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Student Motivation as a Predictor of Academic Performance at University Level

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Abstract

The study aimed to examine the relationship between motivation, self-concept, and academic achievement among university students. It also explored differences in motivation and academic performance. Conducted in Lahore, the research focused on student motivation as a predictor of academic success at the university level. A sample of 250 students from various departments of the University of the Punjab, Lahore campus, was selected for the study. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were gathered using a questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis, employing tools such as frequency, percentage, and standard deviation. The findings revealed a significant correlation between student motivation and academic achievement. Motivation was found to positively influence student performance. Based on the results, the study recommended the development of supportive and encouraging environments both at educational institutions and at home. Such environments can play a vital role in enhancing student motivation. The study emphasized that motivation is essential for academic success. It concluded by recommending steps to foster motivation among university students for improved academic outcomes.

Keywords: *Motivation, Self-concept, Academic Achievement, University Students, Student Performance, Educational Environment.*

Student Motivation

Learning is a psychological process shaped by experiences, involving multiple factors such as the learner, the learning material, the teacher, and the environment. While the teacher and environment affect learning indirectly, their influence on other elements is significant (Bacanlı, 2005). Learner-related factors include readiness, intelligence, motivation, interests, and learning styles. Motivation, in particular, plays a critical role in determining academic success (Senemoğlu, 2005).

Motivation is a multidimensional construct that varies among individuals. It influences student behavior, engagement, and academic outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Guay et al., 2010). The concept of motivation is essential in higher education due to its strong

link with performance and persistence (Kian et al., 2014). Intrinsic motivation arises from internal interests and satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation is driven by rewards or fear of punishment (Dev, 1997; Lepper, 1988).

Studies show intrinsically motivated students are more engaged, use deeper learning strategies, and seek challenges (Condry & Chambers, 1978). In contrast, extrinsically motivated students tend to choose easier tasks and exert minimal effort for maximum reward. Parents, teachers, and institutional policies greatly impact motivation development. Parental involvement, teacher expectations, and classroom environments shape students' attitudes towards learning (Raffini, 1993; Deborah et al., 1999).

Extrinsic motivators like rewards, recognition, and avoidance of punishment can be effective, but over-reliance may reduce long-term interest. Amotivation occurs when students see no link between their efforts and outcomes, leading to disengagement (Reeve, 2014).

Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to how well a student achieves their educational goals, typically measured through GPA, test scores, or course completion (Ward et al., 1996). However, no single method captures performance accurately. Motivation, test anxiety, and emotional states also affect achievement.

Research supports that students with high intrinsic motivation generally maintain consistent and superior performance. Conversely, extrinsically motivated students may achieve short-term goals but struggle with long-term academic success (Lumsden, 1994; Ames, 1990). Motivation thus remains a core predictor of educational outcomes.

Literature Review

This study investigated the relationship between motivation, self-concept, and academic achievement among late childhood school students. Results showed significant positive correlations among these variables, with female students more motivated than males (McClelland, 1985). Motivation was a strong predictor of academic performance ($r = 0.667$) based on correlation and regression analyses. The study emphasized that motivation and self-concept significantly impact achievement (Butler, 1999). Theoretical models such as Tuckman's (1999) strategy-attitude-drive framework and Borkowski's (1990) meta-cognition-affective model explain motivation's components. Researchers also highlight the role of self-efficacy and locus of control in academic outcomes (Bandura, 1986; Weiner, 1990). There is debate over intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation's effects (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1987; Frase et al., 1970). Motivation theories remain diverse with no unifying theme (Locke & Henne, 1986). Scholars recommend mixed-method approaches to explore the complexity of academic motivation (Mansfield & Vallance, 2003). Expectations from teachers also influence achievement through self-fulfilling and sustaining effects (Good, 1987). Research suggests that the sustaining expectation effect is more

pervasive than the self-fulfilling one, with several erroneous teacher expectations stemming from students' socioeconomic status, gender, physical appearance, race, and behavior (McInerney & McInerney, 1994). For instance, attractive students are often expected to perform better both socially and academically (Dusek & Joseph, 1983). While initial expectations may be biased, they often evolve as more academic data becomes available. Nevertheless, these perceptions influence teaching practices such as groupings, feedback, and student-teacher interaction (Broun, 1976). Although not always destructive, misplaced expectations can negatively affect student motivation and achievement, especially when associated with poor teaching (Goldenberg, 1992). Therefore, teachers' beliefs and expectations play a pivotal role in shaping student performance and learning outcomes. Effective teaching strategies can override low expectations, while poor instruction can undermine even high-performing students. The effect size in a meta-analysis is a standardized measure used to determine the strength and direction of relationships in a study (Borenstein et al., 2009). In this research, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used as the effect size and was transformed into a z-value for evaluation purposes (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). When multiple correlations were present between similar categories, either the highest dependent value was used or all independent correlations were included in the analysis (Kulinskaya et al., 2008).

