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The Role of Social Comparison Orientation and Tendencies in Iranian EFL Learners' Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Social Comparison is important as it can be either encouraging or discouraging for the person who makes it. Although studies concerning social comparison in the classroom context abound, few deal with the relationship between the role of social comparison orientation and tendencies in academic achievement in a competition based educational context. Adopting a non- experimental ex-post facto design, this study examines such relationship on 387 English Major Students studying in different Iranian universities in the academic year 2014- 2015. Data were collected through a modified version of Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM). The results, obtained through the statistical techniques of correlation and multinomial logistic regression, revealed that there is a significant relationship between social comparison and academic achievement. Moreover, the results indicated that high comparison orientation and upward tendency for students predict higher academic achievement, and low social comparison orientation and high downward tendency predict lower academic achievement. The findings call for further research on the underlying internal factors that lead to achievement and the similarity of individuals' social comparison behavior in the classroom context, irrespective of culture and context.

Keywords: social comparison, social comparison orientation, social comparison tendencies, academic achievement

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1. Introduction

Social comparison has received considerable attention since 1954 when the social comparison theory was initially proposed by social psychologist Leon Festinger (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & LaPrelle, 1985). Since then it has been considered as one of the major features of classroom environment (Huguet, Dumas, Monteil, & Genestoux, 2001), as students almost always tend to engage in social comparison to find information they need about the accepted and appropriate behavior and outcome in the classroom (Buunk, Kuyper, & van der Zee, 2005).

Research has shown that three motives, including self-evaluation, self-improvement and self-enhancement, lead to different social comparison behaviors (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, & Kuyper, 1999; Buunk, Kuyper, & van der Zee, 2005; Lewis & Weaver, 2015; Wood, 1989).

People seek social comparison with worse-off others, (downward comparison), with the motive of self-enhancement (Friend & Gilbert, 1973; Lewis & Weaver, 2015; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & LaPrelle, 1985) or in response to esteem threats (Wills, 1981), however they engage in social comparison with better-off others (upward comparison) when the desire for self-improvement is dominant (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, & Kuyper, 1999; Harter, 2015; Suls & Tesch, 1978).

As Blanton, et al. (1999) argued, most social comparison research has focused on the conditions that influence the choice of comparison and not the possible effects of social comparison once a choice has been made. One such possible effect of social comparison which has not received due attention is the case of academic achievement. Academic achievement has been defined as the level to which students are performing within their academic program (Wilson, 2009) and is commonly measured as students' grade point average (GPA) (e.g., Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, & Kuyper, 1999; Wilson, 2009) .

According to Farhady, Hezaveh, and Hedayati (2010) in the cultures, such as Iran, that emphasize individualism and rank and value students for being the best, the smartest or the fastest on an academic task, academic achievement tends to be more competitive. Hence, the present study addresses the consequence of social comparison in such a context and

examines the relationship between students' social comparison and academic achievement among Iranian English major students in Iranian universities. It also investigates academic achievement with respect to students' comparison orientation and tendencies, as it is not only important how much a student compares himself or herself to others, but also whether that comparison is being made to students who are doing better-- upward comparison-- or worse-- downward comparison-- in their classes (Wilson, 2009).

The study is significant as it provides new information on students' comparison behavior in an overlooked educational context, indicating that social comparison is important as it can have either encouraging or discouraging effect on students or their learning. Moreover, the study is important because it highlights the complexity of teaching/ learning and indicates that teaching is not limited to external factors such as methods and materials but also to myriads of other internal factors which depends on students' behaviors and their characteristics that can affect students' performance in the classrooms.

2. Literature Review

Festinger (1954) emphasized that the exact equal abilities within the group will satisfy no one. Overall, he argued that social comparison has a variety of functions and that people choose different comparisons according to their motivations to achieve a specific outcome (Li, Hou, & Jia 2015; Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Wood, 1989). Later, the concepts of upward and downward comparisons extended the realm of social comparison. Upward social comparison is the type of comparison that involves someone who is better off and downward social comparison involves someone who is worse off. The distinction of comparison choice resulted in various studies.

Based on the historical review of Suls and Wheeler (2000), the emphasis from the 1950s through the mid-1970s was on accurate self-evaluation through social comparison and upward comparison. The 1980s saw a move toward self-enhancement, mainly through downward comparison. Still, contemporary researchers are examining the dynamics of both upward and downward comparison. Also, Wheeler (1962, 1966 as cited

in Suls & Wheeler, 2000) put the prediction of social comparison theory to test; investigating that the more motivated a person is to do well, the more likely the person will make an upward comparison. This prediction of social comparison theory was supported as the result was consistent with Festinger's (1954) statement.

