

**The Relational-Behavior Model:  
The Relationship Between  
Intrinsic Motivational Instruction and Extrinsic Motivation  
in Psychologically Based Instruction**

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## **Abstract**

This pilot study examined the relational-behavior model (RBM) as a method of intrinsic motivational instruction. Among a sample of 33 college students enrolled in two undergraduate psychology courses, a Spearman rho analysis revealed a significant relationship between the intrinsic motivational factors (e.g. self assessments, group activities, class participation) and the extrinsic motivational factors (e.g. work completion and class attendance). Specifically, the results suggested that the psychology instructors who provided more student/class participation were more likely to have high class attendance and work completion in psychology courses. Additional studies examining the relationship between intrinsic motivational instruction and extrinsic motivation in psychology courses was recommended.

## **Overview**

According to Chandler (2000), intrinsic motivation in education has been characterized as the student's curiosity, interest, and mastery of knowledge beyond external gains. Among

educators, intrinsic motivation represents the inner drive that is essential to academic achievement. Research has suggested that students with high intrinsic motivation have higher grades, higher test scores, and frequent perceptions of academic competency (Allen & Robbins, 2008). On the other hand, low intrinsic motivation has been associated with poor academic progress, poor school attendance, and poor school retention. According to the person-environment fit theory, low intrinsic motivation is due to a mismatch in the student's vocational interest, academic preparation, and academic performance (Allen & Robbins, 2008). In other words, as educational institutions provide more opportunities to balance objective knowledge with self awareness, autonomy, and self determination, students are more likely to be successful in academic programs.

In teaching psychology and counseling-related courses, it is essential to utilize intrinsic motivational instruction (Lin & McKeachie, 1999). Although there are various methods, the relational-behavior model (RBM) has been recently modified to improve intrinsic motivation in psychology courses. Originally, the RBM was designed as a method of providing health prevention to at-risk populations (Chandler & Perkins, 2007). As a method of instruction, the RBM has been modified to the following: (a) to improve the student's knowledge of self through self-assessments and appraisals; (b) to improve the student's objective knowledge through class lectures and class participation; (c) to improve the student's interpersonal skills through cooperative learning activities; (d) to improve the student's understanding of psychology with field learning activities; (e) to improve the student's awareness of community mental health resources through self exploration and field activities; and (f) to improve the student's trust in counseling-related services through small group discussions, critiques, and dialogues.

Despite the use of the RBM, there is a need for empirical support as it relates intrinsic motivational instruction (e.g. self assessments, cooperative learning activities, etc). Moreover, college administrators may need additional evidence as to how intrinsic motivational instruction relates to extrinsic motivation (e.g. work completion, attendance, etc) With this in mind, the purpose of this pilot study is to explore the relationship between intrinsic motivational instruction and extrinsic motivation in psychology courses.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 33 undergraduate students located in a college in the southwestern region of the

United States were used in the study. The age range was 19-46. Within the sample, 57% were males, 36% were females, and seven percent were neither.

### Measure

A survey was constructed utilizing the RBM intrinsic motivational factors and the extrinsic motivation of higher education. Specifically, the survey measured the perceived interest in the following the intrinsic motivational factors: self-assessments exercises, group field experiences, and class participation. In addition, the survey measured the perceived interest in work completion and class attendance as the extrinsic motivational factors.

### Procedures

The survey was provided after the completion of two undergraduate psychology courses. Both courses utilized the RBM approach as a method of instruction. A consent form was provided to each participant indicating the nature of the study, the completion time, and debriefing services. The survey was distributed at the end of the term as a supplemental course evaluation. Each participant completed the survey voluntarily and anonymously. Extra-credit was provided optionally for students completing the study.

## **Data Analysis and Conclusion**

A descriptive analysis is provided on Tables 1-5. A Spearman rho analysis indicated a moderate positive relationship between work completion and class participation ( $\rho = .36, < .05$ ). In addition, the analysis also revealed a moderate positive relationship between class attendance and class participation ( $\rho = .46, < .01$ ). In conclusion, the study suggested a connection between the RBM intrinsic motivational instruction and extrinsic motivation in psychology courses. Specifically, psychology instructors who provided opportunities for student/class participation were more likely to improve work completion and class attendance. Further research examining the relationship between the intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation in psychology courses should be considered.

