

## STUDENTS' LIFE GOALS, THEIR AWARENESS CATEGORY AND COGNIZANCE ON THE BENEFITS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aims to determine the level of participants' perception on the different life goals. This paper would like to investigate also the level of participants' awareness on the benefits of higher education, and the most dominant category of their awareness are also be looked into in this paper. The descriptive design of research was utilized in this investigative work. The survey checklist form was administered to the students who are enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016 in one of the private colleges in Muscat, Oman. The findings of the study declared that the participants' goals in life like career, pleasure, and public service are reasonably important while their family is important only at some extent. Furthermore, knowledge on the benefits of higher education is at a reasonable extent and they are aware that they could develop their skills through higher education. It is also learned that mastery is the most dominant category of their awareness level and followed by experience category. This finding leads the researchers to conclude that these group of participants had a liberal perception. It is delightfully found that they are judiciously aware on what higher education could contribute to their life as they continue to grow in the field of their forthcoming professions. Moreover, the category of their awareness level when wisely utilized coupled with their experiences could pave the way and lead them towards their brighter future.*

**KEYWORDS:** Life goals, Awareness Category, Higher Education, Benefits

### INTRODUCTION

The situation that people exerted so much effort in his day to day existence to endure the demands of life is a normal setting but then still they do not seem to have a meaningful life. This scenario is worthwhile to contemplate. Manktelow and Carlson (2014) said that "a key reason why people feel this way is that they have not spent enough time thinking about what they want from life, and have not set themselves formal goals". A person needs to set his goals and make decisions on what he or she wants to achieve in life. The setting of life goals coupled with hard-work, determination, and higher education are observed and proven by many individuals that these brings them a good and healthy life. People need to single out what are the significant thoughts from the immaterial or interruption in their goals. They should know that self-motivation is important and utilizing successful achievement of goals could help a person build his self-confidence. To look forward or a bit ahead in our life is similar to setting a lifetime goals. This lifetime goals need to be broken into smaller ones to achieve the whole goal. Monitor the process regularly, make a review and update are the important elements to do while on the process of reaching the whole goal in life. Goal setting is common to athletes and businessmen. This could be the reason why these athletes and businessmen is seen to have succeeded in their lives (Manktelow et. al., 2014).

Most of the people believe that they are aware of everything that can be seen by their naked eyes. They think that they have the ability to perceive, feel, or to be conscious of events, objects or sensory patterns. Awareness is defined as humans or an animal's perception and cognitive

reaction to a condition or event. It is further thought that awareness is a relative concept. A person as the highest level of an animal may be partially aware, may be subconsciously aware, or may be acutely aware of external events by way of sensory perception (Miller, Vandome, &McBrewster, 2010). This assumption is challenging and as such would be a good source of investigation. This is not the only point to consider by people while they are still active in this world. Hardy (2014) assembled some research about seven benefits associated with higher education. According to her, “these findings may not dictate every college graduate’s future; however, it does reveal some interesting rewards.” Some of the people especially those who belongs to the marginalized group do not believe much on the idea that getting the higher education will lead the person to have a successful life. The researchers desire to think that maybe they have these thoughts because they are not able to appreciate the benefits of higher education.

In this paper, the researchers would like to document the assessment of the participants regarding their goals in life, a level of their awareness category and also their consciousness on the benefits of getting a higher education. Moreover, the output of this investigative work could be an addition to the stock of knowledge that would be useful to other researchers.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Playdon (2013) “the evidence is clear that some forms of postsecondary education (college) is necessary elements of successful, independent lives for most people in today’s economy.” In the article entitled *Education Pays* (2010) it was reported that those who are holders of bachelor’s degree and working full-time year round in 2008 received higher earnings as compared to individuals with only a high school diploma. This signifies that having higher education lead to potential higher earning (as cited in Hardy, 2014). This result is also supported by the paper of Playdon (2013) when she discovers that on average and for most people having a postsecondary education (college) has a high payoff. She added that “the benefits of higher education also extend to the chances of being employed in the first place.”

Some studies (Carnegie Mellon University, 2006; Journal of the National Cancer Institute, 2008; as cited in Hardy, 2014) published that having a higher education could help lower the blood pressure, lower the levels of cortisol, and stress hormone. Moreover, males and females who earned a college degree are also at a lower risk of developing colorectal, prostate, lung and breast cancer.

