Undergraduate Student Motivation for Social Science Research Methods

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between the students' reasons for taking an undergraduate research methods course (USRMC) and their course motivation regarding whether they are an applied social research (ASO) major.

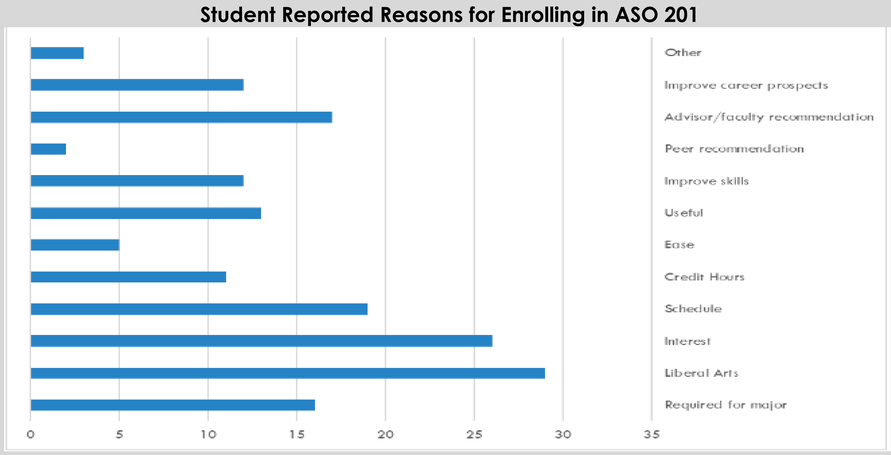
Methods

Sixty-six students (n= 31 females) completed pre- and post-course surveys during the Fall 2018 semester. All students were enrolled in USRMC course, ASO 201. The survey included items such as:

- Reasons for taking the course
- Interest in research and methods
- Research background
- Career goals
- Intent to pursue graduate education

Participants rated self-efficacy for course and social science research; utility, attainment, interest and cost value (Conley, 2012); epistemic beliefs (Conley et al., 2004; Schraw, Bendixen, & Dunkle, 2002); Need for Cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984); and Motivated Strategies for Learning (Garcia & Pintrich, 1995).

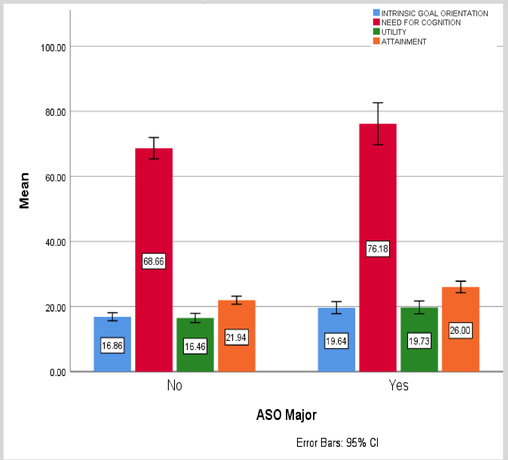
Results



Correlation Coefficients

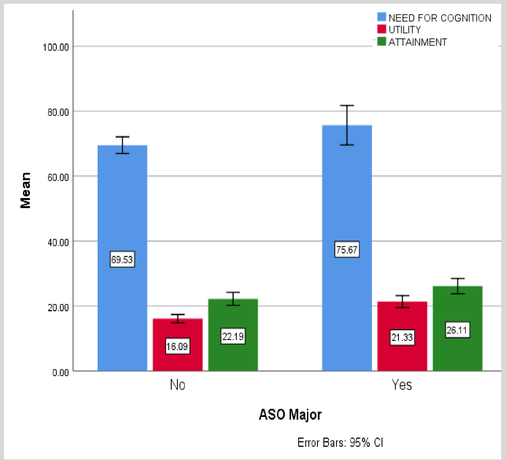
	Utility (Pre-course)	Utility (Post-course)	Attainment (Pre-Course)	Knowledge (Pre-Course)	Task Value (Pre-Course	Intrinsic Goal Orientation (Pre-Course)	ASO Major (Pre-Course)
Enrolled for Major	r = .295 *p* = .047	r = .517 *p* = .005	r = .407 *p* = .005	r = .385 *p* = .018	r = .416 *p* = .005	r = .316 *p* = .032	r = .557 *p* = .001
Enrolled for Miami Plan	r = -.370 *p* = .011	r = -.370 *p* = .024	r = -.423 *p* = .003	r = -.317 *p* = .030	r = -.419 *p* = .004	r = -.520 *p* < .001	r = -.598 *p* < .001

Pre-Course Differences between ASO Majors & Non-Majors



Independent samples t-tests: Intrinsic Goal Orientation (p = .013), Need for Cognition (p = .037), Utility (p = .008), Attainment (p =.001)

Post-Course Differences between ASO Majors & Non-Majors



Independent samples t-tests: Need for Cognition (p = .031), Utility (p < .001), Attainment (p =.011)

Discussion

- This study helps contribute to the literature exploring undergraduate students' motivation to complete a research methods course. While also comparing motivations between students who are enrolled for the major and those enrolled for the Miami plan.
- The negative correlations associated with students enrolled for the Miami plan in the areas of utility, attainment, knowledge, task value, and intrinsic goal orientation suggests that they may need additional motivation due to their unequal footing for the subject.

References

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