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Students' Disposition Regarding Theory X and Y Assumptions and Their Career Choice and Academic Performance: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

This paper is set out to observe the relationship between human disposition in the form of X and Y characteristics as assumed by Douglas McGregor and career choice and academic performance of the students in the context of Saudi Arabia. It is a cross sectional, quantitative study based on survey research through a structured questionnaire. A sample of 278 students was surveyed. For data analysis, descriptive statistics as well as independent sample T test and Multinomial logistic model were used. The study highlights that the student's career option is strongly related to their psychological disposition. Students with X type disposition prefer government jobs over entrepreneurship or private sector job. It implies that for any entrepreneurship training program, the participants may be selected based on their X-Y disposition. As regard academic performance, the study also shows that the students with Y disposition evidently outperform their counterparts with X disposition. It suggests that the teachers should try to develop Y characteristics among the students through allowing them latitude on their studies, and assigning them with ambiguous projects and creative exercises.

Keywords

Theory X, Theory Y, Career Choice, Academic Performance, Disposition

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1. Introduction

Theory X and Theory Y are two opposite sets of assumptions worked out by Douglas McGregor in his 1960 book "The Human Side of Enterprise". Theory X assumes that individuals have natural inertia about work and they need to be monitored constantly to get the job done. Theory Y, however, assumes that individuals like work as like rest and play. They go to work of their own accord, because work is the only way in which they have a chance of satisfying their higher level need for achievement and self-respect. People will work without prodding. Based on the assumptions, the managers deal with their people, which leads to fundamental distinction between management styles. The believers of theory X follows authoritarian style where the emphasis is on rules, structure, strict surveillance and firm link between performance and reward. On the contrary, the believers of theory Y follow participative style of management which emphasizes on sharing and facilitation. Here the managers view themselves as the facilitators and allow the people to determine their own course of actions. They believe that putting trust on people pays off in the form of commitment and sense of belongingness. McGregor urged organizations to adopt Theory Y. Only it, he believed, could motivate human beings to the highest levels of achievement. Theory X merely satisfied their lower-level physical needs and could not hope to be as productive.

The prescription of theory Y by McGregor brings about a radical shift in management style and focuses on the role of a manager as a facilitator rather than a controller. However, his

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recommendation faced wide criticism on the ground that it was not empirically proven and his view that people are, in general, more concerned about higher level needs like self-actualization and self-respect. In fact, he missed the point that there is a role of personality and human disposition that largely affect their work motivation. There are people with positive (Y characteristics) disposition as well as negative (X characteristics) that affect their behavior at work. So considering Theory Y assumptions about human beings as the more valid may not be the case always. However, McGregor's conceptualization of human characteristics in the form of theory X and Y may be a springboard for understanding differences among individuals in terms of their work behavior, career choice, performance and so on. This paper is set out to observe the relationship between human disposition in the form of X and Y characteristics and career choice and academic performance of the students in the context of Saudi Arabia.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Career choice of an individual is influenced by many factors, including social, economic, psychological, as well as biographic. Social factors include family preference, father's/ mother's occupation, cultural norms etc. Economic factors comprise job market condition, financial wellbeing, economic policy of the government etc. Psychological factors embrace personality, aptitude, interest, intelligence etc. Biographic factors include gender, birth order etc. (Azim, Haque & Chowdhury 2013; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). As far as the career intention is concerned, the most prominent factors are the psychological factors. It is the human instinct that a person will prefer to get involved in a profession that he/she likes or that matches with his/her mental makeup. For example, a number of studies observed mostly the psychological factors as the major determinants of students' intention for entrepreneurship career (Azim, 2013; Pruett, et. al., 2009; Giacomin, et. al., 2011; Sánchez, 2011). As regard, career choice for the students, there are broadly three career options, viz. government job, private sector job and entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship as a career offers independence and freedom and if successful, it also has better financial promises than other options. However, it is, perhaps, the most stressful career option and calls for higher risk taking propensity, achievement motivation, creativity and perseverance. Consequently, a large part of the population is found to have apathy about this career. On the contrary, job in the government sector is relatively less stressful, more relaxed and ensure greater sense of security. Job in the private sector offers a middle ground. They are relatively more stressful and demanding than the government jobs but less than those of an entrepreneur. However, for competent individuals, it usually offers better compensation than the government sector. Given the nature of the career options it is expected that the students with Y characteristics are more likely to opt for either entrepreneurship or private sector jobs while the students with X characteristics are likely to prefer government jobs.