*Education Pays* (2010) added that college graduates are less likely to smoke and more likely to exercise compared to high school graduates (cited in Hardy, 2014). Playdon (2013) declares that “those with a college education are more likely to live healthier lifestyles, with fewer incidences of smoking and obesity”. She added that “college-educated adults of ages, and their children, are less likely to be obese and mothers with higher levels of education spend more time with children, regardless of whether they are employed or not”. Psychological benefits derived from the material well-being of individuals and the wealth of society are the observed non-pecuniary benefits of higher which may lead to the increased engagement of voluntary work and understanding of political issues.

In terms of job satisfaction, based on the paper of Playdon (2013) 56 percent of workers aged 30 to 45 agree that their job keeps them learning which is contrary to over 30 percent with a

high school diploma. Commonly, it is believed that the more one learns the more he earns (Playdon, 2013). “People with a higher level of education are more satisfied in their jobs than people who only have a high school diploma”, according to the College Board’s 2010 Education Pays report. In addition, unemployment among college graduates during the recession was consistently lower than the unemployment rates of non-degree holders” (as cited in Hardy, 2014). From the College Board report in 2008, nearly 70 percent of college graduates had employer-provided health insurance, while only 50 percent of high school graduates had that kind of benefits (Hardy, 2014). In the findings of Playdon (2013) she mentioned that “higher levels of education are found to correlate with higher health insurance and pension contributions.” This indicates that this people has the capability to support their health needs. Moreover, the University of Chicago 2007 survey noted that the job of teachers, psychologists, operating engineers, office supervisors, and education administrators are satisfying in nature (as cited in Hardy, 2014).

In the Philippine setting, “Filipinos have a deep regard for education. They observed that it is as a primary avenue for upward social and economic mobility. The middle-class parents make great sacrifices in order to provide secondary and higher education for their children”, (Dolan, 1991). Presently, though there is economic growth in the Philippines unemployment rates still rising. An individual who is a graduate of college education could possibly get employment. National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said the “majority of the unemployed were high school graduates (31.7%), college graduates (21.3%) and college undergraduates (14.6%)”, (“*Philippine higher and vocational education*”, 2013).

Today’s environment education gives the people several benefits. Improvements and change of economic status are only some of these benefits. Education aids in making the future world a better place to live. *Philippine Education* (2014) revealed that Filipino people have a deep concern for education because it occupies a central place in political, economic, social, and cultural life in the Philippines.

“Education in the Philippines, from primary to secondary to tertiary and beyond, is evolving and responding as the country develops and grows. The Philippine government wants the education at all levels to provide its citizens with knowledge and skills to keep it progressing long into the next century”, (“*Philippine higher and vocational education*” 2013). This vision is possible when the people themselves set their goals ahead of time and work hard towards the realization of these goals.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This present study was anchored on the three different concepts or ideas which the researchers believed to be essential in people’s existence in this world namely: life goals, awareness category, and higher education.

In the concept of Manktelow et. al (2014), they said that goal setting motivates a person to acquire knowledge, and aids him to organize his time and resources so that he can make the very most of their lives. Through defining and setting clear goals, one can measure the level of his achievement. And as such he will be able to determine what are seemed to be pointless while on the process of attaining the goals set. This way self-confidence increases as the person identifies his own ability and competence.

On the other hand, the research of Hardy (2014) discussed that there are a number of benefits associated with higher education. She itemized the benefits of higher education namely: higher earning potential, lower blood pressure and stress, healthier lifestyle choices, employer-provided health care coverage, job satisfaction, job stability, and future children benefits. She stipulated that her findings “may not dictate every college graduate’s future; however, it does reveal some interesting rewards.”

Furthermore, Aursnes (2009) conferred his theory of awareness. He enunciated that there are seven levels of awareness. He discussed the corresponding category of this awareness level in which he said that “if shaped correctly then this will result to improve quality of life.” He categorized these level as animal, mass, aspiration, individual, discipline, experience and mastery. Furthermore, he described them one by one as follows:

(1) The Animalistic category concentrates on a person’s fight or flight response. This signifies to the instinctive response of the individual to external challenges. This indicates that a lot of thinking is not exercised in this level. A person reacts but did not respond; (2) the second category on the level of awareness is called Mass. In this category, the person is not really thinking. This means that he just thoughtlessly follow the crowd; (3) the category called Aspiration is the third level of awareness. A person speaks of his desire to be, to do and to have more, but he never do some actions. Individuals who do not know how to convert their dreams into actions belong to this type of awareness; (4) the next category is called Individual level of awareness. In this level, the person starts to express his distinctiveness. The moment the person starts to think that he is unique is the stage that one can begin to achieve great things. Each one has his unlimited but specific potential. Since his specific potential differs from the other person;

