Self- Efficacy and Participation in Choosing the Teaching Profession as Predictors of Academic Motivation among Arab Student's Girls

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine the link between learning motivation among teaching trainees and self- efficacy and the rate of participation in choosing the profession of teaching. The main assumptions: There will be a clear positive link between the rate of self-efficacy of students and academic motivation, with its various elements. There will be a clear positive link between the rate of participation in choosing the profession (teaching) and academic motivation.
The sample included 181 female students. The sample was random relative to students of each academic year and specialization.
The findings of the study corroborated most of the assumptions, and we found clear links between motivation and its variety of elements and participation in the process of choosing the academic institution.

Introduction

In recent years awareness has been growing that motivation is important for student success, and affects the attitudes they take towards their studies, how they cope with pressure and adapt, and how satisfied they are with their studies. This interest has given rise to a great deal of research that aimed to shed light on various theories of motivation and its components, in order to gain an understanding of the concept and so to make it possible to enhance motivation among students (Rounds & Tracy, 1990; Spokane, 1994). Of late we have noted a drop in the motivation of students at the college, as expressed in complaints, low grades, lack of studiousness, irregular attendance, not handing in papers and exercises on time, boredom and dissatisfaction. This could have serious implications for the school system and for the students' eventual contribution as teachers.

The first question in the present study thus seeks to examine how students' academic self- efficacy can contribute to explaining academic motivation.

Another central question concerns the extent to which students' participation in choosing the teaching profession can explain their motivational behaviour. This question is important in light of the support it gains from previous studies that showed that choosing a profession that fulfills the individual's needs and personal inclinations leads to greater personal welfare, as expressed in satisfaction at work, motivation, persistence and achievements, and *vice versa* (Rounds & Tracy, 1990; Spokane, 1994). Research into the extent to which students participated in choosing the teaching profession may shed light on the matter, and may help provide explanations, insights as well as recommendations for policy makers at teacher training institutions.

What is unique about the present study is that it is carried out at an Arab teacher training college in an Arab city, whose student body consists mainly of conservative girls. This background, in addition to the special characteristics of adolescence, may constitute another impetus for undertaking the study.

Adolescence is a developmental stage that is fraught with crises and changes that can bring about identity crises. Here we must emphasize the special aspects of the process of adolescence among Arabs in Israeli society, which is unique and consists, in addition to the universal features of growing up also distinct processes of its own, due to the fact that Arab adolescents in Israel live in an evolving society that is undergoing an accelerated process of modernization together with "Israelization" on the one hand (Al-

Hajj, 1996), and contrary processes of Islamization together with "Palestinization" on the other (Samoha, 2004). Each of these processes implies a different value system and different norms. These contrasts and contradictions make it difficult for adolescents as they undergo the processes of shaping their identity. They suffer from an evident confusion caused by the contradiction between the modern orientation, influenced by Jewish society, and adherence to the norms and values of Arab-Islamic tradition. This state of affairs gives rise to two points: one that such disparate approaches can engender confusion and bring about a general identity crisis among Arab youth, and the other, that it is necessary to examine the extent to which such an identity crisis with its unique features can affect the professional choices made by adolescents. The objective of the present study is thus to inquire into the connection between academic motivation among female students of education and self- efficacy and the extent of their participation in choosing the teaching profession.

Theoretical Background

The concept of motivation refers to the will to invest time and effort in a given activity despite difficulties, high costs and possible lack of success. According to this definition motivation is an inner psychic entity; yet it is possible to evaluate its strength in various ways, for example, through dialogue and verbal reports, or by way of monitoring elements of behavior such as investment of time and effort in a relevant activity, attendance and precision, persistence despite difficulties or failure, and meeting challenges and obligations (Assor, 2001).

In earlier literature there is a discussion of characteristics of activity due to inner motivation. Such characteristics are divided into distinct types: *Behavioral characteristics* (expending time and effort in the absence of compensation or external pressure; choosing difficult tasks in the absence of compensation or external pressure; perseverance, especially after failure or under difficulties, in the absence of compensation or external pressure); *cognitive characteristics* (focusing a great deal of attention on a task [strong involvement in a task], reduced attention and thought on the implications of performing the task on one's self-assessment or social standing [including lack of focus on the achievements and progress of others], flexibility and creativity in thinking about the task); *emotional characteristics* (lack of anger, reduced anxiety and stress, little feelings of shame, guilt or great pride, moderate positive feelings (peace of mind, satisfaction, moderate joy) (Assor, 2001).

Theories of Motivation

There are numerous theories that have attempted to explain motivation, each with its own theoretical philosophical roots. One important approach to explaining motivation treated *motivation as a personality characteristic*, claiming that an individual's behavior in a given situation is influenced mainly by deep-seated long-term personal motives and stressing the need for achievement as basic (for example Maslow, 1954; McClelland, 1961).

