sarrazin, Vallerand, Guillet, Pelletier, & Cury, 2002). Moreover, learning goals have been found to be associated with a diversity of positive processes including greater absorption in actual task performance (Deci & Ryan, 2002), perception of a complex task as a positive challenge rather than a threat and enhanced memory and well-being (Linnenbrink, Ryan, & Pintrich, 1999).

The Performance Goal Orientation and Learning Goal Orientation Scales (PGO and LGO; Button, Matheu, & Zajac, 1996) are two different scales that aim to assess performance and learning aspects of goal orientation.

Goal

The goal of the two scales is to measure goal orientation in terms of performance or learning.
Advice

It is important to note that performance goals and learning goals can be both present at the same time. It is possible that a client aims to perform well compared to other people while at the same time also attempting to improve one’s skills.

Goal orientation can be perceived from both a trait and a state level. Although indivuals differ in their general goal orientation, goal orientation can also vary across situations. The present scales can therefore be used to assess a client’s goal orientation with regard to a certain task, or to assess his goal orientation in general.

Scoring

To compute the score, simply add up all the individual item scores per scale. A weighted score can be calculated by dividing the total score by the number of items, in both cases 8. A higher score reflects a higher level of performance goal or learning goal orientation.

Suggested Readings


## Tool Description (performance goal orientation)

**Instructions:** Use the following scale and circle one number for each statement to indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I prefer to do things that I can do well rather than things that I do poorly.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I’m happiest at work when I perform tasks on which I know that I won’t make any errors.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The things I enjoy the most are the things I do the best.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The opinions others have about how well I can do certain things are important to me.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I feel smart when I do something without making any mistakes.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I like to be fairly confident that I can successfully perform a task before I attempt it.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I like to work on tasks that I have done well on in the past.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I feel smart when I can do something better than most other people.</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Score:**

**Weighted Score (Total Score /8):**
### Tool Description (learning goal orientation)

**Instructions:** Use the following scale and circle one number for each statement to indicate how much you disagree or agree with each of the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree or Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opportunity to do challenging work is important to me.

When I fail to complete a difficult task, I plan to try harder the next time I work on it.

I prefer to work on tasks that force me to learn new things.

The opportunity to learn new things is important to me.

I do my best when I’m working on a fairly difficult task.

I try hard to improve on my past performance.

The opportunity to extend the range of my abilities is important to me.

When I have difficulty solving a problem, I enjoy trying different approaches to see which one will work.

**Total Score:**

**Weighted Score (Total Score /8):**