

The Level of Ambition among Primary School Pupils: A Field Study in Primary Schools of Ouargla City

Rabia Oulidi ^{*1}, Dr. Adaika Samia ^{*2}

¹University of EL Oued (Algeria). Email: rabiaoulidi 166 @gmail .com

²University of EL Oued (Algeria).Email: Samiasamia444@yahoo.fr

¹Laboratory of Social Development and Community Service Associa 39@gmai.com

²Laboratory Qualities of programs in special education. and adapted education University of Ouargla Algeria

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the level of ambition among fourth-grade primary school pupils in Ouargla(Algeria), using a descriptive exploratory–comparative approach. The study population consisted of 253 pupils, from which a main sample of 100 pupils was selected through stratified random sampling. The study employed the "Level of Ambition Scale" developed by Moawad Abdel Azim (2005) and later standardized by Belaoun (2017). The scale comprises 30 items distributed across four dimensions: optimism, goal-setting ability, openness to novelty, and tolerance of frustration.

The findings revealed that the level of ambition among the study sample was high.

Keywords: Ambition, primary school pupils.

1. Problem Statement

Ambition is considered one of the central concepts in educational psychology, as it reflects the level of expectations an individual sets for themselves in terms of achievement and progress. Ambition is viewed as a motivating and supportive factor for school behavior, since a pupil cannot strive for excellence or academic success without ambition that drives them to persevere and work continuously (Abdel Latif, 2018).

A study conducted by Abu Rahma et al. (2024), entitled *Ambition and Its Relationship to Academic Achievement among Orphaned Children and Their Peers in the Southern Governorates of Palestine*, found that the average level of ambition among non-orphaned children was about 81.71%, while it was approximately 69.08% among orphans. The study also indicated a positive correlation between ambition and academic achievement for the non-orphan group, though the relationship was not statistically significant for the orphaned sample (Abu Rahma et al., 2024).

Similarly, an Algerian study entitled *The Level of Academic Ambition and Its Relationship to Academic Achievement among Secondary School Pupils* revealed a positive correlation between ambition and achievement among Algerian students, supporting the hypothesis that ambition can be an influential factor in academic performance (Belarbi, 2016; Falah, 2020).

Accordingly, the problem of this study is represented in the following research question:

- What is the level of ambition among fourth-grade primary school pupils?

2. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be summarized as follows:

- It contributes to enriching educational research in the Arab context by focusing on ambition at the primary education stage, a level often overlooked by researchers compared to secondary stages.
- It provides practical evidence for teachers on how to foster ambition among pupils from an early age.
- It assists parents in understanding the role of family support in developing children's ambition.
- It guides educational policymakers to incorporate developmental programs that enhance motivation and ambition within the school curriculum. Since the primary stage is foundational in shaping a child's personality, strengthening ambition at this level may positively impact future academic trajectories, reduce school dropout rates, and improve educational outcomes.

3. Research Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. Examine and describe the overall level of ambition among primary school pupils in order to better understand its prevalence at the foundational stage of education.
2. Formulate evidence-based educational recommendations and practical strategies aimed at fostering and enhancing ambition among pupils during the primary stage.

4. Operational Definition of Ambition

Ambition is defined operationally as the degree of desire to achieve a set of goals and objectives that an individual aspires to attain in various domains, and for which they strive diligently.

Theoretical Framework

1. Concept of Ambition

Ambition is a psycho-educational concept that reflects the level at which an individual sets goals in comparison to their actual capabilities. Some researchers have defined it as "the tendency to set future goals higher than the current level of achievement, while exerting effort to attain them" (Cassidy &

Lynn, 1989). Abu Rahma et al. (2024), in a Palestinian study, indicated that children's ambition is manifested in the form of high self-expectations and a desire to achieve academic and social accomplishments beyond their current situation. Abdel Latif (2018) also showed that ambition is positively correlated with academic achievement and functions as an internal motivator for perseverance.

2. Theories Explaining Ambition

- *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*: Maslow posited that ambition develops within the hierarchy of human needs and becomes evident when esteem and self-actualization needs are reached, as the individual seeks greater achievements (Maslow, 1970).
- *Expectancy-Value Theory* (Eccles, 2005): This theory states that ambition is determined by an individual's expectation of success in a given task and the value they place on the achievement. The higher the expectancy and the greater the value, the stronger the ambition.
- *Self-Determination Theory* (Deci & Ryan, 2000): This theory argues that ambition develops when children's basic needs—competence, autonomy, and relatedness—are fulfilled. Recent research highlights that autonomy support in the classroom increases pupils' ambition (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

3. Factors Influencing Ambition

- *Individual factors*: Cognitive abilities, self-confidence, and self-esteem. Mira (2012) found that adolescents with higher self-esteem exhibit greater levels of ambition.
- *Family factors*: Parenting style, support and encouragement, and parents' educational level. Zayed et al. (2019) reported that parental practices based on acceptance and emotional support are associated with higher ambition among juveniles, whereas coercive practices reduce it.
- *School factors*: Teacher roles, curricula, and classroom climate. International studies indicate that a school environment supportive of achievement contributes to raising academic ambition (Wentzel, 1998).

