

# From students' life aspirations to academic performance and wellbeing: The mediating role of achievement goal orientations



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GOALS' LAB STUDY (2019-2021)

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Visit the study web: <https://tikslulaboratorija.ktu.edu/>



## INTRODUCTION

A recently proposed Hierarchical Model of Human Goal Striving (Janke & Dickhäuser, 2019) can be useful for understanding students' motivation. It integrates Achievement Goal Theory and Self-Determination Theory and explains how broader life aspirations shape human goal striving in a more specific situation via achievement goal orientations. However, the associations between life aspiration and achievement goal orientation are only tested with adults previously (e.g., Janke & Dickhäuser, 2018). **The aim of our study: to examine achievement goal orientations as a mediator in relations between students' life aspirations and academic achievement and wellbeing.**

## METHODOLOGY

**DATA:** the 1<sup>st</sup> wave of data from a school-based longitudinal study GOAL'S LAB.

**PARTICIPANTS:** 1268 students (47.3% male) aged 14-16 ( $M=14.87$ ,  $SD=0.39$ ) sampled from 36 high schools of Lithuania. Diverse family and socio-economic background:

- 67% live with two parents; 22% parental divorce, 4% parental loss, 4% migration;
- 12.9% receive social support (free nutrition at school).
- Ethnically homogenous (> 98% Lithuanian).

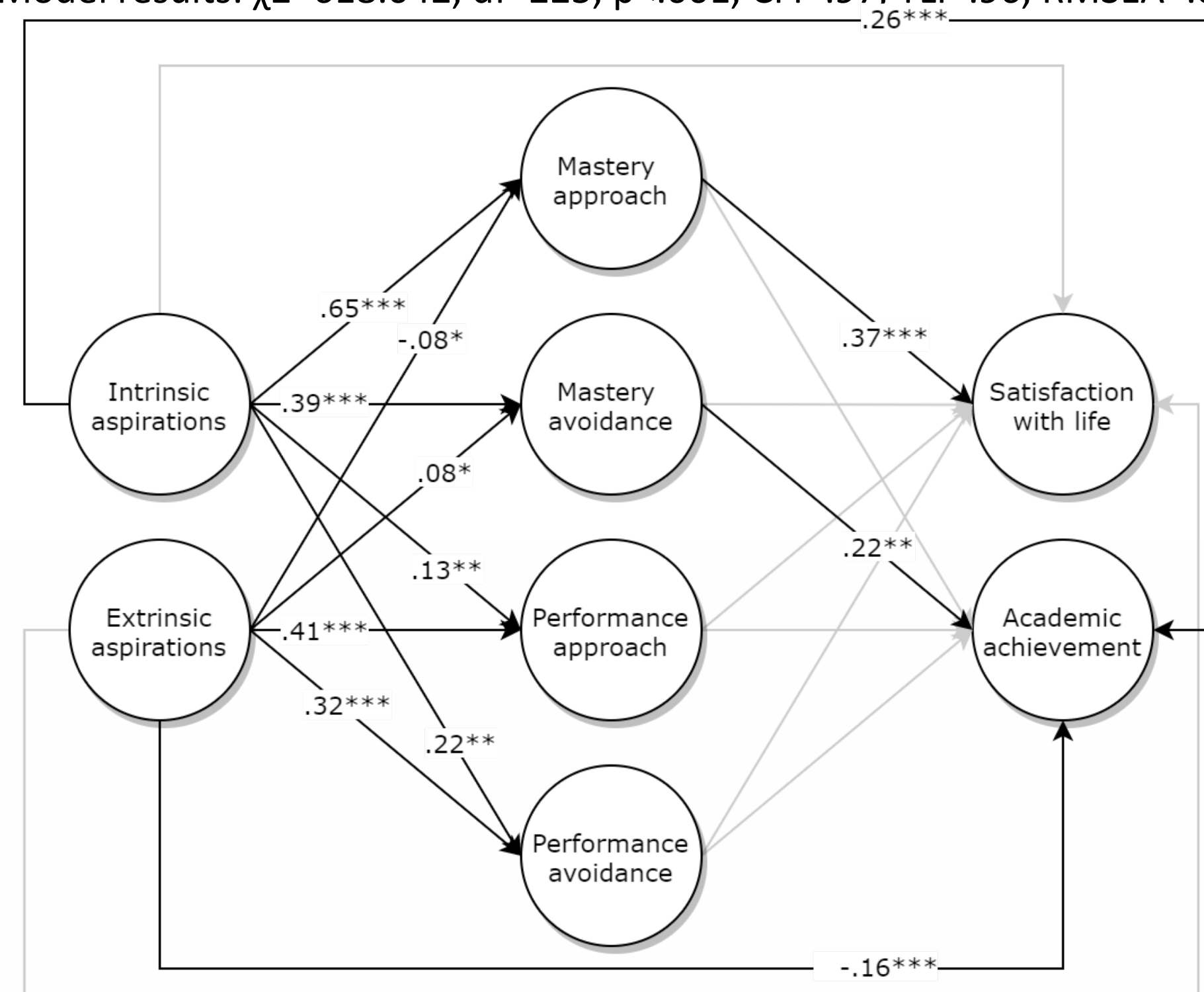
**PROCEDURE:** in-class computer-based assessment in November 2019.