(5) Discipline category is the fifth level of awareness. In this category, it does not imply training or punishment. This considers person’s ability to keep moving forward, growing, and focuses on his goal despite distractions and competing influences. To stay disciplined enables the person to gain energy and avoid being halted or thrown away from the path he wants to follow on; (6) the sixth category on the level of awareness is the one called as Experience. In this world, there is no substitute for experience. A person may be a learned one, but his learning is based, in theory, while experiencing is acquired through real-world applications. Experience is a remarkable way to improve person’s complete awareness. As he experiences things, new opportunities are discovered. The application of experience set the person apart and supplements his quest for a life’s fulfillment; (7) the last category on the level of awareness is called Mastery. This is the point at which the individual truthfully begin to respond. Habit does not control his responds. He has mastered his standards and uses his intellectual faculties to control his thoughts, actions and the ultimate results. Mastery is the way in which enable the person to reach the peak of his life. He is able to overcome his fears, he can quickly begin to see signs of progress toward his goals. His subconscious mind is not filled with doubt, but with optimism and possibility.

## **The Problem**

1. As assessed by the participants, ( male and female ) what is the:

- 1.1. level of their perception on the different life goals utilized in this study?
- 1.2. extent of their cognizance on the benefits of higher education?

1.3. most dominant category of their awareness level?

2. Based on the result of the study what recommendations could be proposed.

### Scope and Limitations

This study limits only on the importance of life goals, a category of the awareness level, and cognizance on the benefits of higher education as assessed by the participants who are enrolled in the academic year 2015-2016. From the findings of the study, recommendations are proposed.

### Objective of the Study

The results of this study would benefit the: **Adolescents.** As young people, this study is beneficial to them since from the result of this inquiry they will be helped to identify their important goals in life; and thus, they will be able to determine which one should be given more attention to attain success in life. **Parents.** They are the ones to guide their children to enable the latter to achieve their goals in life. The results of this study will make them aware about children's perception and with that awareness, attentiveness to their children could be focused. **Teachers.** As mentors of the young minds, they will become more cognizant since the result of this study will determine participants perception on their life goals and insights about higher education. **Public and Private Secondary Institution Administrators.** This will lead them to new discoveries students' opinion about life goals; and thus, may guide them in the formulation of new strategies in order that their students will become more sensitive and enthusiastic aspirants of a brighter future. **Other Researchers.** This will serve as their guiding tool to conduct a further study related to this issue.

### METHOD

The descriptive research design is utilized in this study. Key (1997) explained that "descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation." The school that participated in our study is one of the privately owned schools in Muscat, Oman. The participants of this study are the ones who are officially enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016.

This study utilized three groups of instruments to gather the data needed. The first part of the tool tells about the indicators that determine the life goals that are given importance by the respondents. This is adapted from the online questionnaire in a modified form. There are four groups of life goals used in this study. These are: (1) **Family** which is measured through warm relationship and sense of belongingness; (2) **Pleasure** that is describe through fun, excitement and enjoyment in life; (3) **Career** which is label with job security, self-fulfillment, and sense of accomplishment; (4) **public service** which is express through the terms being well respected.

The second part of the instrument articulated ten different indicators regarding the benefits of higher education (college level). The respondents are asked to mark the level of their awareness based on the statement which says that, high level education – is linked to higher pay; is associated to lower blood pressure and stress; improves the chances of getting a better job;



lower the risk of developing colorectal, prostate, lung and breast cancer; helps to develop skills; reassures healthier lifestyle choices; gets employer that can provide health care coverage; adds satisfaction in jobs; provides job stability; benefits future children.

The third part of the instrument speaks about the seven categorizations of the levels of awareness. Each category carries with it the researcher's made indicators which are assemble from the online article of Aursnes (2009). The indicators in each category are: I react, but I did not take any action for Animalistic category; In doing the requirements I am not categorically thinking, I just blindly follow the crowd for Mass category; I desire something, but I do no action for Aspiration category; I realize that I am unique and that my unique thoughts and contributions are essential to this world for Individual category; I have the ability to focus on my goal despite distractions and competing influences for Discipline category; I get involved, take action and take part in this world for Experience category; and I use my intellectual faculties to control my thoughts, my actions, and ultimate results for Mastery category.