Other researchers such as Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons and Kuyper (1999) studied the choice of comparison and comparative evaluation as the predictors of academic performance. They explained that social comparison theory related improved performance to both the tendency to compare with others who are performing well and the tendency to view the self as better than others. Blanton et al. (1999) conducted a longitudinal study involving 876 students in their first year of secondary education in four schools in the Netherlands. Participants' scores were used to track changes in academic performance during ninth grade. The students completed a questionnaire in which they listed their targets of comparison and made comparative evaluations of their abilities for each of the seven courses. The findings of this study revealed that social comparison predicted academic performance. Also, it stated that students did better in school if they compared themselves with others who were doing well. These results indicated that social comparison is a determinant of performance level (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, & Kuyper, 1999).

In another study of social comparison choices in the classroom, Huguet, Dumas, Monteil, and Genestoux (2001) searched for further evidence of students' upward comparison tendency and its beneficial impact on performance. They did so with reference to the work of Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, and Kuyper (1999). Blanton et al. (1999) had found that those who nominated a comparison target in several courses chose students from the same sex who slightly outperformed them in class. Also, this choice of comparison had a beneficial effect on students' course grades. Similarly, Huguet et al. (2001) supported earlier findings by Blanton and colleagues, and offered evidence that children compare upward with close friends as a means of improving themselves.

The above-mentioned studies led to the work of Buunk, Kuyper, and van der Zee (2005) that investigated affective response to social comparison

in the classroom (Buunk, Kuyper, & van der Zee, 2005). In their study 609 secondary school students participated, and the affective reactions to social comparisons of grades were examined. Generally the students reported more recurrent responses to upward than to downward comparison. That is, the hope that one might in the future receive a good grade similar to that of the target. Those with a low-performance level responded more often to downward comparison with the fear that they would receive similar low grade on the next test (Buunk, Kuyper, & van der Zee, 2005).

Wilson (2009) investigated the relationship of the factors such as ability, academic achievement, social comparison, perceived level of difficulty, academic self-concept, and future goals in three populations of accelerated high school students (Wilson, 2009). The researcher developed an instrument for his study and found that the students had different patterns of self-concept. Perceived difficulty and achievement were larger predictors of academic self-concept than the social comparison variables for all the students (Wilson, 2009).

Kuyper, Dijkstra, Buunk, and van der Werf (2011) examined social comparisons in the classroom in an investigation of the better than average effect among secondary school children. The better than average effect which refers to the tendency to rate self as being higher on positive attributes and lower on negative attributes than others was examined on five important characteristics among 15,806 secondary school Dutch students. The results of the study revealed small better than average effects, with the exception of being eager to get high grades, on which the effect was much larger.

Buckingham, Zell, and Schurtz (2012) in their study of social comparison investigated that local social comparison information is used more than general social comparison information when both are given. They examined the extent to which individuals seek local comparisons when they have already received general comparison information in two studies. Both studies showed that participants were more interested in local comparison with peers indicating that students seek comparison with their own classmates. In other words, it was found that students were more interested in local comparison with peers.

Bounoua, Cury, Regner, Huguet, Barron, and Elliot (2012) investigated the link between social comparison and achievement goal model. In the first study the general disposition to engage in social comparison was positively correlated with each type of achievement goals, suggesting that the desire to seek out social comparison information is not limited to a particular type of achievement goal. In the second study the evaluation of the directions of social comparison namely, upward or downward indicated the pursuit of performance-approach, mastery-approach, and mastery-avoidance goals led to upward social comparison, and the pursuit of performance-avoidance goals caused a shift from upward comparison towards downward comparison. The findings provided new insight to the emerging integration of achievement and social comparison, demonstrated the tendency to engage in social comparison, and showed most of achievement goals lead to upward comparison.

Marsh, Kuyper, Morin, Parker, and Seaton (2014) investigated social comparison from the aspect of big-fish-little-pond and local dominance effects. They integrated new statistical models, methodology, and design to offer new insights regarding the effects of school and class average achievement on academic self-concept, and the big-fish-little-pond-effect. In support of the theoretical social comparison basis, students' social comparison in the classroom substantially reduces the big-fish-little-pond-effect (the negative impact of being schooled with other high-achieving peers in highly selective academic settings on students' self-perception and academic self-concept). Students accurately perceive achievement differences between different classes within their school and across different schools. However, consistent with local dominance, school and class achievements are largely determined by comparisons with students in their own class, not objective or subjective comparisons with other classes or schools.