The theory of self-direction (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan , 1991) is based on the humanist approach and assumes that human beings have three basic innate needs: for autonomy, for ability and for relations and belonging. According to this theory when these needs are met a person's involvement in the activities that he or she pursues will be profound and of a higher quality, whereas in case these needs are repressed or prevented from being met motivation will be weaker. A third approach in motivation research is *the behaviorist approach* (Skinner, 1968), according to this approach: people are motivated mainly to undergo positive experiences and to avoid negative ones. The motivation to perform a given behavior is influenced by a person's history of reinforcements and punishments. Behavior that brings about a positive experience will tend to appear more frequently, while behavior that has in the past caused a negative experience will tend to appear less frequently.

A approach in the study of motivation is *the cognitive approach*, which has given rise to two major theories in the study of motivation. According to the *theory of causal attribution* (Weiner, 1986) a

person tries to explain to himself what were the causes of events such a success or failure. The theory claims that the type of causes that are perceived as contributing to success and failure will affect students' expectations to fail or succeed in similar situations in the future. In addition, such expectations will affect the sense of control that students have with respect to future successes and failures, their feelings towards the mission and towards themselves, and therefore also their motivation.

The second theory stresses the importance of a person's expectations with respect to the results of his or her behavior. One of the important concepts in this context is "self- efficacy" (Bandura, 1977). Self- efficacy is a person's perception of him/herself as capable of successfully performing the task in question. According to the theory a person's perception of self- efficacy with respect to performing a certain task evolves as a result of previous experiences of success and failure in the performance of similar tasks, and of having observed other, similar people succeed or fail in the performance of such a task. In the present study we shall focus on the theory of causal attribution and the conception of self-efficacy that is derived from it. Our decision to choose this cognitive perspective in order to explain the concept is based on the perusal of numerous studies that confirm the cognitive explanations for motivation.

Self-Efficacy

The concept has been defined as "the extent to which an individual believes he has the ability to organize and perform the behaviors needed for achieving the results that he considers desirable" (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). The concept of "self-efficacy" when applied to the domain of professionalism is defined as a professional's belief in the person's ability to control the events that influence the person's professional life (Friedman, 1997).
Teachers' self- efficacy is a type of professional efficacy which is built up as beliefs that teachers or students adopt with respect to their performance ability at a given level of achievement (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990).

A number of definitions have been proposed in this context. One group of definitions refers to the teacher's feeling of being able to influence students without taking possible difficulties into consideration. At this level the teacher feels capable of affecting student performance (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Mclaughlin & Marsh, 1978; Pigge & Marso, 1993); the teacher feels that he or she as the power to influence student behavior in class in desirable ways (Evans & Tribble, 1986), or believes him/herself capable of affecting students' performance (Cole, 1995). These definitions expressed the teacher's sense of personal efficacy.

The second group of definitions treated the teacher's sense of efficacy with respect to difficulties related to the students or their family background. Guskev (1988) defined it as the teacher's belief or conviction that he or she is capable of affecting how well a student will learn, although difficulty or lack of motivation may be possible.

Academic self- efficacy among students is defined as "the extent of a student's belief that he can organize and carry out needed behaviors and actions in order to attain the educational and academic performance that he considers desirable (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 203). Several studies have shown that academic self- efficacy can contribute to raising achievements and academic performance and motivation among students (Caprara, Barbaranlli & Pastrolli, 1996; Chemers, Hu & Garcia, 2001; Greene, Miller, Crowson, Duke & Akey, 2004; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Schunk, 1994; Sharma & Silbereisen, 2007; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

The Development of Self-Efficacy Among Students?

According to social cognitive theory people create a perception of self- efficacy for themselves by way of processing information that comes to them from following the sources (Bandura, 1986, 1997):
A. Reconstructed personal experiences or past performances (Bandura,1986; Barone, Maddux & Snyder, 1997; Zeldin & Pajares, 1999). Success raises the level of efficacy while failure lowers it. In

the case of students, success in courses in previous institutions of learning can be considered successful personal experiences that may improve academic self- efficacy.

B.   Observing others' performance, learning experiences through the observation of models and learning by imitation are the second type of information source for self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Barone, Maddux & Snyder, 1997; Schunk, 1981). Observing a successful experience performed by others may raise the level of self-efficacy, and *vice versa* (Bandura, Adams, Hardy & Howells, 1980).

C.   Verbal persuasion, that is, persuasion through things one receives from others and that convince the learner of his ability to perform a task successfully. The power of persuasion lies in the persuader's credibility, knowledge and skill (Shunk, 1982, 1983, 1984b; Schunk & Cox, 1986).

D.   The last information source is one's physiological and emotional state. Tension and anxiety are sometimes seen as indicators of a fear of failure, of inability, or of a lack of skill (Bandura, 1995, 1997; Barone, Maddux & Snyder, 1997; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998).