H1: The students with Y characteristics will prefer entrepreneurship over government job as career option

H2: The students with Y characteristics will prefer private sector Job over government job as career option

Academic performance of a student largely depends, *inter alia*, on a student's intelligence and the level of effort spent on studies (Mlambo 2011). A motivated student will work hard to learn more and continue his/her studies with perseverance. S/he will have the drive to excel and will exercise self control and self discipline in the study. S/he will study without prodding. Thus it is expected that the students with Y characteristics will have better result than those of X characteristics.

H3: Students with Y characteristics will have better result than those of X characteristics.

3. Methodology

It is a cross sectional, quantitative study based on survey research through a structured questionnaire. Participants included 278 students of a large public University of Saudi Arabia of which 64.7% are male and 35.3% are female. The questionnaire was based the questions listed in web portal of Businessball.com. However, to tune the questions for the student respondents, every question was rephrased for its suitability. Total 11 questions were compiled in 6 point Likert scale starting from never (0) to always (5) to elicit the respondents' X-Y tendency. In order to assess the internal consistency of the construct, the reliability analysis of the items was run which resulted in a relatively poor value of $\alpha < 0.6$. However, when three items (Q 3, 5, and 6) were deleted from the measure the estimated Cronbach's Alpha rose to an acceptable level of 0.78. Thus the study ultimately used 8 questions to measure the X-Y tendency of the respondents. Given 5 as the maximum score per item, a total of maximum 5 average score was expected. Based on the phrasing of questions, higher score indicates Y characteristics while lower score designates X characteristics. In other words, the higher the average score, the more Y characteristics of the respondents were assumed. In order to categorize the students into X type and Y type, a definition was developed based on average score. Respondents scoring less than 3 were considered X type while respondents with

more than 3 average score were considered as Y type. The questionnaire was originally prepared in English. However, to make it comprehensible to the respondents, each question was translated into Arabic by an expert and then the translated Arabic version was reviewed by another expert to ensure the accuracy of the translation. The Arabic versions of the questionnaire were used to collect data. The questionnaire also included academic performance of the students in terms of CGPA, gender, and career choice. All these variables were in category form. According to academic performance, students were divided into three categories: weak (CGPA below 3) Mediocre (3.1 to 4) and Good (4.1+). The survey included a cover letter that informed participants about the purpose of the study. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. A total of 278 usable questionnaires were received, representing a response rate of 69.50%. The data were then analyzed using SPSS version 16.0. For data analysis, descriptive statistics as well as independent sample T test and Multinomial logistic model were used.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The Following table and graphs indicate the descriptive statistics related to the variables considered for the study.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics related to the variables considered.

Items		Frequency	Percentage	Mean X-Y Score
Gender	Male	180	64.7	3.40
	Female	98	35.3	3.60
Career Options	Government Job	113	40.6	3.15
	Private sector Job	86	30.9	3.62
	Entrepreneurship	79	28.4	3.75
Academic Performance (CGPA)	Weak Students	69	24.8	3.06
	Mediocre Students	117	42.1	3.51
	Good Students	92	33.1	3.72
X-Y Type	X Type	69	24.8	
	Y Type	209	75.2	