**DATA ANALYSIS:** Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in Mplus 8.4.

## RESULTS

### What are relations between life aspirations, goals orientations and academic outcomes?

Model results:  $\chi^2=618.042$ ,  $df=225$ ,  $p<.001$ , CFI=.97, TLI=.96, RMSEA=.037



### Do goals orientations mediate associations between life aspirations and academic outcomes?

Effects	Outcome variables			
	Academic achievement		Satisfaction with life	
	Est.	95% CI	Est.	95% CI
<b>Predictor: Intrinsic aspirations</b>				
Direct	.26	[.13 .43]	-.05	[-.19 .10]
Total indirect	.13	[.01 .24]	.19	[.06 .33]
Specific indirect via Mastery approach	.05	[-.10 .17]	.24	[.09 .42]
Specific indirect via Mastery avoidance	.09	[.01 .20]	-.03	[-.14 .06]
Specific indirect via Performance appr.	.02	[-.04 .17]	.01	[-.09 .14]
Specific indirect via Performance avoid.	-.03	[-.22 .10]	-.02	[-.22 .14]
Total	.39	[.30 .47]	.15	[.07 .23]
<b>Predictor: Extrinsic aspirations</b>				
Direct	-.16	[-.27 -.07]	.10	[-.01 .22]
Total indirect	.04	[-.03 .13]	-.05	[-.13 .06]
Specific indirect via Mastery approach	-.01	[-.03 .01]	-.03	[-.07 .01]
Specific indirect via Mastery avoidance	.02	[0.00 .06]	-.01	[-.05 .01]
Specific indirect via Performance appr.	.07	[-.16 .35]	.02	[-.26 .34]
Specific indirect via Performance avoid.	-.04	[-.29 .16]	-.03	[-.30 .21]
Total	-.12	[-.19 -.05]	.05	[-.03 .12]

**VARIABLES and INSTRUMENTS. Predictors:** *intrinsic* (15 items) and *extrinsic* (14 items) life aspirations measured with Aspiration Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  respectively 0.92, and 0.93.

**Mediators:** four achievement goal orientations measured with 3 items each from AGQ-R (Elliot & Murayama, 2008): *mastery approach*, *mastery avoidance*, *performance approach*, *performance avoidance*. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  respectively 0.83, 0.76, 0.83, and 0.78.

**Outcomes:** 1) *subjective wellbeing* measured with 5 items from Satisfaction with Life Scale-Child (Gadernann et al., 2010), Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.88; 2) *academic achievement*: average of autumn semester grades retrieved from school records.

### Effects on ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

**Intrinsic aspirations** were directly and indirectly positively associated with academic achievement. The significant total indirect effect was primarily attributed to a specific indirect effect linking intrinsic aspirations with academic achievement via **mastery avoidance**.

The effect of **extrinsic aspiration** on academic achievement was negative and direct, i.e., not mediated by achievement goal orientations.

### Effects on WELLBEING

**Intrinsic aspirations** were positively associated with satisfaction with life. This effect was mostly indirect and attributed to a specific indirect effect via **mastery approach**.

We did find one indirect effect linking **extrinsic aspirations** with satisfaction with life via mastery approach. However, the total effect was not significant, indicating that extrinsic aspirations may not be associated with satisfaction with life when other pathways are taken into account.

## CONCLUSION

- Our results support the Hierarchical Model of Human Goal Striving in achievement related context with high-school students.
- Long term intrinsic life aspirations centering on personal growth act as driving factors for both analyzed academic outcomes via enhancement of mastery orientations (i.e. striving for competence enhancement or avoiding the loss of competence).
- Results for the effects of extrinsic aspirations aiming to strive for external motivators like fame, wealth or status on academic outcomes were inconclusive.