The above-mentioned instruments were submitted to a group of experts in the academic field for approval before it was administered to twenty pilot respondents. Some suggestions were noted and applied to make the indicators clearer to the participants. This is the tool utilized in this research to arrive the answers of the issues raised in this paper.

A permission letter was sent to the head of the office in the subject academic institution. After permission was granted the survey questionnaires were distributed/administered to the participants. The accomplished questionnaires were collected and the responses to each instrument were tallied. The data are then processed and tabulated.

For interpretation purposes regarding the importance of life goals the weighted mean is employed. Numeric value is assigned in each hypothetical mean range. Furthermore, the qualitative scale of measurement as shown below with its corresponding verbal interpretation is utilized.

<u>Numeric Value</u>	<u>Hypothetical Mean Range</u>	<u>Qualitative Scale</u>	<u>Verbal Interpretation</u>
1	1.00 – 1.75	Unimportant (U)	- means that for the participants this goal in life is not important at all.
2	1.76 – 2.50	Slightly Important (SI)	- means that for the participants this goal in life is important at some extent
3	2.51 – 3.25	Fairly Important (FI)	- means that for the participants this goal in life is reasonably important
4	3.26 – 4.00	Extremely Important (EI)	- means that for the participants this goal in life is tremendously important

Moreover, for purposes of explanation regarding participants' cognizance on the benefits of higher education the scale of measurement below were employed.

<u>Numeric Value</u>	<u>Hypothetical Mean Range</u>	<u>Qualitative Scale</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
1	1.00 – 1.75	Unaware (U)	- means that the participants has no knowledge at all on the significance of higher education
2	1.76 – 2.50	Slightly Aware (SA)	- means that knowledge of the participants on the significance of higher education is at some extent
3	2.51 – 3.25	Fairly Aware (FA)	- means that knowledge of the participants on the significance of higher education is at reasonable extent
4	3.26 – 4.00	Extremely Aware (EA)	- means that knowledge of the participants on the significance of higher education is at greatest extent

As regards to the category on the level of awareness, the participants have to rank the indicators. Each rank has the corresponding interpretation. In the event that the indicator is ranked as: 1 – it transmits participant's ability to reach his goals at uncertain level; 2 –very low level; 3 –low level; 4 –satisfactory level; 5 –very satisfactory level; 6 –excellent level; 7 – ultimate level. To determine the category of the participants' awareness level the mathematical computation of ranking the indicator of every category is used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section highlights the results of the study and discussion is made to clearly describe the answers of the participants.

### Student's Life Goals

The Table 1 below shows the different indicators under each life goal factor. The factor average has been computed and reflected on the table below with its corresponding qualitative description.

**Table 1. Level of Participants' Perception unto Life Goals**

Indicator	Factor	Factor Average ( $\mu$ )	QD
1. Warm relationships with others; Sense of belonging	Family	2.41	SI
2. Fun ; excitement and enjoyment in life	Pleasure	2.79	FI
3. Job security; self-fulfillment; sense of accomplishment	Career	2.98	FI
4. Being well respected	Public Service	2.68	FI

**Legend:**

Hypothetical	Mean Range	Qualitative Description
1.00 – 1.75		Unimportant -U
1.76 – 2.50		Slightly Important - SI
2.51 – 3.25		Fairly Important - FI
3.26 – 4.00		Extremely Important - EI

As reflected by the answers of the participants, it is noticed that only one of the four factors rated by them as *slightly important*. This signifies that the participants perceived this goal in life as *important at some extent*. This factor is identified as the family ( $\mu = 2.41$ ). On the other hand, the three factors that measure the participant's perception unto their life goals namely: career ( $\mu = 2.98$ ), pleasure ( $\mu = 2.78$ ), and public service ( $\mu = 2.68$ ) are rated by them as *fairly important*. This means that for them these goals in life are *reasonably important*. It can be noticed that the goal in life as regards to career has the highest rating while the family has the lowest rating. Based on the results career got the highest rate above all the other factors. This result suggests that the participants had the enthusiasm to pursue their profession.

**Students Level of Awareness on Higher Education**

This part of the study explains the participants' level of awareness as regards to the benefits of higher education. There are eight indicators considered in this part. The item average is computed to determine the level of participants' awareness.

