

FACTORS AFFECTING THE LEARNING MOTIVATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS, CASE STUDY OF CHU VAN AN SECONDARY SCHOOL, BINH DUONG

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Abstract

The study aims to explore factors influencing middle school students' motivation to learn. Instead of assuming a general decline in motivation, it objectively examines the issue through research, identifying key influences such as curriculum difficulty, teaching methods, and external pressures. By analyzing survey data from eighth-grade students at Chu Van An Middle School, the study provides evidence-based insights into the challenges affecting student engagement in learning. This research aims to identify the factors affecting the learning motivation of middle school students to help them become more engaged in their studies. In this study, the author designed a survey questionnaire of 8 questions combined with a quantitative method to identify the factors causing a lack of interest in learning among middle school students. The survey was conducted at Chu Van An Middle School in Binh Duong Province. The survey participants were 375 eighth-grade students in the 2024-2025 academic year. According to the survey, 184 male students felt uninterested in learning due to various factors, accounting for 49.07%; 157 female students, accounting for 41.87%; and 34 students of other genders, accounting for 9.07%. Given this situation, it is urgent to propose feasible solutions to help students regain interest in learning.

Keywords: influencing factors, learning motivation, middle school students

1. Introduction

Along with the remarkable development of today's society, education is one of the top priorities that needs to be focused on, especially for the younger generation – the students, who are like tender buds on a branch that needs to be nurtured and trained to become useful citizens. Alongside this concept, teachers are the ones who instill motivation and ignite a passion for learning in students while they are still in school. “As is true for most psychological constructs, many definitions of the term motivation exist. However, it is commonly acknowledged that motivation can be understood as an internal state that arouses, directs, and sustains human behavior.” (Heckhausen, 2010; Zimbardo & Gerrig, 2004; Hansmann, 2010,). Middle school students undergo significant changes in both

physical and psychological development. Their physical and mental growth is often imbalanced, leading to a mismatch between their cognitive development and physical abilities. This age group is also the most challenging to guide, especially if teachers lack the appropriate skills or do not have engaging lessons to capture their attention. The challenge of motivating middle school students to stay focused on their studies in class is a difficult problem for all teachers, influenced by both objective and subjective factors. In this study, the author points out the factors affecting middle school students' loss of interest in learning, which is clearly illustrated through a practical survey.

2. Literature review

2.1 Kinds of Motivation

Learning motivation is defined as the internal and external factors that inspire students to engage in the learning process, maintain their efforts, and achieve their goals. Learning motivation can be divided into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation originates from a love for learning or a desire for understanding. "Intrinsic motivation is the motivation to be involved in an activity for its own sake." (Paul Eggen & Kauchak Don, 2005). Extrinsic motivation is influenced by external rewards or pressures such as grades, recognition, or expectations from family. "Extrinsic motivation is a standing invitation to students to adopt a surface approach." (Biggs, 2002). Different learning motivations result in different academic outcomes among students. Extrinsic motivation, in particular, has a significant impact on students' academic performance and stimulates their interest in learning. This is achieved as students strive to perform well in their roles to earn rewards, encouragement, or high grades that reflect their efforts.

2.2 Studies on Learning Motivation

The study by Eccles and Harold (1993) demonstrated that family and the social environment have a significant impact on students' motivation to learn. Specifically, factors such as parental expectations, family involvement in children's learning, and family relationships are strong influences on learning motivation. Teaching methods and the approach of teachers have a significant impact on student's motivation to learn. When teachers create a learning environment that supports autonomy, students feel stronger motivation to learn. Specifically, teachers should encourage students to cultivate self-awareness and develop the ability to self-regulate their learning (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Zimmerman's (2000) study emphasizes that the ability to self-regulate and self-reflect is a crucial factor in maintaining motivation to learn. Students who can regulate their learning behavior, set personal goals, monitor progress, and adjust their learning strategies tend to have stronger motivation to learn.

The study by Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) used quantitative methods to collect data on students' motivation to learn through questionnaires and surveys.

The study by Bonwell and Eison (1991) emphasizes that active learning methods can effectively enhance students' motivation to learn. These methods, including group discussions, projects, and interactive learning activities, encourage students to become active participants in the learning process, thereby fostering enthusiasm and motivation to learn. Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) studied the relationship between motivation and academic performance, finding that when students feel motivated, they tend to focus more on their studies and achieve better results. Motivation helps students maintain persistence and improve their academic outcomes.

Schunk (1991) indicates that students' motivation to learn changes throughout developmental stages. In the early stages of adolescence, students typically have high motivation due to support from family and teachers. However, as they mature, their motivation to learn becomes more dependent on self-awareness and internal factors.

An evaluation of previous studies shows that motivation to learn among middle school students is a key factor in the learning process and has a direct impact on their academic performance. Various research methods have helped clarify the factors influencing learning motivation, including personal, family, social, and teaching method factors. The results of these studies suggest that fostering a supportive, encouraging, and appropriate learning environment is essential for sustaining students' motivation to learn. Some studies on middle school students' motivation to learn have identified knowledge gaps and unresolved issues.