Self-efficacy is considered one of the most important indicators of learning motivation and has been offered as an explanation for motivational behavior. Studies have shown that a perceived high self-efficacy with respect to a given task strengthens the tendency to choose that task, to persevere in carrying it out despite difficulties, to perform well, and even to evaluate the task as important and enjoyable (Schunk, 1991).

Self-efficacy focuses on the learner's personal beliefs as a critical component that can predict what a person will do with his or her knowledge and skills, and can also determine success or failure at school (Bandura, 1997). Other components of motivation such as self-image, anxiety or the value of a task, affect academic results; however, according to Bandura (1997) their effect on academic performance derives mostly from the sense of confidence with which the learning approaches academic tasks. This claim by Bandura is supported by a considerable body of research.

Researchers have noted that the component of belief in one's self-efficacy in statistical models that contain additional motivation variables as well is the only such variable that has a direct effect on performance (Graham & Pajares, 1999; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Pajares, Miller& Johnson, 1999; Pajares & Valiante, 1999; Zimmerman & Bandura,1994).

When people choose to enter into situations in which they expect to perform some activity successfully, the greater their sense of self-efficacy the more complex the situations that they are willing to face, or the more challenging the situations demanding a high level of performance that they dare attack (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Barone & Maddux & Snyder, 1997; Brown & Lent, 1996; Hackett, 1995; Pajares & Schunk, 1999; Schunk, 1997; Zimmerman, 1995; Zeldin & Pajares, 1999).

Self-efficacy affects the performance rate and the quantity of invested energy, effort and perseverance (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Lent, Brown & Larkin, 1986; Pajares & Schunk, 1999; Schunk, 1981, 1989; Zeldin & Pajares, 1999; Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Ponz, 1992).

It also affects the prediction of the degree of interest in academic subjects, motivation and leaning among students (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee,1991; Lent, Brown & Hackett,2002; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Pintrich & DeGroot, (1990; Schunk, 2003; Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinz-Pons, 1992). These findings indicate that self-efficacy affects motivation and cognition through its influence on the extent of student interest in the task, perseverance in its performance, the goals which students set for themselves, their choices and the way they use cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies for self-management.

Saada (2007) examined the connection between self-direction and learning and self-efficacy for teaching among students of education at Arab teachers' colleges, and found a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and learning (learning motivation) and personal didactic self-efficacy. However, the findings indicated the lack of a correlation between self-efficacy for learning and general didactic self-efficacy. These findings are consistent with previous studies that showed that students perceive their ability to cope with various academic tasks in light of their abilities as expressed in self-directed learning, including perseverance, planning and problem solving (Carrol et al., 2011; Motlag, Amrai, Yazdani, Abderahim & Souri, 2011; Yusuf, 2011a, 2011b).

A perusal of the scholarly literature on self-efficacy gives the impression that the concept is significantly and positively correlated with many components of motivational behavior, thus possibly

pointing to its importance as a critical predictor of motivational behavior and learning. The quantity of research on this topic clearly shows that self-efficacy plays a role in prediction and mediation between a number of ability components (for example, skill, knowledge, ability and previous knowledge) and achievements in the future (Bandura, 2006; Schunk & Pajares, 2001).

A number of components have been studied in the context of motivational behavior. In the present study we shall also address the variable of the student's school year. Previous studies on this subject did not produce consistent results. While some studies point to a rise in motivation with increasing "academic experience" (Linder & Harris, 1993) others found a reduction (Fisherman, Shay & Karniel, 2000). Such a mixed result was also found with respect to differences between freshmen and junior students of education (Rich, Ilus & Kula, 2000). In the study conducted by Saada (2007) on Arab students of education juniors were found to be more motivated than freshmen and sophomores, but freshmen were found to have "a more motivational behavior" than sophomores. Another study that tested motivation and satisfaction among students of education in the course of their studies found that their satisfaction in their studies and the motivation to become teachers lessened between the first and second year of their training. On the other hand, their sense of efficacy for teaching remained high throughout all four years (Segal & Ezer, 2009).

In the present study the variables of self-efficacy and of motivational behavior (Pintrich, Smith & McKeachie, 1989) were used. The following components were examined as indices for self-efficacy: Belief in one's ability, belief in success, experience in challenges, and value of the task. With respect to motivation the following components were examined: Academic ambience, quantity and quality of effort, and perseverance.

In the literature there are reports on a number of other variables, in addition to self-efficacy, that are predictors for motivation among students. There, we also ask to what extent can participation in the decision to choose the teaching profession be a predictor for academic motivation among students.

