
NEWSLETTER

How Cooperation and Competition Affect Student Academic Performance and Wellbeing

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DUE to the emergence of positive psychology and education, increasing attention has been paid to student physical and mental development and character building in addition to their academic performance. Schools have made efforts to encourage cooperative learning behavior in students. Research also shows that students display better academic performance, more positive peer relationships, and stronger senses of belonging to the school in a cooperative learning environment. On the other hand, there are intense competitions among students in a school setting. A reasonable amount of competition is seen as a motivational factor in student learning, with positive effects on student academic achievements. Also, competitions with explicit, proper goals may bring excitements and enjoyment to individuals.

A scientific view of the relation between cooperation and competition contributes to students' positive attitudes towards them and the healthy development of their character. This study utilizes data from the PISA to conduct systematic research into the impact of cooperative and competitive behaviors on student academic performance and wellbeing, with the purpose of providing guidelines for fostering appropriate spirit of cooperation and competition in students. Research findings reveal that:

- In terms of gender differences, boy students perceived more cooperation and competition than girl students, achieving lower in reading but higher in mathematics and science and with higher levels of life satisfaction and self-efficacy as well as stronger senses of purpose in life.
- By dividing cooperative and competitive behavior into high- and low-ranks by their respective mean values, students were classified into four groups labeled: (A) high cooperation/high competition; (B) low cooperation/high competition; (C) high cooperation/low competition; (D) low cooperation/low competition. Group A had good academic results, a high level of life satisfaction and self-efficacy, and a strong sense of purpose in life. Group B had the highest academic achievement but the lowest level of life satisfaction, along with a weak sense of purpose in life and low self-efficacy. Group C had low academic results but a high level of life satisfaction, high self-efficacy, and explicit life purpose. Group D achieved the lowest academic performance with a low level of

life satisfaction, a weak sense of purpose in life, and the lowest self-efficacy.

- The more competitive behavior a student perceived at school, the better their reading, mathematics, and science achievements. The more cooperative behavior a student perceived at the school, the higher level of life satisfaction, stronger sense of purpose in life, and higher self-efficacy they had.
- The positive effects of competitive behavior on student reading, mathematics, and science literacy would weaken with the increase in cooperative behavior. The positive impacts of cooperative behavior on student life satisfaction, life purpose, and self-efficacy would strengthen with the boost in competitive behavior.

Hence, the article proposes suggestions as follows.

- i. Recognize the importance of cooperative behavior to student healthy development. The school should encourage teachers to integrate cooperation education into instruction and class management to create more opportunities for interpersonal communication and collaboration for students to foster solidarity and cooperative behaviors in them.
- ii. Properly evaluate the motivational role of competitive behavior. Direction and education targeted at specific competitive behavior should be provided to students for cultivating a correct view of competition, to avoid the adverse effect of peer comparison.
- iii. Pay attention to the interaction between cooperative and competitive behavior. Both cooperation and benign competition should be encouraged to keep students motivated in learning and to afford them more opportunities for self-development and social and emotional growth.

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