4. Previous Studies

- *Abu Rahma et al. (2024)*: Demonstrated a positive relationship between ambition and academic achievement among non-orphaned children in Palestine, while the relationship was weak among orphans.
- *Al-Harasiya (2023)*: Found that self-efficacy beliefs significantly affect the level of ambition among students in basic education in Oman.
- *Mira (2012)*: Developed a standardized scale of ambition for adolescents in Jeddah, revealing differences related to age and gender.
- *Belarbi (2016)*: Confirmed that academic ambition is influenced by various social, economic, and cultural factors among Algerian school pupils.

Fieldwork

1. Research Methodology

Since the present study aims to explore the level of aspiration among fourth-grade primary school pupils, the descriptive method in its exploratory approach is the most appropriate methodology for this research.

2. Population of the Study

The study population consisted of fourth-grade male and female pupils enrolled in the elementary schools *Imam Bukhari and Emir Abdelkader Old* in *Ouargla*(Algeria). The total population amounted to 253 pupils, distributed by gender as shown in Table (01).

Table (01): Characteristics of the Study Population by Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Males	107	42.30%
Females	146	57.70%
Total	253	100%

It is evident from Table (01) that the study population is composed of 253 pupils, including 107 males (42.30%) and 146 females (57.70%).

3. Pilot Study

Before proceeding with the actual implementation of the research instrument on the main study sample, a pilot study was conducted on a small group drawn from the same population. The purpose was to verify the clarity of the items and the validity of the instrument, as well as to test its suitability for the targeted age group (fourth-grade elementary pupils). A limited group of pupils from *Imam Bukhari and Emir Abdelkader Old* schools were randomly selected, and the scale was administered under conditions similar to the usual classroom environment. Special care was taken to provide simplified instructions appropriate to the characteristics of this age group.

This step helped to identify observations regarding the wording of certain items and the extent to which pupils understood the content of the questions, in addition to estimating the time required to complete the questionnaire. Based on the findings of the pilot study, minor adjustments were made to the wording of some items to enhance clarity, which improved the instrument's validity and ensured its appropriateness for use with the main study sample.

Research Instrument: Ambition Level Scale

The Ambition Level Scale was originally developed by *Moawad Abdel Azim (2005)* and later standardized by *Nassira Belakoun (2017)*. The scale consists of 30 items designed to measure ambition levels among individuals, with responses provided on a four-point Likert scale: *Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely*. The items are distributed across four main dimensions:

- Optimism
- Ability to Set Goals

- **Openness to New Experiences**
- **Tolerance for Frustration**

The scoring key distinguishes between positive and negative items: positive items are scored progressively from 1 to 4, while negative items are reverse-scored.

In terms of reliability, the internal consistency coefficient was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of 0.76, indicating an acceptable level of reliability and internal homogeneity.

Regarding validity, it was assessed through internal consistency by calculating item–dimension correlations, which confirmed that the items effectively measured the intended dimensions.

Overall, the scale demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability and validity, making it a suitable tool for measuring ambition levels among elementary school pupils, especially after adapting item wording to align with their developmental and cognitive characteristics. The scale covers multiple aspects of ambition—including optimism, goal orientation, openness to novelty, and the ability to cope with frustration—thus providing a comprehensive representation of ambition as a psycho-educational construct.

4. Main Study

4.1. Delimitations of the Main Study

The present main study is defined by the following delimitations, which determine the scope of generalizing its results:

- **Spatial Delimitation:** The study was conducted in two elementary schools: *Imam Bukhari* and *Emir Abdelkader Old*, located in *Ouargla*, Algeria.
- **Human Delimitation:** The study sample consisted of 100 fourth-grade pupils (boys and girls).
- **Temporal Delimitation:** The research instrument was administered during the period extending from December 10, 2023, to February 10, 2024.

4.2. Study Sample

The study sample was selected from the aforementioned population using a stratified random sampling technique, as this approach was deemed the most appropriate to adequately represent all strata of the original population. The total sample size consisted of 100 pupils, representing approximately 40% of the population. Table (02) illustrates the distribution of the study sample by gender.

Table (02): Distribution of the Study Sample by Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	40	42.30%
Female	60	57.70%
Total	100	100%

It is evident from Table (02) that the study sample included 100 pupils, of whom 40 were males (42.30%) and 60 were females (57.70%).