Choosing the Teaching Profession

Choosing a profession is one of the most important decisions a person makes in their life, one that has implications in numerous domains of life. Earlier studies on this issue focus on two aspects of the decision process: personality and developmental. The personality aspect deals with the choice of a profession as derived from a person's needs and preferences and arrived at through an interaction between one's social and cultural environment and various hereditary factors (for example, Holland, 1985; Roe, 1957; Sears et al., 1997). The developmental approach, on the other hand, claims that the choice of profession is not a one-time affair but an evolutionary process that can change in the course on one's life (for example, Super, 1963, 1980). However, the dimension of personality is also important in Super's theory, in which the concept "self" appears, as part of the claim that the profession chosen by an individual enables him or her to express the totality of their abilities, traits and preferences that make up the self (Katsir, Sagi & Gilat, 2004).

Most studies on choice of profession have focused on identifying those features of the teaching profession that enable its practitioners to realize themselves and on an examination of teachers' satisfaction with the choice they made, by way of studying the connection between the profession's features and the personal inclinations of those who have chosen it (for example, Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000).

A perusal of studies on the perception of the teaching profession and the reasons for choosing it reveals three main domains of considerations: altruistic considerations, related to a perception of the teaching profession as one that is socially appreciated; intrinsic considerations, related to utilitarian aspects of the performance of the job; and extrinsic considerations, related to utilitarian aspects that are not part of the activity of teaching itself, such as vacations, work conditions and social status.

Choosing the Teaching Profession Among Arabs

The choice of teaching as one's profession is influenced, like many other fields, also by cultural, occupational and ethnic factors, although motivations for choosing the teaching profession are similar for students from different lands. Yet the socio-cultural context from which students come has a crucial influence on the process and direction of one's choice of profession in general (Harris, 1998; Luzzo & Jenkins-Smith, 1996), and the choice of the teaching profession specifically (Ford, 1999; Goodwin & Genishi, 1994; Su, 1996).

The situation among Arab teachers in training has so far not been adequately studied in my opinion. Two studies have addressed this issue specifically, Kass et al. (2004) and Alian et al. (2007). In the study conducted by Kass et al. (2004) on the motives for choosing the teaching profession in the Bedouin sector the researchers point to a number of significant variables, namely the influence of the reality on the ground in the teaching profession and various practical considerations: professional challenge; the desire to play a social role and serve as an agent of change in Bedouin society; and choosing this profession as a transition towards another profession.

Alian et al. (2007) examined the motives for choosing the teaching profession among student teachers at Arab colleges. Among the motives they uncovered some concerned the profession itself; these were mainly the following: intellectual development, creativity, a feeling of pleasure, opportunity to propose ideas and express talents, satisfaction at working with children of different ages, and the perception of teaching as a mission and a means for reforming and improving society. These were perceived as motives that were significantly more influential than motives of social and economic status. *The two crucial factors in choosing to pursue the profession of teaching are a request or expressed desire by parents, or persuasion by a relative*, while factors related to a personal experience in the field of teaching. Such as a admired teacher or a familiar and beloved professional only had a moderate effect. One finding of this study was that the family did influence the choice to pursue a profession. But it was not stated whether the parents' influence was through coercion or persuasion, nor was there a discussion of the effect that this factor had on various motivational or emotional components.

Studies on the influence of the family in Arab society have come up with various different findings. Smilansky (1993) found that the family played a significant role in decision making, due to its function as an agent of socialization. Its influence is expressed in two different ways, in the opportunities it offers and in the family processes that it creates. Mar'i & Binyamin (1975) stressed the strong desire among Arab families to give their children a higher education.

The studies that have been carried out on this subject did not deal with the way family intervention in the choice of profession affected other variables. The present study will focus on analyzing this relationship in greater depth in order to understand how coercion in choosing the teaching profession can influence various components of the motivation to learn. This variable was chosen for the purpose of the present study due to the researcher's familiarity with the subject population, namely traditional Arab society, in which parents have a crucial role in determining their daughter's professional future. Most of the female students are financially dependent on their parents for defraying all or most of the costs of studying, and are therefore forced to attend the institution and study for the profession chosen for them by their parents, leaving them very little choice in the matter.

To What Extent do Students Participate in Choosing Their Profession?

A look at the professional literature reveals that this aspect has as yet not been directly addressed. It has only been studied indirectly, and has never been placed at the center of any study as the main variable. This can be explained through the fact that in Western societies the individual has much more freedom to choose his or her professional future than is the case in conservative societies, in which the collective, and especially the family, play a significant role in determining an adolescent's future.