Based on this review, it can be concluded that comparison is important as it can be either encouraging or discouraging for students. Moreover, Porter and Kramer (2002) emphasized the role of external factors, and the crucial role of clusters, such as university or research institutes in a particular field, in long-term competitive success.

However, to the researchers' knowledge the effect of such factors on academic achievement, especially in certain educational systems, like that in Iran, where comparison is constantly encouraged by culture, families and educators have not yet been investigated. To bridge the gap, this study examined the relationship between comparison tendencies among Iranian English majors in the Iranian context and their academic achievement to address the question of whether or not comparison should be encouraged at all in this research context, and if yes what type is a better determinant of academic achievement. This study is significant as it provides information on one of the critical aspects of student behavior in a context which has been overlooked in the current literature. The present study addressed the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between social comparison and academic achievement among Iranian English major students?
2. In what way would ' comparison orientation' and 'tendencies' alter the strength of the relationship?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study comprised 387 students (70.8% female and 29.2% male; 68.5% undergraduate , and 31.5% graduate students) studying varied English related disciplines in Iranian universities in the academic year of 2014-2015. The GPA of 4.7% of the participants was less than 14, 15.2% had the GPA between14 and 15, 22.5% had the GPA between15 and 16, 30.2% had the GPA between 16 and 17, and 27.4% had the GPA of more than 17.They were selected based on convenience sampling as the researchers were realistically unable to receive a random sampling of the population. In order to give a general picture of the participants who took part in this study, the distribution of sample by year of study, gender, academic level and GPA is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of sample by year of study, gender, academic level and GPA

		Frequency	Percent
Year of study	1st	114	29.5
	2nd	108	27.9
	3rd	81	20.9
	4th	84	21.7
	Total	387	100.0
Gender	Female	274	70.8
	Male	113	29.2
	Total	387	100.0
Academic level	Undergraduate (BA)	265	68.5
	Graduate (MA)	122	31.5
	Total	387	100.0
GPA groups	< 14	18	4.7
	14 – 15	59	15.2
	15 – 16	87	22.5
	16 – 17	117	30.2
	> 17	106	27.4
	Total	387	100.0

3.2 Design of the study

The design of this study is non-experimental ex-post facto in which pre-existing groups of comparers are compared on one dependent variable, in this case academic achievement. Academic achievement is defined as the level up to which students perform in their academic program (Wilson, 2009). Like many studies (such as Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, & Kuyper, 1999; Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Wilson, 2009), this study has chosen student's grade point average (GPA) as the index for academic achievement.

3.3 Instrument

In order to examine students' social comparison orientation plus their upward and downward comparison tendencies, the required data for the present study was obtained through a self-report questionnaire-- A modified version of Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM)

scale (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). The original 11-item scale was modified into 15-item scale to address the upward and downward comparison tendencies as well. The first part of the questionnaire asked for students' demographic information and also students' academic achievement which constituted the university-reported Grade Point Average (GPA). The second part of the scale included statements about individuals' self-comparisons with others, to which they could respond based on a five-point scale ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. The questionnaire has already proved valid and reliable in different contexts (e.g., Gibbons & Buunk, 1999; Schneider& Schupp, 2011). However, to determine the reliability of the modified instrument for this study, the Cronbach's alpha test of reliability was performed. The test yielded reliability coefficient of .74 for social comparison orientation and .81, and .72 for upward and downward social comparison tendencies. As the reliability values were above .70, according to Pallant (2010, p.90) they were ideal for the purpose of this study.

3.4 Data collection procedure

The necessary data for the study were collected in the first semester of Iranian academic year of 2014-2015 from 387 Iranian English major students. The data were collected through both online and on-site administrations in three weeks. While the part of the data were collected from English major students studying in universities in Guilan, the northern province of Iran, where they were accessible by the researchers, the other part were obtained through email, internet, and social networks from the student population all over Iran. In either case, the questionnaire needed 10-15 minutes of the participants' time to complete. For ethical purposes, the respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaires anonymously.

3.5 Data analysis

The data gathered for this study underwent descriptive statistics, correlation and multinomial logistic regression -- Descriptive statistics to analyze the demographic data, correlation to indicate the relationship between social comparison and academic achievement-- measured by students' GPA--, and

multinomial logistic regression to demonstrate prediction of social comparison for academic achievement. The findings are reported in the same order.

