

Academic Motivation among the Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

Motivation is considered as one of the most important conditions for learning. Motivation to learn has become a problem for a growing number of university students. The unmotivated are disengaged from the start because they do not see the importance of the subject matter. Motivation or lack of motivation has important consequences: Absenteeism, lack of attention in class, unconstructive attitude and lack of student engagement leads to low marks or failures. In the search for causes of student failure and lack of student performance, motivation is not taken into account. The teacher or the educational institution blames the students without going into the problem of motivation. As educators we have to understand the dynamics that increases or decreases student motivation and find ways to motivate the unmotivated students to study. If this is not done seriously, it may not be right to blame the students that they are not performing well in academics. This study is an attempt to find factors which are in some way related to academic motivation of students.

Key Words: Academic motivation, Undergraduates and career.

Introduction

Academic motivation has become the subject of study in recent years because of the serious consequences of the lack of motivation among students. One of the gravest consequences is academic failure. Some of those who fail drop out from the educational institutions and end up as unskilled labourers for the rest of their life. Some are able to begin their own business and survive. But there are also others who are not able to cope up with the failure and end their life by attempting suicide.

Literature Review

India has one of the world's highest suicide rates for youth aged 15 to 29 (Vikram Patel et al. 2012). Every hour, one student commits suicide in India, according to 2015 data (the latest available) from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). In 2015, the number of student suicides stood at 8,934. In the five years leading to 2015, 39,775 students killed themselves. The number of attempted suicides, many unreported, is likely to be much higher (Devanik Saha, 2017). Although there was no exact set of causes outlined, failure at examinations accounted for nearly a quarter of the cases. A total of 2,403 (in the year 2014), 2,646 (2015), and 2,413 (2016) suicides were committed due to this reason, Hansraj Gangaram Ahir, minister of state for home

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affairs, wrote in response to a question submitted to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament, on Jan. 02 (Ananya, 2018). Students failing and dropping out of College are a student concern because the impact of college failure can cause lasting damage to self-esteem, and the consequences can influence an entire lifetime. It is a faculty concern because all too often faculty feel frustrated and/or feel a sense of personal failure and blame their own teaching for the failure of some students in their classes. It is a College concern because Colleges and universities are accountable not only for a graduate rate, but also for their students' success during enrollment and after graduation (Abour H et al. 2013).

Causes of Students Failures

Apparently, the root cause of failure seems to be lack of academic motivation of students. In 2011 the above authors conducted a study asking 739 students to provide their own perspective of why students fail courses and drop out of colleges. The premise is that there is no better way to find out than to ask the students directly if something has helped and encouraged them to learn and succeed or held them back and discouraged them from learning (Bain 2004). In that study, the many reasons students provided for failing courses and colleges were grouped into seven main categories, including motivation (35%), study habits (17%), academic preparedness, (12%), external factors (11%), attitudes (11%), instruction (10%), and relevancy issues (4%). Motivation and study habits were mentioned most frequently as the root cause of student failure at the college level. (Abour H et al., 2013).

In this study, the authors posed the same question to 190 faculty members from two-year and four-year colleges to hear their perspectives on why students fail courses and fail out of college. Faculty members perceive that the three main root-cause factors for students failing are (1) student-related factors, which were mentioned 415 times, or 68 percent of the responses; (2) life and socioeconomic issues, which were mentioned 70 times, or 12 percent of the responses; and (3) failures of the educational system, which were mentioned 125 times or 20 percent of the responses.

Student-related Factors

In the opinion of college faculty members who responded to the study, the first major area, and largest by far, for failure of students is **Student-related Factors** (cited 415 times or 68%). Under this area there are four categories: (1) Not Ready for College (mentioned 231 times, or 38% of responses); (2) Lack of Effort (mentioned 72 times, or 12% of responses); (3) Lack of Motivation or Interest (mentioned 73 times, or 12% of responses); and (4) Personality Issues (mentioned 39 times, or 6% of responses).

Lack of Motivation or Interest

Lack of Motivation or Interest, engagement, persistence, and “not being active learners” were mentioned frequently in this survey. It ranks third overall, in terms how often it was mentioned, and it was the second most-often-mentioned student-related root-cause factor: 73 times or 12

percent of responses. This category included the following subcategories: Lack of motivation; Don't-care attitude, or negative attitude; Lack of engagement; Lack of interest, direction, or focus; Do not want to be in college; and Lack of passion. Some faculty respondents thought that failing students have little understanding of how their education relates to their lives. They do not know what they want in life and have no clear goals as to where they are going. If someone has no idea where they are going, it will likely be extremely difficult to get there.