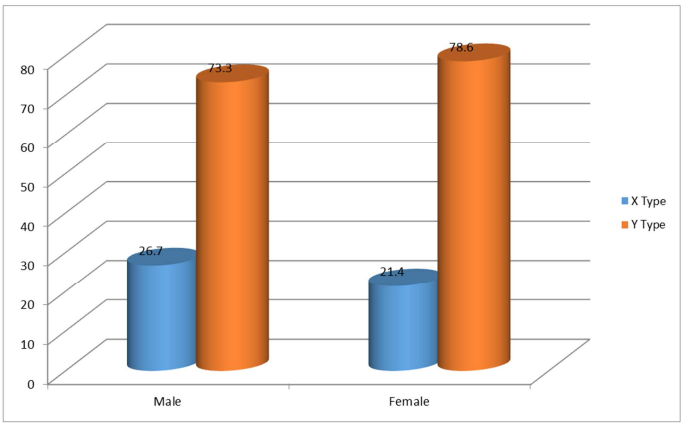

Figure 1. Gender and X-Y Type (Percentage).

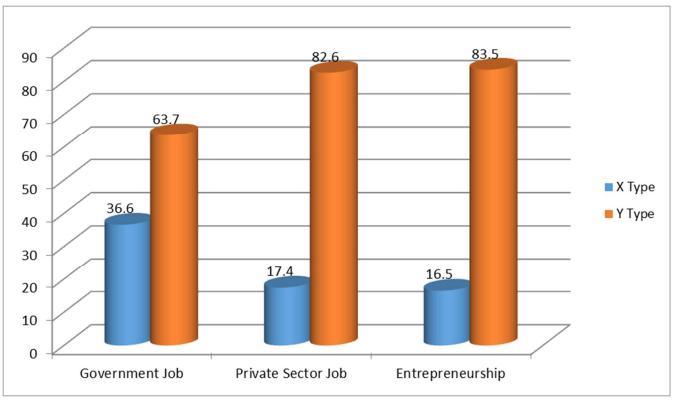

Figure 2. Career Option and X-Y Type (Percentage).

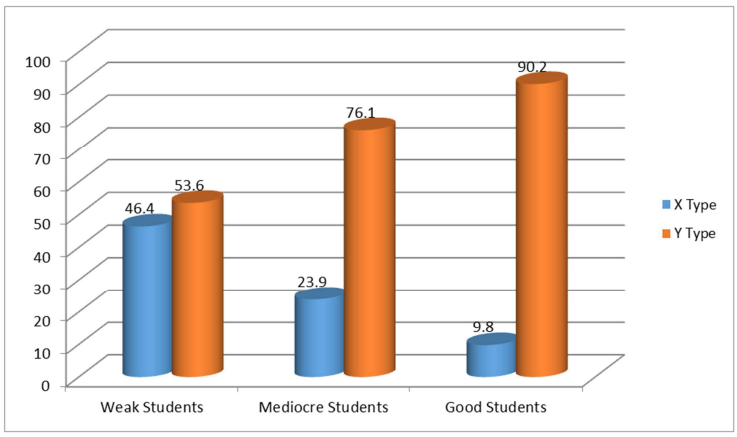

Figure 3. Academic Performance and X - Y Type (Percentage).

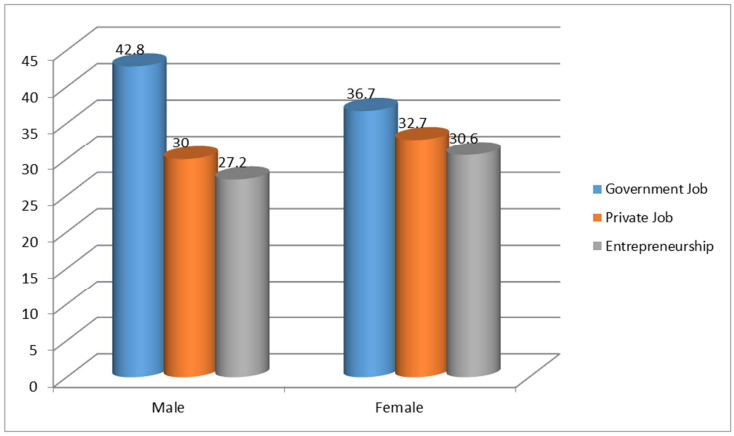

Figure 4. Gender and Career Choice (Percentage).