**Table 2. Higher Education Awareness Level**

Indicator	Item Average ( $\mu$ )	QD
1. I need to go to university or college to study for a degree in higher education.	2.90	FA
2. I have sufficient information about how to pursue the degree I want to.	2.66	FA
3. I would improve my chances of getting a better job if I go for higher education.	2.77	FA
4. My parents want me to go for higher education	2.74	FA
5. Higher education helps me to develop my skills.	2.99	FA
6. The cost of the university is stopping me to pursue the desired degree	2.93	FA
7. I do not think my results will be good enough for the desired degree.	2.79	FA
8. Teachers encourage students to go for higher education.	2.99	FA

**Legend:**



**Hypothetical Mean Range    Qualitative Description**

1.00 – 1.75	Unaware	- U
1.76 – 2.50	Slightly Aware	- SA
2.51 – 3.25	Fairly Aware	- FA
3.26 – 4.00	Extremely Aware	- EA

The participants declared that they are *fairly aware* on the 8 indicators used in this study. This means that the knowledge of the participants on the benefits of higher education is at *reasonable extent*. Among the eight indicators regarding perception on the benefits of higher education, the number 5 and 8 got the highest factor average ( $\mu = 2.99$ ). Along with the fulfilling role played by the teachers to encourage students to continue their higher education which was considered by the students, the participants are now reasonably aware that they could develop their skills through higher education.

**Category of Awareness Level**

The Table 3 below discusses the category of awareness level of the participants. The seven categories are utilized and each of the categories has one indicator to simplify its description.

**Table 3. Category of Participants' Awareness Level**

Indicator and its Corresponding Category (from lowest-highest)	Result's Based: Score	Result's Based: Rank	Level of Awareness Interpretation corresponding to its rank
1. I react, but I did not take any action. (Animalistic)	340	2	Very low level
2. In doing the requirements I am not categorically thinking, I just blindly follow the crowd. (Mass)	356	3	Low level
3. I desire something, but I do no action. (Aspiration )	329	1	Uncertain level
4. I realize that I am unique and that my unique thoughts and contributions are essential to this world. (Individual)	423	5	Very Satisfactory level
5. I have the ability to focus on my goal despite distractions and competing influences. (Discipline)	411	4	Satisfactory level
6. I get involved, take action and take part in this world. (Experience)	453	6	Excellent level
7. I use my intellectual faculties to control my thoughts, my actions, and ultimate results. (Mastery)	522	7	<b>Ultimate level</b>

The data-based chronological order of the awareness category is not shown in this result. This signifies that the participants of this study possessed distinctive awareness level; however, it is perceptible that the most dominant category of participants' awareness level is *mastery*. Undeniably, the participants are physically active and their mental alertness is at good extent. In this category of awareness level the individual openly begin to respond. His or her responses are controlled by his or her intellects and not by habit. He or she has learned his standard, he knows how to control his thoughts, actions, and the ultimate results through the use of his or her mind. And a person who is at this category is described as strong and can speedily see progress toward his goals. This category further signifies that a person possesses positivity in his work (Aursnes, 2009).

## Findings

Based on the gathered data the researchers found that:

1. the participants' goals in life like career, pleasure, and public service are perceived by them as *reasonably important* while their family is important only at *some extent*.
2. participants' knowledge on the benefits of higher education is at a *reasonable extent* and they are aware that they could develop their skills through higher education.
3. *mastery* is the most dominant category of their awareness level followed by *experience category*

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study lead the researchers to conclude that these group of participants had a liberal perception since their assessment showed that to pursue their career, pleasure, and public service has to be given reasonable time while the family is only to some extent. It is delightfully found that they are judiciously aware on what higher education could contribute to their life as they continue to grow in the field of their forthcoming professions. Furthermore, the category of their awareness level (mastery level) when wisely utilized coupled with their experiences could pave the way and lead them towards their bright future.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend that:

1. as early as this time identification of goals in life appears to be very significant to do by every individual so that they will be able to regulate and lead their actions towards the realization of their goals in life
2. social support from parents are still very important since in making any decisions every person needs guidance
3. enhance supervision from the teachers as the second parent of the students are also necessary

4. school administrators are expected to know better about the students enrolled in their school, and be around at all times so that these students can be guided accordingly in the fulfillment of their goals
5. further study related to the issues raised in this paper be conducted to a wider scope so that results would be more applicable to different environment

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