4. Results

This section presents the results of descriptive statistics, as well as the inferential statistics of correlation and multinomial logistic regression.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of social comparison orientation and tendencies.

Table 2. The mean and standard deviation of social comparison in sample

Variables	*N*	Mean	SD
Social comparison	387	29.18	5.217
Upward	387	10.63	2.881
Downward	387	7.53	2.475

According to Table 2, the mean of sample group in social comparison orientation (29.18 out of 45) is above average, which is the indicator of moderate high comparer in sample group. On the other hand, the means of upward (10.63 out of 15) and downward (7.53 out of 15) social comparison tendencies show the moderate dominance of upward tendency in sample.

Finally, Table 3 presents the frequency, mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum of social comparison tendencies in the sample.

Table 3. The frequency, mean, standard deviation of social comparison tendencies in the sample

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Upward	287	11.93	1.744	6	15
Downward	79	10.58	1.558	5	14

4.2 Correlation and multinomial logistic regression

In order to answer the first question of the study, the non-parametric Kendall's Tau-b rank correlation was employed to investigate the possible associations in the underlying dependent variable (GPA) and the independent variable (social comparison). The only assumption of this test is the repetition of ranks in dependent and independent variables, which is present in our sample. Table 4 shows the results of Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient test between social comparison and academic achievement (GPA).

Table 4. Results of Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient between social comparison and academic achievement

Group	Variables	Social comparison	Upward	Downward
Total	GPA	.39** .000	.48** .000	-.45** .000

The results in Table 4 indicates while there is a significant positive correlations between GPA and social comparison orientation (r = .39; N = 387; p < .001) and upward comparison tendency (r = .48; N = 387; p < .001), this relation is negative for downward comparison tendency (r = -.45; N = 387; p < .001).

For the second research question, as our independent variable was nominal (categorical, and there were more than two categories), we used Multinomial Logistic Regression (MLR), which is a classification method that generalizes binary logistic regression to multiclass problems. MLR does not assume normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance for the independent variables (Starkweather & Moske, 2011). MLR has assumptions, such as independence of independent variable (lower than .8), and interval independent variables which are met in this study. In addition, MLR does necessitate careful consideration of the sample size and examination for outlier cases. Sample size guidelines for MLR indicated that sample size should be at least 30 times the number of parameters being estimated (Pedhazur, 1997), which our sample size has met this requirement, and we used cook's distance to discriminate outliers, which indicated no

outliers in our data. Table 5 describes the overall test of relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Table 5. Model fitting information in total sample

Model	-2logLlikelihood	Chi-Square	*df*	*Sig*
Intercept only	1081.369			
Final	782.684	298.685	12	.000

The distribution reveals that the probability of the model chi-square (298.685) was less than the level of significance ($p < .001$). So, the existence of a relationship between dependent and independent variables was supported, and the null hypothesis that indicated no difference between the models without independent variables, was rejected by alternative hypothesis. In addition, the values of Cox & Snell (.588) and NagelKerke (.567) reported in Table 6 suggest that between 53.8% and 56.7% of the variability is explained by the set of variables used in the model.

Table 6. Pseudo R-Square

Cox & Snell R^2	.538
NagelKerke R^2	.567

In addition, Table 7 reports the likelihood ration tests, and indicates there is a statistically significant relationship between independent and dependent variables ($p < .001$).

Table 7. Likelihood ration tests

Effect	-2log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	*df*	*Sig*
Intercept	802.336	19.652	4	.001
Social comparison	818.089	35.405	4	.000
Upward	823.007	40.323	4	.000
Downward	875.324	92.640	4	.000

The parameter estimates for multinomial regression were also calculated (Table 8).

Table 8. Parameter estimates

GPA		B	S.E	Wald	*df*	*sig*	Exp(B)
< 14	Intercept	-.527	2.295	.053	1	.818	
	Social	-.058	.094	.385	1	.535	.943
	Comparison	-.750	.169	19.782	1	.000	.472
	Upward	.756	.197	14.776	1	.000	2.130
	Downward						
14 –	Intercept	2.723	1.236	4.853	1	.028	
15	Social	-.095	.055	3.033	1	.082	.909
	Comparison	-.445	.093	22.670	1	.000	.641
	Upward	.442	.094	22.290	1	.000	1.556
	Downward						
15 –	Intercept	1.844	1.030	3.202	1	.074	
16	Social	-.086	.041	4.391	1	.036	.918
	Comparison	-.160	.078	4.241	1	.039	.852
	Upward	.267	.074	13.049	1	.000	1.306
	Downward						
> 17	Intercept	-3.111	1.285	5.859	1	.015	
	Social	.178	.043	16.909	1	.000	1.195
	Comparison	.021	.097	.048	1	.826	1.102
	Upward	-.426	.089	23.101	1	.000	.653
	Downward						