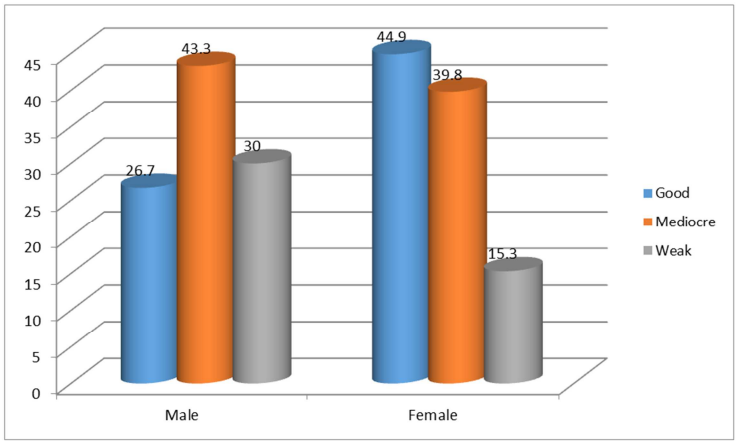

Figure 5. Gender and Academic Performance (Percentage).

Of all the respondents 24.8% are categorized themselves as X type and 75.2% as Y type. Female students are found to have higher Y score (mean 3.60) than their male (mean 3.40) counterparts. Females are also observed to be relatively more Y type than the male respondents (Figure 1). Students opted for entrepreneurship as their career option scored highest (mean 3.75) followed by private sector job (3.62) and government (3.15). More Y type students are observed to intend for entrepreneurship as their career choice than private sector and government jobs (Figure 2), Students with good academic performance showed highest X-Y score (3.72) followed by their mediocre (3.51) and weak (3.06) counterparts. Y type students and found to perform better in their academic results than X type (Figure 3). As far as gender and career intention is concerned, both male and female students are found to prefer government jobs over private sector jobs or entrepreneurship. However, male students are observed to have higher preference for

government jobs than their female counterparts (Figure 4). As regard Gender and academic result, it is observed that female students obviously outperform their male counterparts (Figure 5).

An Independent Sample 'T' Test was conducted to determine the variations in X-Y scores between different career options, academic performance and gender.

Table 2. Independent sample 'T' test for mean X-Y scores of students.

Items	Career Options			Academic Performance			Gender	
	Government	Private Job	Entrepreneurship	Weak	Mediocre	Good	Male	Female
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mean X-Y Score	3.15	3.62	3.75	3.06	3.51	3.72	3.40	3.60
Sign. Diff. Groups	(1-3)** (P=.000)	(1-2)** (P=.000)	(2-3) (P=.245)	(4-5)** (P=.00)	(5-6)* (P=.039)	(4-6)** (P=.00)	(7-8)* (P=.043)	

Note: 1 = Government, 2 = Private Job, 3 = Entrepreneurship, 4 = Weak, 5 = Mediocre, 6 = Good, 7 = Male, 8 = Female, $p^{*} \leq 0.05$; $p^{**} \leq 0.01$.

The results in Table 2 above reveal that there is significant difference (at 1% level) between the X-Y score of the students who opted for government job and private sector job and between government job and entrepreneurship. However, no significant difference is observed in case of private sector job and entrepreneurship. As regard, academic performance, the X-Y score of weak and mediocre students, mediocre and good, and good and weak students are found significantly different from each other. X-Y score of male and female are also observed to have significant difference at 5% level. Female students have significantly higher score than their male counterparts.

4.2. Test of Hypothesis: Multinomial Logistic Regression

The Multinomial logistic regression model was constructed to explain the direction and relationship between students' career choice and their X-Y type and between the students' academic performance and their X-Y type.

Table 3. Results of Multinomial Logistic Regression Analysis on Career Options and X-Y Type.