Adolescence is a transitional stage accompanied by numerous changes. The main task at this age is shaping the personality (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson the adolescent undergoes an "identity crisis" during which he or she tests and tries roles, with the eventual objective of loyalty to certain groups,

conceptions and values (ibid.). This is the age in which a person is required to choose a profession to which he or she can relate, and which will in the future become an integral part of one's general identity. This process usually requires curiosity, investigation, and examining the suitability of various professions and choosing one that is appropriate. According to this approach adolescents are required to look at various possibilities in order to determine whether and to what extent they fit their general identity. It is therefore to be expected that they will experience an identity crisis characterized by confusion, looking at possibilities, and satisfying one's curiosity by testing different options, until they eventually arrive at a stable choice that will accompany them successfully as they move towards the new stages of their lives and that will open different possibilities for a more authentic life. Adolescents that do not succeed in developing a stable identity may continue to be confused and feel lost, without any commitment to a specific path. This in turn can lead to the appearance of various disturbances that may affect one's career or personal life(Erikson, 1968).

It is to be expected that in the conservative Arab society, in which freedom of choice is minimal and adolescent girls are not permitted to choose a profession without consulting their parents who will pay for their education, such girls are not likely to choose out of a sense of attraction to the profession but more out of a desire to conform socially, or out of fear of missing out on an education, or out of a desire not to anger her family, so as not to block her chances for an academic education. Therefore her choice of a professional identity will not be stable, nor will it be closely connected to personal motives. This hypothesis receives support from the theory of identity control, which assumes that the daily interactions between parents and their adolescents contribute greatly to the shaping of the latter's identity (Kerpelman et al., 1997). According to this approach the feedback that adolescents receive from their parents can support or challenge their identity as well as their beliefs concerning their own future. Studies on this issue showed that the emotional attachment between mothers and daughters had a predictive capability with respect to the latter's choice of profession, so that the stronger the tie the more the adolescent will be likely to change her mind in favor of that of her mother's (Li & Kerpelman, 2007).

Society's gender-related expectations affect the beliefs concerning future careers of adolescent females more than those of males (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Greene & DeBacker, 2004; Plunkett, 2001; Shepard, 2004); in other words, society has a greater influence on the decisions of female adolescents concerning their choice of profession than it does on the decisions of male adolescents. Studies have shown that there are differences between the genders with respect to professional aspirations. Thus, for example, Oyserman, Gant & Ager (1995) noted that among African adolescents the females are more affected by the context than males and consider themselves motivated only when they are in a certain social context, in contrast to their male counterparts. In addition, female adolescents tend more to take the advice of others into consideration and have more respect for authority in matters that concern their own professional aspirations and interests (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).
It may be argued that due to the conservative and collective nature of Arab society, in which parental authority takes precedence over the individual and his or her personal choices (Aziza, Levenstein & Brodesky, 2001; Haj Yahya, 1994), Arab female adolescents are likely to be more influenced in their career decisions by the views of their parents than their male counterparts would be. This in turn would tend later to cause them difficulties in shaping their professional and personal identities, and that could have an adverse effect on their motivation to learn and could make them dissatisfied with their chosen profession, to which they would not feel connected.

Yet another significant variable that can explain the implications of lack of participation in choosing a profession is James Marcia's theory, according to this theory, adolescents who are forced to choose an identity by pressure from their environment and without being themselves involved in the process are called adolescents in *a state of premature fixation*, which is characterized by living with a sense of having an identity over whose acquisition they feel no responsibility. They tend to conformist behavior and to obey authority (Marcia, 1980; Berman et al., 2001). In most cases they see themselves as defined in terms of their connection to others and they expend their greatest efforts towards meeting external standards. Their self image is relatively low and depends on how their surroundings respond to them. They usually experience relations stereotypically and possess an external locus of control (Marcia, 1980, 1993). They adhere to current circumstances and to the people who helped create these

circumstances, and they are resistant to change at almost any price. Their reliance on circumstances serves them as a security net (Marcia, 1994, 1995; Schwartz, 2001). They possess a low degree of differentiation but a high sense of inner integration (Berzonsky & Adams, 1999). These adolescents possess, similarly to the status of shaping their identity, a ability to assess precisely and correctly their abilities and status with respect to various tasks (Lange & Byrd, 2002). It would seem that their identity fixation, which is not the result of an independent search undertaken by themselves, constitutes an attempt to protect themselves from harsh feelings such as shame, fear or guilt (Marcia, 2002). The process does indeed provide them with a sense of considerable well being (Meeus, 1999), satisfaction and joy from their self (Makros & McCabe, 2001), as well as a low level of anxiety. Yet in order to maintain these positive and relaxing feelings they must remain within a familiar mental and social context (one that is familiar from childhood). Any change of context upsets the balance and may undermine them (Marcia, 2002). It is therefore to be expected that the transition to collage, a new and less familiar place, may engender in female students feelings of alienation, apathy, pessimism and a lack of confidence in their ability to cope with the new situation, and this in turn may lead to problems of adaptation and a drop in motivation.