Other faculty members stated that some college students might not have a real desire to be in College; they might not be ready yet. Perhaps they are being pressured by family or friends, or perhaps they are drifting in life or repeatedly changing majors. Other survey respondents said students are not motivated to do the work: "They either do not want to be in College but external forces are forcing it on them or they simply do not care."

A few faculty respondents said that even students with passion "often lack the understanding of how specific course(s) fit within the 'grand scheme,' especially if they determine (rightly or wrongly) that the course(s) is not on the critical path" to their ultimate goal. Others do not realize the amount of work involved in their majors or cannot decide on a major field of study. Other faculty members said students lack direction, and that "These students attend college with little, if any, goals in mind; education means little to them due to the lack of connection between what they study and their lives." Finally, a faculty respondent said simply that: Students lack the passion/determination/drive for the educational goal of earning a degree. Pursuing a bachelor's degree is a long-term goal requiring passion, determination, the drive to overcome "hurdles," and a willingness to do "whatever it takes" to achieve their goal.

The objective of the Research

Since motivation plays a major role in the performance of students, the researcher was interested in finding out the determinants of motivation and also the extent of such determinants present among the students.

Methodology

This study was conducted using a Descriptive design and questionnaires were used to collect data from the student respondents. It is a census study in which all 205 first-year students of Economics and Commerce were asked to respond to the questionnaire. The data were analyzed using SPSS 20 Version. The findings have been presented in the form of tables. T-test and ANOVA and Correlations were used to verify the differences in the motivation by the sample characteristics.

Table 1: The Profile of Respondents

Departments	Frequency	Percent
Economics	62	30.2
Commerce	143	69.8
Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	140	68.3

Female	65	31.7
Residence	Frequency	Percent
Village	121	59.0
Town	66	32.2
City	18	8.8
Parents' Education	Frequency	Percent
No Formal	39	19.0
Primary	29	14.1
High School	67	32.7
Hr. Sec	56	27.3
Graduation	14	6.8
Parents' Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Daily Wage	132	64.4
Private	33	16.1
Govt.	26	12.7
Business	14	6.8
Socio-economic Status	Frequency	Percent
Low	36	17.6
Moderate	167	81.5
Well to Do	2	1.0
Type of Schools	Frequency	Percent
Christian	70	34.1
Private	37	18.0
Government	98	47.8
Medium of Language in School	Frequency	Percent
Tamil	157	76.6
English	48	23.4
Percentage of Marks in 12th	Frequency	Percent
Up to 60%	33	16.1
60 - 75%	87	42.4
75% and More	85	41.5

N=205

More than two third (68.3%) of the respondents of this study were male students. More than half (59%) of the respondents were from village residences. The vast majority (93.2%) of the parents' highest education was only up to higher secondary level only. Nearly two third (64.4%) of the respondents' parents highest occupations were daily wage earning. Majority (81.5%) perceived to be middle class and another two fifth (17.6%) were from the lower socio economic strata. Nearly half (47.8%) of the students had studied in government schools. three fourth (76.6%) of the students were from Tamil medium of language in their schooling. Majority (83.9%) of the students had scored first class and above in their 12th examinations. The above sample characteristics describe the respondents who were mainly from a rural background from a

moderate to lower socio-economic strata, the education and occupation of their parents again confirmed their socio economic status and hence, a good number of students were from government and aided Christian schools and mostly from Tamil medium schools. However, the majority of the students had scored first class and above. To genuinely criticize the schooling pattern that it is only memory-based learning and scoring in examinations.

Factors affecting Motivation

Table 2: Choice of the subject/course

Choice of the subject/course	Frequency	Percent
I chose the subject which I am studying	129	62.9
I did not choose, it was forced on me	24	11.7
Admission was available in this subject	28	13.7
It was suggested by others	24	11.7
Total	205	100.0

About 37% of students did not choose the subject they were studying. It was either forced on them by their parents or suggested by friends. Once they join, they find that the subject is not to their taste or interest. This is a factor which could affect their motivation to study.

