

The challenge of low student motivation in schools

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ABSTRACT

Student motivation is a crucial factor influencing academic success, emotional well-being, and long-term personal development. However, many learners experience declining motivation due to a combination of personal, instructional, environmental, and social factors. This paper explores the major causes of low student motivation, including individual psychological challenges, ineffective teaching methods, school climate issues, family dynamics, and digital distractions. It also examines the academic and emotional consequences of disengagement, which can negatively affect both individual learners and the overall classroom environment. The paper further outlines practical strategies for enhancing motivation through learner-centered instruction, interactive teaching practices, supportive school climates, family collaboration, emotional and social support, and effective management of distractions. Research findings highlight the importance of autonomy, recognition of effort, strong teacher-student relationships, and project-based learning in improving intrinsic motivation. The study concludes that addressing low motivation requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving teachers, families, and school leaders to create a positive and engaging learning environment.

Keywords: student motivation; academic engagement; teaching methods; school environment; family influence; digital distractions; intrinsic motivation; learner-centered approaches; project-based learning; educational psychology

INTRODUCTION

Student motivation plays a central role in learning and personal development. It encourages pupils to actively engage in classroom activities, complete assignments diligently, and pursue both short-term and long-term academic goals. Unfortunately, many students experience low motivation, which can hinder their performance, interest in learning, and overall school experience. This issue is not a matter of laziness; rather, it arises from a combination of personal traits, teaching methods, school climate, family background, and societal factors. Understanding why students lose motivation, the consequences of disengagement, and strategies to address it is essential for teachers, parents, and school administrators aiming to create a supportive learning environment.

REASONS BEHIND LOW MOTIVATION

1. Personal Factors

Individual characteristics greatly influence motivation. Some students feel disconnected from the school curriculum because they perceive it as irrelevant to their lives or future careers. When the relevance of lessons is unclear, students are likely to lose interest. Additionally, students who have faced repeated academic struggles may develop low self-confidence and avoid challenges. Psychological issues, such as stress, anxiety, or attention difficulties, also play a role in reducing a learner's drive. Personal habits, including procrastination or disorganization, can further hinder motivation.

2. Methods of Teaching

The style of teaching strongly affects whether students are motivated. Traditional methods focused on memorization and passive listening often fail to engage learners. Classes that lack interactive activities, projects, or practical applications may seem boring or irrelevant. Teachers who rarely provide feedback or fail to recognize students' efforts can inadvertently discourage participation. Emphasizing grades above learning can also make students focus only on results rather than understanding, further lowering their intrinsic motivation.

3. School Environment

The atmosphere and resources of a school influence motivation as well. Large classes with limited individual attention can leave some students feeling ignored or undervalued. Conflicts with peers or teachers can increase stress and disengagement. Schools that do not offer extracurricular activities, clubs, or opportunities for leadership may fail to capture students'

interests and encourage initiative. Physical resources, such as modern classrooms, technology, and learning materials, also contribute to how motivated students feel.

4. Family and Social Influences

Family involvement and expectations are critical to a child's motivation. Lack of support or interest from parents can leave students feeling isolated or undervalued, while excessive pressure can cause stress and avoidance behaviors. Peer influence is another factor: students surrounded by disengaged or unmotivated friends may adopt similar attitudes, whereas those with supportive friends are more likely to remain motivated and persistent.

5. Distractions and Technology

In today's world, distractions are abundant. Social media, video games, and mobile devices can reduce focus on school tasks and diminish intrinsic motivation. While technology has potential as a learning tool, overuse or misuse can lead to procrastination, shorter attention spans, and lower engagement in educational activities.

CONSEQUENCES OF LOW MOTIVATION

Low motivation can have immediate and lasting effects on students. Academically, unmotivated learners may skip classes, submit incomplete work, earn low grades, and participate minimally in lessons. These outcomes can affect their future education and career opportunities.

Emotionally, lack of motivation can lead to frustration, anxiety, and poor self-esteem. Students may feel disconnected from their peers and the school community. If disengagement persists, it can evolve into more serious mental health issues, such as depression.

At the classroom level, low motivation among some students can impact the entire learning environment. Teachers may spend extra time managing disengaged students, reducing the overall effectiveness of lessons. Motivated students may feel demoralized if surrounded by peers who are indifferent to learning, creating a negative cycle.

WAYS TO ENHANCE STUDENT MOTIVATION

1. Learner-Centered Approaches

Providing students with choices and control over their learning can boost motivation. Allowing learners to select topics, work on projects that interest them, and engage in problem-solving activities makes schoolwork more meaningful and engaging.

2. Interactive and Engaging Teaching

Teaching strategies that encourage participation, creativity, and hands-on experience can

inspire students. Group discussions, collaborative projects, experiments, and real-life applications make lessons more dynamic. Using technology thoughtfully, such as educational apps or multimedia resources, can further increase engagement. Recognizing effort and progress, not just grades, reinforces motivation.

3. Supportive School Climate

A positive school environment fosters motivation. Respectful relationships between teachers and students, encouragement for collaboration, and opportunities for leadership and extracurricular involvement help learners feel connected and inspired. Schools should also ensure access to adequate resources, facilities, and activities that allow students to explore interests beyond academics.

4. Family Collaboration

Parents and guardians play a crucial role in maintaining motivation. Open communication, encouragement, and realistic expectations help students stay engaged. Families can collaborate with teachers to monitor progress, provide guidance, and support healthy study habits.

5. Addressing Emotional and Social Needs

Counseling, mentoring, and peer support programs can help students overcome emotional, social, or psychological barriers that affect motivation. Building resilience, self-confidence, and coping strategies equips learners to maintain their focus and effort over time.

6. Managing Distractions

Students benefit from learning strategies to manage distractions effectively. Developing time management skills, setting clear goals, and creating structured study routines help them balance academic responsibilities with leisure activities and reduce the impact of digital distractions.

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Research indicates that schools implementing student-centered and interactive learning approaches see measurable improvements in motivation and engagement. Project-based learning, where students tackle real-world problems, helps learners understand the practical applications of knowledge. Studies also show that providing recognition for effort, fostering autonomy, and maintaining supportive teacher-student relationships significantly enhances intrinsic motivation and long-term academic achievement.

CONCLUSION

Low motivation in school is a complex issue influenced by personal characteristics, teaching methods, school conditions, family support, and societal factors. Its impact is evident in academic performance, emotional health, and long-term prospects. Tackling this challenge requires collaboration between teachers, parents, and administrators to create a nurturing, engaging, and

studentcentered environment. Encouraging active learning, fostering supportive relationships, providing meaningful opportunities, and addressing individual needs can help students regain motivation. Motivated learners are not only more successful academically but also develop confidence, resilience, and skills necessary for lifelong learning and personal growth.

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