In the psychological literature a significant correlation is reported between lack of control over important events in one's life and the emergence of symptoms of learned helplessness, expressed as motivational, cognitive and emotional disabilities (Seligman, 1975). Thus according to this theory we may surmise that female students who pursue a certain course of studies because they have no other choice, or because it was imposed on them by their parents, will suffer from reduced motivation and their self-efficacy for academic success will be negatively affected. A study by Agbaria (2011) showed that teachers of special education who perceived themselves as less involved in school activities reported symptoms of learned helplessness with respect to their work at school, expressed as unwillingness to expend effort, dissatisfaction and difficulty in perseverance.

To summarize, a perusal of the literature on self- efficacy indicates that it can serve as a predictor for motivation and academic performance among students. Students with high self-efficacy are able to operate cognitive and meta-cognitive self-management skills and can develop strategies for self learning. Through the mediation of using these skills such students will experience a rise in motivation and in achievements. The first question we ask here is whether among Muslim Arab female students such a correlation will be found. In other words, can the contexts and the predictive power of self-efficacy for motivation be generalized to non-Western populations?

The other variable examined in this study is the extent of participation in making the decision to choose the teaching profession. This variable's significance derives from the importance of participation and involvement in making the crucial decisions in one's life for numerous other mental components, as was clearly shown in the survey of the literature.

The second question that the study wishes to answer is: To what extent can the lack of participation in making the decision to choose the teaching profession predict a decrease in motivation, and so provide support for the theories discussed in the theoretical background?

The third question test, if differences in the levels of academic motivation that can be ascribed to the academic year?

Research Hypotheses:

- There is a significant positive correlation between the level of the various components of self-efficacy of students and the various components of academic motivation;
- There is a significant positive correlation between the extent of participation in choosing the teaching profession and academic motivation;
- There are differences in the levels of academic motivation that can be ascribed to the academic year.

Method
Subjects

The sample included 181 students, which is about 25% of the total study population, consisting of the female students at the Al-Qasemi College. Sampling was layers sampling.

Variable	Categories	Number	Percentage
Year	Freshman	38	21
	Sophomore	42	23.20
	Junior	40	22.10
	Senior	61	33.70
Specialization	Islam	43	23.76
	Preschool education	8	4.42
	Mathematics	28	15.47
	English	43	23.75
	Special education	59	32.60

Table 1: Distribution of demographic variables

Tools

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) (Pintrich et al., 1989). The questionnaire contains three sub-questionnaires (44 items, alpha = .95), as follows: Self-efficacy questionnaire, goal orientation questionnaire, and motivational behavior questionnaire. In the present study the first and last of these sub-questionnaires were used, based on our analysis of previous studies that used them with a high degree of reliability on similar Arab populations:

The academic self-efficacy questionnaire: This questionnaire makes it possible to examine, through students' answers to the questions, their belief in their ability to succeed, make an effort and experience various events. The questionnaire consists of fourteen items, to each of which the student must answer on a scale of 1 to 5. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic in Saada (2007) and the following reliability coefficients were computed for it:

General self-efficacy (alpha = .88).

Faith in one's own ability: five items (alpha = .73); example of an item: "In comparison to other students I do my best".

Belief in one's success: two items (r = .63); example of an item: "I believe in my ability to succeed in my studies".

Experiencing challenges: four items (alpha = .63); example of an item: "I carry out all my academic tasks".

The value of the task: three items (alpha = .77); example of an item: "I enjoy my studies".

In the *factor analysis* three factors were found (Saada, 2007):
1. "Reference to personal ability" (4 items, α=.79).
2. "Demonstration of interest in one's studies" (7 items, α=.83).
3. "Being focused on one's studies" (3 items, α=.60.

In the present study Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for the various dimensions, with the following results:
1. "Reference to personal ability" (4 items, α=.76).
2. "Demonstration of interest in one's studies" (7 items, α=.75).
3. "Being focused on one's studies" (3 items, α=.64).

Motivational behavior questionnaire: This questionnaire makes it possible to examine, through students' answers to the questions, their motivational behavior. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic in Saada (2007) and the following reliability coefficients were computed for it. The questionnaire consists of twelve items, to each of which the student must answer on a scale of 1 to 5. Here are the reliability coefficients:

Motivational behavior (alpha = .88).

Academic atmosphere: 3 items (alpha = .65); example of an item: "At home I'm used to studying in a quiet and comfortable place".
Quantity and quality of effort: 4 items (alpha = .74); example of an item: "It is noticeable that I make an effort in my studies".
Perseverance: 5 items (alpha = .78); example of an item: "My studies are foremost on my mind".
In the present study Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for the various dimensions, with the following results:
Academic atmosphere: 3 items (alpha = .78).
Quantity and quality of effort: 4 items (alpha = .71).
Perseverance: 5 items (alpha = .67).

Participation in choosing the teaching profession: The objective is to discover to what extent female students were able to participate in the decision to choose the teaching profession. This was measured through students' answers to the two questions "To what extent did you participate in choosing your school (college)?" and "To what extent did you participate in choosing your specific field of study at college?". Students were asked to answer on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = was not consulted at all, and 5 = participated fully.