## **References**

Allen, J. and Robbins, S. (2008). Prediction of College Major Based on Vocational Interest, Academic Preparation, and First Year Academic Performance. *Research in Higher Education*, Vol. 49.

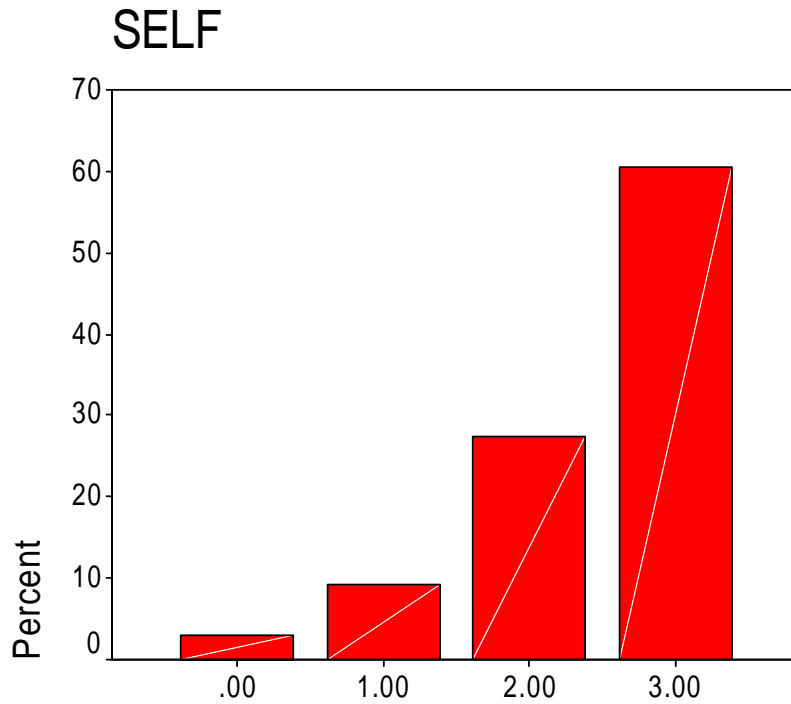
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**Table 1. Interest Ratings of Self-Assessments in Psychology Courses**



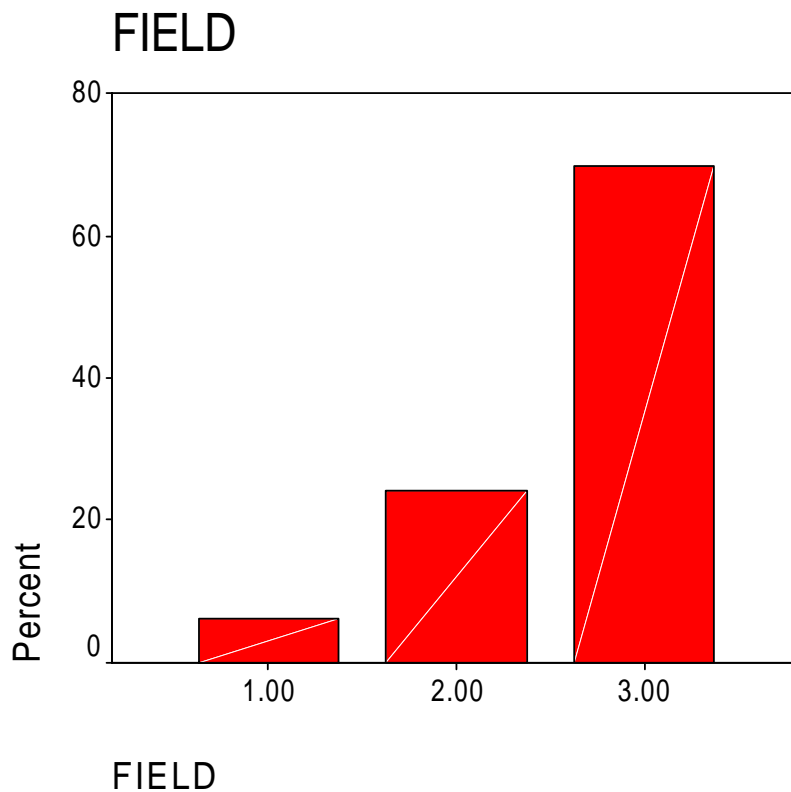
SELF

n=33

\* SELF= Self Assessment/Self Appraisal:  
0=Not At All; 1=A Little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot

Self-assessments were an experiential component of the psychology course.. With the use of internet sites, students were assigned on-line self-appraisal activities. These activities involved assessing leadership styles, communication styles, commitment, introversion, self-esteem, etc. The instructor provided lectures and individual feedback regarding their self-appraisal results. Note: As noted in the course syllabi, all activities were for educational purposes only.

**Table 2. Interest Ratings of Field Experiences in Psychology Courses**



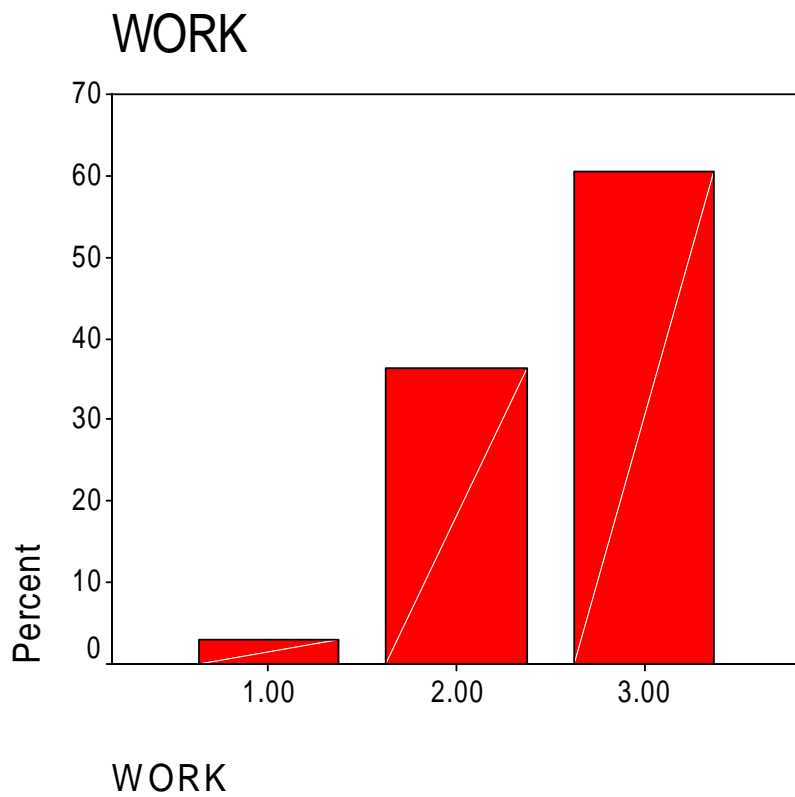
n=33

\*FIELD=Field Experience

0=Not At All; 1=A Little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot

The field experiences were group activities designed to explore specific areas related to psychology. The field experiences were completed on and off campus with the consent of the instructor. Each group was required to complete a written summary of their experience. Field experience topics included identifying supportive services and wellness services.