The study employed a random effects model and used the Comprehensive Meta-Analysis software for calculations (Bornstein et al., 2009). Moderator variables included publication year, publication type, country, subject, and sample group. Previous motivation research used various inventories, such as the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), to assess intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Schraw & Dennison, 1995). However, many of these instruments lacked specificity in identifying detailed extrinsic motivational factors (Dev, 1997; Fortier et al., 1995). Motivation is considered fundamental in learning, as students need both enthusiasm and control to be effective learners (Maehr & Meyer, 1997; Deci et al., 1991). Research has shown that learning goals support deeper engagement and persistence, unlike performance or work-avoidance goals, which may hinder achievement (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Seifert, 2004). Creating autonomy-supportive environments fosters intrinsic motivation and improves academic outcomes by helping students feel responsible for their learning (Covington, 2000; deCharms, 1984).

Research design

Correlation research design was used to access the relationship between, student motivation and academic achievement. Quantitative research approach was employed to conduct this study, while the research design was descriptive.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all students of the University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Sample & Sample strategies

The sample size comprised of 250 university students. The data was collected through simple random sampling technique.

Instrumentation

The study used a structured questionnaire adapted by Auwalu Shuaibu Muhammad to measure motivation. It included two sections: demographics (e.g., age, CGPA) and motivation-related items. The motivation section had 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The instrument's validity was ensured through expert review, and its reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74. This affirmed the tool as reliable for assessing students' motivation as a predictor of academic performance.

Procedure

Data was collected from various departments of the University of the Punjab, with the researcher personally distributing questionnaires to selected respondents. Before distribution, the researcher explained the study's purpose and importance of participation. Respondents were assured that their academic records would not be affected by their responses. The confidentiality of their answers was also guaranteed. This approach helped ensure voluntary and honest participation.

Results

Table 4.1

Reliability analysis of the Scale Student Motivation (N=250)

Variable	*K*	A
Student Motivation	25	.74

Note. k=number of items, α=reliability alpha

The table 4.1 showed that the scale has the reliability .74 which sufficient to carried the study.

It was hypothesized that there is positive relationship between student motivation and academic performance.

Table 4.2

Relationship between Students Motivation and Academic Performance (N=250)

Variables	1	2
1. Students motivation	…	.38***
2. Academic performance/CGPA	…	…

Note. ****p*<.001

Table 4.2 showed that there is positive relationship between student motivation and academic performance (r=.38), which mean that if students' motivation will increase there will be increase in their academic performance.

It was hypothesized that student motivation predicts the academic performance.

Table 4.3

Linear Regression between the Students Motivation and Academic Performance (N=250)

Predictor	**CGPA**	
Student motivation	ΔR	B
	.15	.38***
F(1, 98)	17.05***	

Note. ****p*<.001

Table 4.3 showed student motivation positively predict the academic performance (β=.38, p<.001), which mean that if students' motivation will increase there will be increase in their academic performance.so the hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion

The study examining student motivation as a predictor of academic performance at the university level reveals several significant insights into the relationship between motivation and educational success. Using a descriptive correlational design and a validated questionnaire, the research found a positive and meaningful correlation between students' motivation levels and their academic achievement, measured by CGPA. The reliability of the motivation scale, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74, ensured that the instrument was dependable for assessing motivational factors among university students. Data collection involved direct interaction with respondents from various departments, allowing the researcher to explain the study's purpose and assure participants about confidentiality and the non-impact of their responses on academic records. This approach promoted honest participation, improving the validity of the collected data. The analysis, conducted through SPSS, confirmed that motivation significantly predicts academic performance, with a positive regression coefficient indicating that as motivation increases, so does academic achievement. These findings align well with existing educational theories and previous research that underscore motivation as a critical component of learning. Both intrinsic motivation—driven by personal interest and satisfaction—and extrinsic motivation—based on external rewards—play roles in shaping student engagement and persistence. The study supports the idea that motivated students are more likely to employ deep learning strategies, overcome challenges, and maintain consistent performance. Furthermore, the research highlights the influence of environmental factors such as parental involvement, teacher expectations, and institutional support in fostering motivation. Effective teaching practices and supportive educational environments can enhance student motivation, leading to improved academic outcomes. The study recommends that universities focus on creating autonomy-supportive and encouraging atmospheres, both in classrooms and through policy, to boost student motivation. Overall, the study emphasizes that motivation is not merely an inherent

trait but a dynamic factor that can be cultivated. Educational interventions, such as motivational workshops, counseling services, and goal-setting programs, could help students increase their motivation levels. As motivation directly affects academic success, integrating motivational strategies into academic programs is essential for improving university students' performance. The research contributes valuable evidence for educators and policymakers to prioritize motivation in efforts to enhance learning and achievement at higher education institutions.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of student motivation on academic performance. The study found positive and mutually causal relationship between student's motivation and student's academic performance. This relationship is reciprocal, meaning students who are more motivated perform better and student who perform better become more motivated.

Conclusively, the study revealed that university of Punjab's students" academic performance was having a positive relationship with their motivation in learning. This means that for any increase in students" motivation, their academic performance will increase in the same direction. Additionally, the study indicated that motivation serves as a good predictor of students" performance (GPA).

Recommendation

On the basis of findings and conclusion, the following recommendations

1. Teachers should provide interesting activities for boosting interest of those students who have low motivation towards their academic achievement.
2. University environment should be healthy and accordance with the students' need and interests, so they utilize their abilities.
3. Parents should be kept on motivating to their children in better achievements.
4. Students should be encouraged to participate in academic and co academic activities.

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