Process

After receiving the approval of the college's research center the questionnaires were handed out during a day of classes, when the students were attending lectures. The researchers explained the purpose of filling out the questionnaires to the students and stressed the fact that the questionnaire would remain anonymous and that the data would be used solely for the purposes of the study. The level of cooperation was very high: every one of the students who were present in the college agree to fill the questionnaires, which were in Arabic, having been translated already in the past for use in previous studies.

Results

Results for the first hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between the level of the various components of students' self-efficacy and the various components of academic motivation. Pearson correlations were calculated for the various levels of motivation and self-efficacy. See Table 2.

	Motivation	Academic Climate	Quality and quantity of effort	Perseverance of	Self-efficacy	Personal ability	Interest in studies	Focus on studies
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1							
2	**0.94	1						
3	**0.81	**0.65	1					
4	**0.84	**0.73	0.48	1				
5	**0.44	**0.39	**0.40	**0.35	1			
6	**0.39	**0.35	**0.41	**0.25	**0.76	1		
7	**0.40	**0.35	**0.34	**0.33	**0.93	**0.54	1	
8	**0.28	**0.22	**0.24	**0.27	**0.69	**0.54	**0.46	1

*p<0.05, **p<0.01
Table 2: Pearson correlations between motivation and its components, and self-efficacy and its components

The table shows that there is support for the research hypothesis; there are statistically significant positive correlations among all components.
Results for the second hypothesis: There is a significant correlation between the extent of participation in choosing the teaching profession and the school on the one hand, and academic motivation on the other. Pearson correlations were calculated for the correlations among the various variables. See Table 3.

	Participation in choosing a school	Participation in choosing specialization
Motivation	**.26	**.33
Academic climate	*.20	**.34
Quality and quantity of effort	**.29	**.24
Perseverance	**.18	**.27

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 3: Pearson correlations between motivation and participation in choosing a school and the area of specialization

The findings mostly indicate the existence of low but significant correlations between participation in making the decision of which school to attend, as well as participation in making the decision to choose the teaching profession, and motivation.

Results for the third hypothesis: There are significant differences in motivation among students of different academic years.

In order to determine the validity of the hypothesis that there are differences in motivation depending on the academic year, an f test was done which showed that there were statistically significant differences between the different academic years with respect to motivation and its various components, with the exception of quantity and quality of effort. See Table 4.

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	F(3,152)
Motivation	4.43(0.39)	3.97(0.53)	4.32(0.57)	4.41(0.61)	**5.36
Academic climate	4.57(0.34)	4.08(0.52)	4.39(0.61)	4.20(0.55)	**6.72
Quality and quantity of effort	4.33(0.60)	3.89(0.76)	4.23(0.76)	4.18(0.82)	2.46
Perseverance	4.23(0.59)	3.83(0.69)	4.25(0.73)	4.03(0.75)	*3.30

*p<0.05, **p<0.01

Table 4: Student motivation in different years

From this table we see that the lowest scores for motivation can be found among sophomores. Such differences between students in different academic years support the research hypotheses, which predicted significant differences in motivation between academic years.

Discussion

The study examined the correlation between self-efficacy and the extent of participation or involvement in choosing the teaching profession, and academic motivation among female students at the Al-Qasemi College. The research hypotheses predicted positive correlations between self-efficacy and the extent of participation in choosing the teaching profession, and academic motivation. Most of the findings supported the research hypotheses: positive correlations were found between the extent of participation and self-efficacy on the one hand, and academic motivation on the other.

Self-efficacy and motivation: As noted, the study found significant positive correlations between the various components of self-efficacy and the various components of motivation. This finding is consistent with those of previous studies, which reported on the importance of the concept of self-efficacy for predicting academic motivation among students (Graham & Pajares, 1999; Pajares, 1999; Pajares et al., 1999; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Pajares & Valiante, 1999; Zimmerman & Bandura,1994). The finding also strengthens the conclusion that self-efficacy among students is important for predicting academic success, perseverance and investing effort in one's studies. Students with high self-efficacy will tend to try harder during their studies and to perceive their academic activity as a challenge, due to their belief in their success and development (Hsieh & Schallert, 2008; Saracalo & Dinçer, 2009; Tseng & Tsai,2010; Walker, Greene & Mansell, 2006).

Participation in choosing the teaching profession and motivation: The findings support the hypotheses that predicted positive correlations between participation in choosing the teaching profession and academic motivation. They are consistent with the findings of previous studies that found positive correlations between choosing a profession based on self realization and motivational components.