Base	Variable (Career Options)	Coefficient (β)	S.E.	Exp(β)
Entrepreneurship	Government Job X type =1	1.050 (p=.004)	.362	2.857
	Private sector Job X type =1	0.068 (p=.869)	.416	1.071
Private Sector Job	Government Job X type =1	.981 (p=.005)	.346	2.168
	Entrepreneurship X type =1	-0.068 (p=.869)	.416	.413

From Table 3, given the coefficient of 1.050 at 1% level of significant, it is observed that the X type students prefer government job over entrepreneurship as their career choice. The estimated odd ratio of 2.857 indicates that a Y-type student is 2.857 times more likely to prefer entrepreneurship over working for Government organizations. This obviously validates our hypothesis 1 i.e. *The students with Y characteristics will prefer entrepreneurship over government job as career option.* As regard the private sector job vis-à-vis entrepreneurship, the X type students observed to prefer private jobs. However, the preference is not statistically significant (p=.869). For the relationship between private sector and Government job, it is found that there is a positive relationship with 1% level of significant. The estimated odd ratio of 2.168 indicates that the Y type students are 2.168 times more likely to work for private organizations than government. It supports our hypothesis 2 i.e. *The students with Y characteristics will prefer private sector Job over government job as career option*

As far as the academic performance and X-Y type is concerned, it is observed that in comparison to Y type students, X type students are more likely to perform weak result than good (β=2.088) or mediocre result (β=1.016).

Table 4. Results of Multinomial Logistic Regression on Academic Performance and X-Y Type.

Base	Variable (Academic Performance)	Coefficient (β)	S.E.	Exp(β)
Good Result	Weak Result X type=1	2.088 (p=.000)	.435	8.065
	Mediocre result X type=1	1.071 (p=.010)	.415	2.919
Mediocre Result	Weak Result X type=1	1.016 (p=.002)	.327	2.763
	Good result X type=1	-1.071 (p=.010)	.415	.343

These relationships are observed to be statistically significant at 1% level (Table 4). The estimated odd ratio shows that an X-type student is 8.065 and 2.919 times more likely to perform weak result than good result and mediocre result respectively than his/her Y type counterpart. The positive coefficient (1.071) between good and mediocre results at 1% level of significance shows that the X type students are more likely to do mediocre result than the Y type students. The odd ration of 2.919 implies that the X type students are 2.919 times more likely to perform mediocre over good result than their Y type counterparts. Thus the results vary clearly supports our hypothesis 3 i.e. *H3: Students with Y characteristics will have better result than those of X characteristics.*

5. Conclusion

The study highlights that the student's career option is strongly related to their psychological disposition. Students with X type disposition, who are often lethargic, risk averter, and lack of drive, are likely to prefer government jobs over entrepreneurship or private sector job. On the contrary, the students with Y type disposition, who are likely to be achievement oriented, risk taker, and capable of exercising self control and discipline are interested in entrepreneurship and private sector jobs as their career option. It implies that for any entrepreneurship training program, the participants may be selected based on their X-Y disposition. As regard academic performance, the study also shows a strong relationship between student's psychological disposition and their academic performance. The students with Y disposition evidently outperform their counterparts with X disposition. It suggests that the teachers should try to develop Y characteristics among the students through allowing them latitude on their studies, and assigning them with ambiguous projects and creative exercises.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Your current result (CGPA) in the university:

Below 2 ☐ 2.1 -3 ☐ 3.1- 4 ☐ 4.1-5 ☐

Your career choice:

☐ I prefer to work in government

☐ I prefer to work in private organizations

☐ I prefer to start my own business

Please mention your actual preference about the following statements by ticking the appropriate box for each statement.

(5 = always, 4 = mostly, 3 = often, 2 = occasionally, 1 = rarely, 0 = never)

Items	never	rarely	occasionally	Often	Mostly	Always
	0	1	2	3	4	5
I like to be involved and consulted by my teachers/parents before they assign me any job.						
I want to learn skills outside of my immediate area of responsibility.						
I work best and most productively without pressure from my teachers/seniors/parents.						
I want to be trained to do new things.						
I prefer to discuss my concerns, worries or suggestions with my teachers/seniors/parents.						
I like to be given opportunities to solve problems connected with my studies or family.						
I like to discuss with my teachers/seniors/parents about how I can improve and develop.						
I prefer work over rest.						

Thank you for your cooperation

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