**Table 3. Interest Ratings in Work Completion in Psychology Courses**



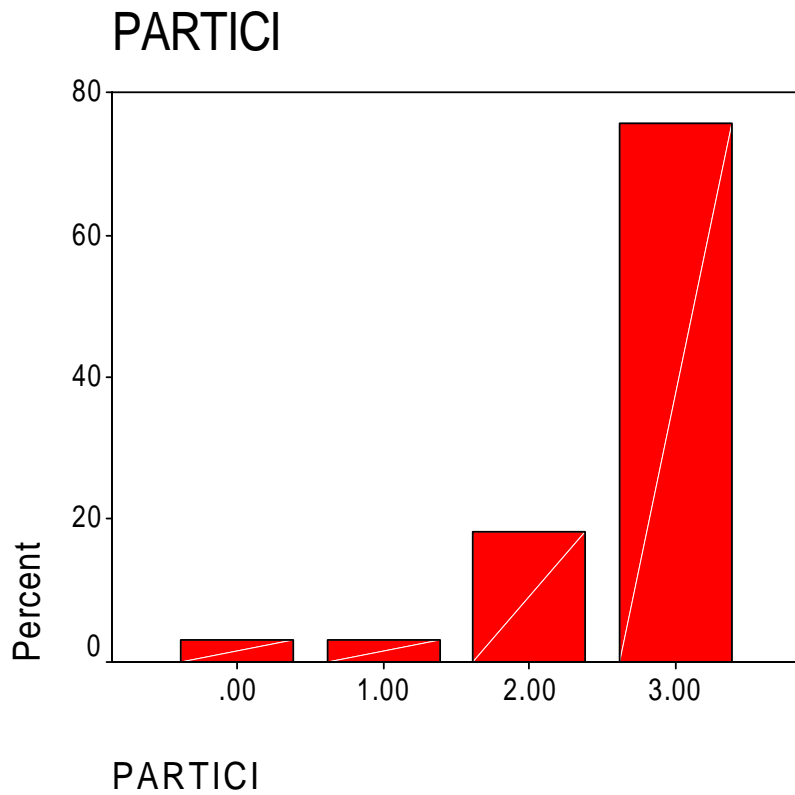
n=33

\*WORK=Work Completion Interest:

1=A Little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot

**Table 4. Interest Ratings in Class Participation in Psychology Courses**



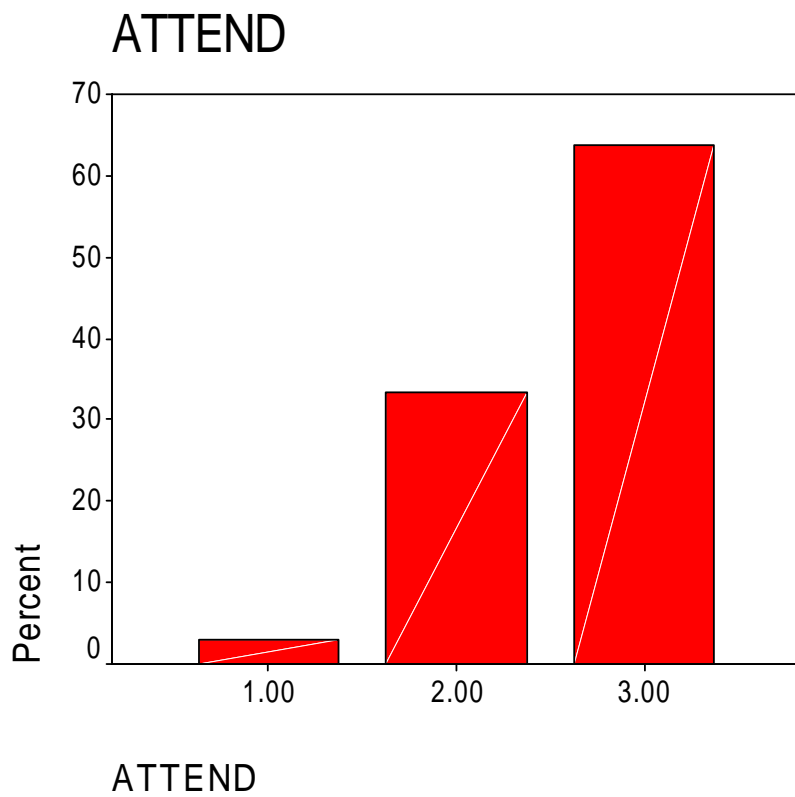


n=33

\*PARTICI=Class Participation:

0=Not At All; 1=A Little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot

**Table 5. Interest Ratings in Attending Psychology Courses**



n=33

\*ATTEND=Interest in Attending Class  
(1=A Little; 2=Somewhat; 3=A lot)