The findings can be explained in accordance with Erikson and Marcia's theories of identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980), that predict negative future implications for the shaping of a subordinated identity, expressed mainly in the form of indifference, confusion and a sense of alienation, with a high probability for the appearance of problems of adaption at every significant transition in life, which upsets the ostensible mental balance.

We may therefore argue that problems of adaption and lack of motivation may derive from the fact that these female students were not consulted on the choice of their professional identity, as a result of which they adopted a professional identity that was subordinated without a crisis. It is therefore likely that as they enter academic life, a significant transition, their subordinated professional identity will not help them cope with this transition and they will respond with indifference, and tend to project their failure on society in general and the academic school system in general.

The findings are also consistent with the theory of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), which predicts a drop in motivation following uncontrollable life experiences. One may therefore argue that the lack of participation by female students in determining their own professional future, and their giving in to social pressure without being able to change the situation, can cause them over time to develop a negative cognitive set and convince them that any action on their part to change the situation would be ineffective. They therefore refrain from trying to influence or change the situation and are forced to accept it as is.

It is therefore possible to argue that this feeling of helplessness concerning the determination of one's professional future may be accompanied by negative effects on their motivation to operate and advance in a profession that they did not choose freely. Weiner's (1986) theory of attribution can constitute yet another theoretical niche for our findings. In terms of this theory we may surmise that female adolescents who did not adopt a professional identity and whose identity is subordinated, will tend to look for an external attribution in life and refrain from taking responsibility for their own lives. They will tend to be indifferent and to project their own failures on others or on luck, which could decrease their perceived need to act in order to change their situation, since they believe that the causes of their situation are beyond their control. Such indifference could be correlated with the reduced motivation of these students.

Area of academic year and motivation: The study's findings point to statistically significant differences between different academic years and motivation, thus supporting the research hypothesis that predicted the existence of such differences (Saada, 2007; Segal & Ezer, 2009). The findings show a mixed tendency and do not support the hypothesis that students in advanced years will have higher motivation. According to the findings students in their junior year do, as expected, show higher "academic motivation" (in all its components) than freshmen and sophomores. However, the hypothesis is refuted in the case of freshmen students, who showed higher "academic motivation" than sophomores.

The findings concerning variance in favor of students in their junior year are consistent with the results of earlier studies that indicate a rise in motivation along with increased "academic experience" (Linder & Harris, 1993), as well as with practical teaching experience (Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). The contribution of the academic year to motivation may also be given a "quantitative" explanation, based on the fact that the course of study is spread over a period of four years, as well as a "qualitative" explanation, as based on the process that enables one to develop in one's discipline and to gain practical experience in teaching.

Thus, contrary to the hypothesis, our findings show that freshmen female students demonstrate more "academic motivation" than their sophomore counterparts. This finding deserves further study. One possible explanation is that freshmen students, having only recently been accepted to study at the college, are more enthusiastic and more willing to make changes and accept innovations in their learning behavior than sophomores. As another explanation, it has been argued that while freshmen are preoccupied with structuring and developing their professional knowledge, while sophomores are more preoccupied with deepening that knowledge. Possible support for this explanation may be provided by the possible

appearance of intervening or mediating variables in the sophomore year, such as a certain overlap between the two years; this is a matter that requires further examination in a future study.

As for differences in motivation among students with different areas of specialization, the study has not found any, contrary to the research hypothesis, according to which students in more prestigious areas of specialization would be expected to be more motivated. The specific course of study thus does not appear to affect the motivation of female students.

A possible explanation for this finding is that academic motivation among female students is apparently more strongly affected by personality factors and by changes in the course of study than by the area of specialization itself. Since the spectrum of fields of specialization offered by the college is not very broad, it is difficult to check the effects of this variable.

The present study suffers from a number of limitations. First of all, it must be stressed again that the subjects were all conservative Muslim Arab female students. Another limitation that the only research tool used was the questionnaire; the variables were not checked any other way. Finally, it is worth noting that the study was conducted at a college with very specific characteristics. Perhaps future studies should examine these variables as they affect other types of population, in other colleges, using subjects of both sexes and with differing background variables, such as changes in the course of training, etc.

Summary

The findings supported most of the research hypotheses: Significant correlations were found between the various components of motivation and self-efficacy, as well as between participation in choosing one's collage and the academic year. These findings indicate increasing students' involvement in determining their professional future will have a positive effect on their motivation, as expressed by perseverance in study, willingness to work and to face challenges creatively, and a greater emotional bond. Therefore the study recommends greater awareness on the part of parents and high school teachers of the drawbacks of imposing a choice of profession that does not accord with the student's own wishes. Such compulsion may have long-term effects on one's professional development. Allowing adolescents to participate in choosing is academic subject is very important for the shaping of their professional identity. Future studies can investigate this correlation on more representative samples and take various psychological and social variables into account, such as identity, successful marriage, creativity at work, tendency to pessimism and passivity, changes during the course of training, and more.

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