According to the table, the results of multinomial regression revealed that:

1.< 14 GPA group: The values of Exp (B) (.472) and B (-.750) for upward comparison tendency implies that survey respondents who showed upward comparison tendency were less likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was less than 14. In other words, increase in upward comparison tendency decreased the probability of having GPA less than 14. On the other hand, the values of Exp (B) (2.130) and B (.756) for downward comparison tendency implies that survey respondents who showed higher downward comparison tendency were more likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was less than 14. In other words, increase in downward comparison tendency increased the probability of having GPA less than 14. In sum, the upward and downward comparison tendencies were significant in distinguishing < 14 GPA group from 16 – 17 GPA group.

2.14 – 15 GPA group: The values of Exp (B) (.641) and B (-.445) for upward comparison tendency implies that survey respondents who showed higher upward comparison tendency were less likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was from 14 to 15. In other words, increase in upward comparison tendency decrease the probability of having GPA 14 to

15. On the other hand, the values of Exp (B) (1.556) and B (.442) for downward comparison tendency imply that survey respondents who showed higher downward comparison tendency were more likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was from 14 to 15. In other words, increase in downward comparison tendency increased the probability of having GPA 14 to 15. In sum, the upward and downward comparison tendencies were significant in distinguishing 14 to 15 GPA group from 16 to 17 GPA group.

3.15 - 16 GPA group: The values of Exp (B) (.918) and B (-.086) for social comparison orientation implies that survey respondents who showed higher social comparison orientation were less likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was 15 to 16. In other words, increase in social comparison orientation decrease the probability of having GPA 15 to 16. the values of Exp(B) (.852) and B (-.160) for upward comparison tendency implies that survey respondents who showed higher upward comparison tendency were less likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was 15 to 16. In other words, increase in upward comparison tendency decrease the probability of having GPA 15 to 16. On the other hand, the values of Exp (B) (1.306) and B (.267) for downward comparison tendency implies that survey respondents who showed higher downward comparison tendency were more likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was 15 to 16. That is, increase in downward comparison tendency increased the probability of having GPA 15 to 16. In sum, social comparison orientation, and upward and downward comparison tendencies were significant in distinguishing 15 to 16 GPA group from 16 to 17 GPA group.

4.> 17 GPA group: The values of Exp (B) (1.195) and B (.178) for social comparison orientation implies that survey respondents who showed higher social comparison orientation were more likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was > 17. In other words, increase in social comparison orientation increase the probability of having GPA more than 17. On the other hand, the values of Exp(B) (.653) and B (-.426) for downward comparison tendency implies that survey respondents who showed higher downward comparison tendency were less likely to be in the group of respondents whose GPA was more than 17. In other words, increase in downward comparison tendency decreased the probability of

having GPA more than 17. In sum, social comparison orientation and downward comparison tendency were significant in distinguishing > 17 GPA group from 16 to 17 GPA group.

To see if the model's prediction was accurate, the classification table (Table 9) was examined which provides evidence in support of the accuracy of the model.

Table 9. Classification table

Observed	< 14	14 - 15	15 - 16	16 – 17	> 17	Percent correct
< 14	7	7	3	1	0	38.9%
14 – 15	1	37	7	11	3	62.7%
15 – 16	0	15	35	32	5	40.2%
16 – 17	0	4	14	66	33	56.4%
> 17	0	2	3	28	73	68.9%
Overall percent						56.3%

As shown in Table 9, 7 people (38.9%) of < 14 GPA group, 37 people (62.7%) of 14 to 15 GPA group, 35 people (40.2%) of 15 to 16 GPA group, 66 people (56.4%) of 16 to 17 GPA group, and 73 people (68.9%) of the people of > 17 GPA group were predicted correctly by the model. According to the findings, this model can predict 56.3% of the GPA groups according to their social comparison orientation and tendencies.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was designed to explore the relationship between social comparison and academic achievement of Iranian English major students, and to discover whether social comparison orientation and tendencies would alter the relationship.