Table 3: Knowledge of the subject taken

Knowledge of the subject taken	Frequency	Percent
I knew about the subject	89	43.4
I did not know about the subject	33	16.1
I knew very little about the subject	59	28.8
I did not know about the allied subjects	24	11.7
Total	205	100.0

Little more than half of the students did not know about the subject. They just wanted to have a degree but not with a clear idea of what they want to become. In other words they did not have a clear plan for their College studies. This could be another factor which influences the motivation to study.

Table 4: Knowledge of Job

Knowledge of Job	Frequency	Percent
I know the type of job I can get after completion	112	54.6
I do not know about the type of job I can get after completion	21	10.2
I did not think about a job after completion	27	13.2
I want to complete the course first	45	22.0
Total	205	100.0

About 45% of the students did not care about knowing the type of job they would get after completing the degree in which they were studying now. Once again we get the impression that they do not have any goal to achieve or target to reach. This could be an additional reason for their lack of motivation.

Table 5: Level of Study

Level of Study	Frequency	Percent
To study only up to Under Graduation	87	42.4
To study up to Post Graduation	96	46.8
To study up to M.Phil	11	5.4
To study up to Ph.D	11	5.4
Total	205	100.0

The table shows 42.4% of the students were not intending to go beyond the degree level. That means they are only interested in getting a degree. In most cases they need to do a job to support their families. Since there is no interest in a higher level of learning, their interest to study the subject in depth does not occur. They just want to get a degree to apply for some job. How do we expect academic motivation from such students?

Table 6: Study Methods

Study method	Frequency	Percent
I used to study just before examinations	107	52.2
I used to study regularly	46	22.4

I used to memorize the lessons	26	12.7
I used to choose few lessons to study	26	12.7
Total	205	100.0

The vast majority of students express the fact that they do not have the system of learning required for higher education. Most of them study just before examinations and only 22.4% of them say that they study regularly. The study habit plays an important role but when it is not instilled when they are young, it is difficult to begin at the College level.

Table 7: Disturbances Experienced

Disturbances	Frequency	Percent
I am disturbed by my family situation	60	29.3
I am disturbed by friends	41	20.0
I am disturbed by social media	83	40.5
I am disturbed by the heavy load of study	21	10.2
Total	205	100.0

Though all the students have some disturbance or the other the most disturbing factor is the media. They get distracted from their studies and remain in the world of dreams due to the excessive use of media. Sufficient media education is not found in the curriculum of the school. Their language and culture is affected by the mass media and social media.

Table 8: Interest in Studies

Interest to study	Frequency	Percent
I am very much interested in study	92	44.9
I am not interested in study	18	8.8
I am satisfied with the minimum	51	24.9
I want to achieve something great	44	21.5
Total	205	100.0

A direct question has been answered with regard to their interest in study. Only 50% of the students are interested in study. The educators will find it difficult to motivate the other 50% of the students. When almost half of the students are uninterested in studies, the morale of the class will not be suited to learning.

Table 9: Achievement Motivation

Achievement	Frequency	Percent
I do not have any ambition to achieve	50	24.4
I have desire to achieve	101	49.3
I did not think about it	22	10.7
I just want to enjoy myself now	32	15.6
Total	205	100.0

Again only 50% of the students have a desire to achieve something in their life. If the desire to achieve is not found among students, it is very difficult to make them study.

Table 10: Perceived Self Confidence

Self-Confidence	Frequency	Percent
I do not have confidence in my success	30	14.6
I have full confidence in my success	125	61.0
I am not very sure of my success	28	13.7
I believe in luck	22	10.7
Total	205	100.0

It is interesting to see 61% of the students feel confident to succeed in spite of not having sufficient motivation to study. Sometimes unrealistic goals and ambitions are found among the students and they are depressed when they come to know their own capacity or the reality of their achievement.

Table 11: Problems of Background

Problems of Background	Frequency	Percent
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I did not have good foundation in study	48	23.4
I did not have the opportunity to learn the English language	99	48.3
I did not have a good school	28	13.7
I did not have sufficient finance	30	14.6
Total	205	100.0

Among the negative factors of their family background, 48% of the students felt that they were handicapped due to the lack of opportunity to learn the English language well. A significant number of them also felt that they did not learn the basics well. Understanding the subject especially the basics of the subject can happen only when they study in their own mother tongue but unfortunately in our country, they have to learn in English which is not taught well in their school years.