4.3. Procedures for Conducting the Main Study

The study was implemented in a natural classroom environment during regular school sessions, following prior coordination with the administration of the two schools and the teachers. The Ambition Level Scale was administered collectively to the pupils.

The process began with a simple explanation of the study's purpose, emphasizing that their responses would be used exclusively for scientific research and would not affect their school evaluations. Instructions on how to answer the scale items were clarified using illustrative examples to ensure understanding and accuracy.

The completion of the questionnaire took, on average, 25 to 30 minutes, under the direct supervision of the researcher, who responded to inquiries and ensured that the process ran smoothly in appropriate conditions. Once the forms were collected, they were checked for completeness and validity, preparing them for subsequent statistical analysis aimed at determining the level of ambition among elementary pupils in the sample.

Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of the Results

The research question was formulated as follows: What is the level of ambition among fourth-grade elementary pupils?

Based on the interpretation criteria of the Ambition Scale, the following data were obtained:

Table (03): Distribution of Pupils According to the Level of Ambition

Variable	Low	%	Medium	%	High	%
Ambition	09	09%	19	19%	72	72%

It is evident from Table (03) that 9 pupils (9%) demonstrated a low level of ambition, 19 pupils (19%) showed a medium level, while the majority, 72 pupils (72%), displayed a high level of ambition.

To verify the statistical significance of the differences between these levels, a Chi-square test was applied.

Table (04): Significance of Differences in Levels of Ambition

Levels	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	χ^2	Sig. Level
Low	09	3.33	1.08	0.01
Medium	19	3.33		
High	72	3.33		

As shown in Table (04), the Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 1.08$) was significant at the 0.01 level, indicating statistically significant differences between ambition levels. Since the highest percentage was in favor of the high level, the study question can be answered as follows: The level of ambition among fourth-grade elementary pupils is high.

Discussion of the Results

The results revealed that fourth-grade pupils possess a high level of ambition. This finding aligns with several previous studies that confirmed ambition tends to emerge strongly in early school years. For instance, Forrester (2022) found that elementary pupils often exhibit high academic aspirations, even in disadvantaged contexts, where ambition is linked more to positive future expectations than to present constraints. Similarly, Smith et al. (2016) reported that pupils who enjoy their schooling and receive strong family and school support demonstrate higher ambition levels.

This result can also be explained in light of motivational theories. According to the Expectancy–Value Theory (Eccles, 2005), ambition increases when a pupil combines a strong expectation of success with a high valuation of the goal. Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory posits that ambition is enhanced when the basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Within this framework, a supportive and encouraging classroom environment may be a key factor behind the elevated ambition levels observed in the current sample.

In the Arab context, these findings are consistent with those of Abu Rahma et al. (2024) in Palestine, which demonstrated a positive correlation between ambition and academic achievement among non-orphan children, highlighting the role of family and school factors. Likewise, Al-Harasiyyah (2023) confirmed that self-efficacy beliefs among students significantly influence ambition levels, supporting the present findings.

Conversely, some studies have reported divergent results, indicating that ambition may be moderate or even low under adverse psychological or social conditions. For example, Al-Jabri (2018) found significant differences in future anxiety between high- and low-ambition groups, suggesting that psychological and social stressors can limit ambition despite good cognitive abilities.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the high level of ambition among fourth-grade pupils in this study can be attributed to the positive interaction between classroom environment, family support, and socio-psychological encouragement. This is consistent with the general trend in the literature emphasizing the importance of early intervention to strengthen academic aspirations.

Study Recommendations

1. Incorporating classroom and extracurricular activities that focus on setting personal and academic goals, thereby enhancing pupils' awareness of their abilities and future potential.
2. Organizing training programs for teachers on how to foster pupils' intrinsic motivation through continuous encouragement and by employing active teaching strategies that emphasize pupil participation and individual success.
3. Raising parents' awareness about the importance of supportive and accepting parenting styles, particularly those based on encouragement and emotional support, given their direct impact on the development of academic ambition.

4. Designing counseling programs aimed at strengthening pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence, especially among those who demonstrated medium or low levels of ambition.
5. Expanding future research to compare ambition levels between elementary and middle school pupils in order to track the development of ambition across different age stages.
6. Proposing future studies that examine the impact of families' socio-economic status on pupils' ambition levels, which would assist policymakers in developing equitable educational policies.
7. Embedding topics within the school curricula that address ambition development, goal-setting skills, and coping with frustration, in line with the psycho-educational needs of children.
8. Developing modern measurement tools for ambition that are culturally and socially adapted to the Arab context, in addition to the scale used in this study, to ensure greater accuracy of results.

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