The findings provided considerable support that there is a relationship between social comparison and academic achievement and that social comparison predicted academic performance. According to results, social comparison orientation and tendencies can predict academic achievement as high comparison orientation and upward tendency for students predicts higher academic achievement and being low in social comparison orientation and high in downward tendency predicts lower academic

achievement. In other words, increase in social comparison orientation and upward comparison tendency increased the probability of having higher academic achievement, while increase in downward comparison tendency increased the probability of having lower academic achievement. The results are consistent with the other works in this area such as those of Blanton et al. (1999) and Huguet et al. (2001)

Moreover, the students in this study, like those in the earlier ones (Buunk, Kuyper, & van der Zee, 2005), showed more frequent responses to upward than to downward comparison. These findings were consistent with Festinger's theory. Festinger in his theory of social comparison processes emphasized how individuals use groups to fulfill the informational need to evaluate their abilities and opinions. An emphasized aspect of his theory was the unidirectional drive upward in case of abilities, stating that, exact equal abilities within the group will satisfy no one (Festinger, 1954). These findings are also in line with the other works on social comparison that suggested that students tend in general to compare more upward than downward, in order to confirm they are similar to better students (Buunk, Kuyper, & van der Zee, 2005; Festinger, 1954; Wheeler, 1966; cited in Suls & Wheeler, 2000, p.6). Iranian English Major Students also, similar to those in the other cultures and countries, generally compare upward in their classroom contexts and the relationship between social comparison and achievement holds true in this context as well. The findings clarify the imperative encouraging role of comparison in the classes as students compare themselves with better students and such comparison motivates them to try harder to reach similar outcomes in academic contexts. Therefore, educators can encourage comparison with better off others between students in the classroom and improve students' achievement as it motivates them to put more effort and achieve higher, similar to the better students.

These results demonstrated that Iranian English Major Students also, similar to those in some other cultures and countries, generally compare upward in their classroom contexts and the relationship between social comparison and achievement holds true in this context as well. The findings clarify the imperative encouraging role of comparison in classes as students

compare themselves with better students and such comparison motivates them to try harder to reach similar outcomes in academic contexts. Therefore, educators can encourage comparison with better off others between students in the classroom and improve students' achievement as it motivates them to put more effort and achieve higher, similar to the better students. It is critical to guide students' comparison because Festinger stated that "the holding of incorrect opinions and/or inaccurate appraisals of one's abilities can be punishing or even fatal in many situations" (1954, p. 117). Although this study has provided another piece of the puzzle regarding academic achievement -- the puzzle is not complete yet and calls for further research on the underlying internal factors that lead to achievement and the similarity of individuals' social comparison behavior in the classroom context, irrespective of culture and context.

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Appendix

You are kindly requested to fill this questionnaire.

Gender	Academic Level	Year of Study	Grade Point Average
Female ☐ Male ☐	Undergraduate ☐ Graduate☐	1st ☐ 2nd ☐ 3rd ☐ 4th ☐	< 14 ☐ 14 -15 ☐ 15- 16 ☐ 16 -17 ☐ > 17 ☐

Direction: Most people compare themselves from time to time with others. For example, they may compare the way they feel, their opinions, their abilities, and/or their situation with those of other people. There is nothing particularly 'good' or 'bad' about this type of comparison. We would like to ask you to indicate how much you agree with each statement below.

Response scale for items:

1. I strongly disagree **(SD)**
2. I disagree **(D)**
3. I neither agree nor disagree **(NA/ND)**
4. I agree **(A)**
5. I strongly agree **(SA)**

	statement	SD	D	NA/ND	A	SA
1	I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.					
2	If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what others think about it.					
3	I often compare how my loved ones (best friends, family members, etc.) are doing with how others are doing.					
4	If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how those who are much better than me have done it.					
5	I always like to know what others in a similar situation would do.					
6	I am not the type of person who compares often with others.					
7	I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people.					
8	If I want to find out how well I have done something, I compare what I have done with how					

	statement	SD	D	NA/ND	A	SA
	those who are much worse than me have done it.					
9	I often try to find out what others think who face similar problems as I face.					
10	I often like to talk with others who are higher than me about mutual opinions and experiences.					
11	I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people who are more important than me.					
12	I always pay a lot of attention to how I do things compared with how others do things.					
13	I never consider my situation in life relative to that of other people.					
14	I often like to talk with others who are lower than me about mutual opinions and experiences.					
15	I often compare how I am doing socially (e.g., social skills, popularity) with other people who are less important than me.					