

Student attitude of 'excessive entitlement' may result in exam failure

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(Phys.org) —University students who have an exaggerated belief in what they deserve, known as 'excessive entitlement', tend to do worse in their exams than those who take personal responsibility and are internally motivated for success.

Research just published by the University of Otago confirms some educators' claims that their [students](#) increasingly believe they have a right to success, and that this belief interferes with actually achieving success when they face the challenges of university study.

Lead author Dr Donna Anderson and Professor Jamin Halberstadt, from the Department of Psychology in collaboration with Dr Robert Aitken from the Department of Marketing, examined the entitlement beliefs of almost 300 student volunteers sitting a Marketing and Consumption paper, then used these beliefs to predict their final exam scores at the end of the term.

The results show for the first time that students with a greater [perception](#) of personal entitlement performed worse than their [peers](#) in the final exam, but only when they found the paper more difficult than expected.

"It is interesting, but not surprising, that the negative effect of excessive entitlement on performance was most evident in the context of a challenge," says Dr Anderson.

"Other research supports findings that [personality differences](#) can vary

in strength depending on the level of stress in the environment in which they're measured. This certainly seems to be the case with attitudes of entitlement."

Other factors that predicted exam performance in the study were [personal responsibility](#) and internal motivation: students who reported greater responsibility for their own actions, and those who believe that their [fate](#) is in their own hands, obtained higher final exam marks.

The researchers say these factors may explain the entitlement effects, as people who feel excessively entitled tend to believe that other people are responsible for their success or failure, and so are less motivated to put in more effort when required.

Dr Anderson says the study provides practical advice for improving learning outcomes.

"Entitlement attitudes can be altered by shifting students' beliefs about what they can legitimately expect from their learning institutions, and what they need to expect from themselves."

"Such a realistic distinction can easily be taught, when needed, and will better prepare students for the personal resilience required to achieve academic success, which is often undermined by an attitude of excessive entitlement."

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Provided by University of Otago

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