Table 12: Present Problems in Studies

Present problems	Frequency	Percent
I do not understand the classes	44	21.5
I cannot speak in English	123	60.0
I cannot get along with the teachers	32	15.6
I do not have the confidence to do well in my studies	6	2.9
Total	205	100.0

Communication in English has become a major problem for the majority (81.5%) of students. Due to the lack of language skill, they have an inferiority complex and that affects their performance in studies.

Table 13: Area of Interest

My interest	Frequency	Percent
Sports	68	33.2
Dance, Music, Media	64	31.2
Friendship	41	20.0

Study	32	15.6
Total	205	100.0

It is surprising to see only 15.6% of the students were really interested in studies alone. The others seem to have a variety of other interests and study is not their first priority. For higher education, a certain amount of study focus is required. Often the students do not have sufficient stamina to work hard on studies.

Table 14: Time Management

Time Management	Frequency	Percent
It is difficult for me to get up in the morning	64	31.2
I am not used to planning my time	59	28.8
I am unable to say NO to time wasters	23	11.2
I want to enjoy my College life	59	28.8
Total	205	100.0

The table shows a very poor time management phenomenon among the students. It also reveals the maturity level of the students who come to College level studies. They are not capable of self-determination about utilization of their time.

Table 15: Perception about Self Performance

Perception about Self Performance	Frequency	Percent
If I work hard I can perform	99	48.3
I find it difficult to put myself to hard work	41	20.0
I want to have skills but am not ready to go through hard training	51	24.9
I get angry with myself and others for my failures	14	6.8
Total	205	100.0

Only 50 % of the students have self-confidence; the others are not ready for hard work. It is a clear sign of not having that internal force from within or passion to study.

Table 16: Factors Perceived for Successes

Factors which help towards Successes	Frequency	Percent
My Inner force or inner drive to succeed	67	32.7
My religion and my religious practices	25	12.2
My Caste and affiliations	12	5.9
My ability, effort, encouragement	101	49.3
Total	205	100.0

The same 50% of the students rely on their ability, effort to succeed.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the data reveals certain fundamental issues with regard to motivation. Surprisingly, the study shows that the following factors did not significantly differ with regard to the motivation problems of students: gender, place of birth, education of parents, socio economic status, and type of schools and medium of schools. But the results show the following demotivating factors present among a sizable number of students: (1) they did not choose the subject they are studying now. (2) They did not know about the subject they were studying. They did not have any idea about the type of job they can get after completing their studies. (3) They are not thinking of continuing their studies after a degree. (4) They admit that they have come just to enjoy College life. (5) They admit that they are disturbed by media and their family situation. (6) They say that they are not interested in studies and do not have any desire to achieve something in their life. (7) They are not confident of success. (8) They feel that they did not have opportunity to study well in good schools. (9) They are not able to understand the classes or have problems with the teachers. (10) Only a small minority (15%) of students have a real interest in studying; others have a variety of other interests and we are not sure whether such interests distract them from studies.

The Implications of the Study

1. A sizable portion of students who come to College are not prepared for higher education.
2. There are many internal factors which affect their motivation to study. Some of them are: lack of self confidence, lack of aim in life, lack of inner strength to overcome temptations from media, friendships etc.

3. There are also many external factors which affect their motivation to study. Some of them are: lack of basics, lack of language skill, lack of freedom to choose, lack of knowledge about the possible jobs etc.
4. The management and the teachers in educational institutions do not deal with the lack of motivation with individual counseling, guidance and concern.
5. The art of motivation has to be developed among the educationists.
6. The method of study and learning has to have more importance than acquiring of marks somehow.
7. Higher Education has to become joyful, meaningful and useful.

Conclusion

The study has revealed the gap in the education system and it is up to the educational institutions and persons involved in higher education to address the problem of motivation among students. Individual attention has to be given and it is important to find the motivation level of each student and the factors affecting his/her motivation. If required they could be put into some form of psychological testing and guided personally towards motivation. More time has to be spent at the initiation period on motivation and clarity of purpose for coming to higher education. Further study will help to find ways which are suited to the students to motivate them.

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