Perceived University Students' Attributions of Their Academic Success and Failure

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Abstract

This study examined the applicability of the attribution theory in understanding how students attribute their academic success and failure. Participants involved a sample of 260 undergraduate students at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. They completed an attitude questionnaire scale with items on locus of control, stability and controllability dimensions. The results show that the majority of students attributed their academic performance to internal, stable and controllable factors. High performing students were more likely to attribute their academic performance to internal and controllable factors than low performing students. Success was attributed to internal and controllable factors, while academic failure was attributed to external and uncontrollable factors. Save for sex, the participants' demographic variables did not statistically significantly influence the attribution pattern. The results of this study confirm the predictions of the attribution theory and are in line with the findings of similar studies conducted in other university settings.

Keywords: attribution; academic performance; academic success; academic failure; Tanzania.