Lack of Long-Term Research on Changes in Motivation Over Time

Although many studies have shown the relationship between motivation and academic achievement (Smith, 2021) at different stages, there is a lack of long-term research tracking changes in motivation over time for middle school students. Understanding the long-term factors affecting learning motivation will help improve strategies for sustaining motivation over time.

Area for Improvement

Smith and Jones (2019) highlight the need for longitudinal studies to assess changes in motivation across developmental stages.

The Impact of Technology on Learning Motivation

While research on learning motivation in traditional learning environments has been extensive, there is less focus on the impact of technology, especially online learning platforms and digital learning tools, on middle school students' motivation to learn. (Zimmerman, 2000)

Area for improvement

According to Johnson and Lee (2021), further research is needed to explore the role of technology and digital tools in shaping students' learning motivation within the context of online education.

Self-Regulation and Intrinsic Motivation

Although learning motivation and self-regulation are discussed in studies, there is a lack of in-depth research on developing intrinsic motivation and self-regulation in middle school students, especially when they face difficult subjects or encounter negative environmental factors affecting their learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Area for improvement

Zimmerman (2002) emphasizes the role of self-regulation strategies in enhancing intrinsic motivation, particularly during challenging academic situations.

The Impact of Social and Community Factors

According to Smith (2020), while some research has been done on the influence of family and social environments on learning motivation, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies on the role of other social factors, such as peers, friend groups, or the surrounding community.

Area for improvement

Further research is needed on how social and community factors, such as peer support, classroom competition, and extracurricular activities, can affect middle school students' motivation to learn. (Johnson, 2018; Lee & Kim, 2021)

The Relationship Between Motivation and Emotional Factors

As noted by Pekrun et al. (2002), while many studies focus on external influences on motivation, there is limited research examining the role of emotional factors like anxiety and self-confidence in academic motivation.

Area for improvement

Research by Deci and Ryan (1985) highlights the interplay between motivation and emotional factors, but specific studies on middle school students remain scarce.

In conclusion, current studies on middle school students' motivation to learn still have many gaps to be explored, especially in areas such as the influence of technology, the development of intrinsic motivation, the impact of community, and the relationship between motivation and students' emotions. These studies will help expand understanding and provide practical solutions to improve students' motivation to learn in the school environment. (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Zimmerman, 2002; Pekrun, 2002).

3. Research Design**3.1 Research Objectives**

The objective of this study is to identify and analyze the factors influencing middle school students' motivation for learning, with the goal of understanding the elements that either promote or hinder their motivation. Based on these findings, the study seeks to provide actionable recommendations and solutions aimed at improving students' learning motivation, enabling them to study more effectively.

To achieve this, the study will follow a structured data processing procedure. The collected data will first be cleaned and organized before being analyzed using a variety of statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the basic features of the data, while factor analysis will help identify underlying dimensions of the factors influencing motivation. Regression analysis will be applied to assess the relationships between these factors and their impact on students' motivation.

Additionally, to ensure the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha will be calculated. This test will evaluate whether the items within the questionnaire are measuring the same underlying concept. The research results will not be limited to simple percentage-based data presentation; instead, the analysis will be comprehensive and include statistical tests to strengthen the reliability and validity of the conclusions drawn from the data.

3.2 Research Questions

This study aims to explore the factors influencing middle school students' learning motivation by addressing the following research questions, which will be tested as research hypotheses:

1. Which school-related factors (such as the curriculum, teaching methods, and pressure of grades) have the most significant impact on students' learning motivation? The study will analyze actual data to determine which factors are most influential, accepting those with significant effects and rejecting those with minimal or no impact.
2. How do external factors (such as family, friends, teachers, and the learning environment) affect students' learning motivation? The study will assess the extent and direction of these influences, distinguishing between positive and negative impacts based on empirical evidence.
3. What are the differences in learning motivation among different student groups (based on gender)? Statistical analysis will be conducted to examine whether gender differences exist and, if so, to what extent they influence learning motivation.

The research findings will serve as a basis for accepting or rejecting specific hypotheses regarding these factors. The conclusions drawn will help develop effective solutions to support and enhance middle school students' learning motivation.

3.3 Subjects

The subjects of this study are 375 eighth-grade students from Chu Van An Middle School in Binh Duong Province. The students are divided into three groups based on gender: Group 1 consists of 184 male students, Group 2 consists of 157 female students, and Group 3 consists of 34 students of other genders. All students participated in a survey on the factors influencing learning motivation.

To analyze the impact of these factors, regression analysis will be conducted to examine the relationship between influencing factors and students' motivation. Specifically, the study will assess how internal motivations (such as personal goals, interests, and self-efficacy) and external motivations (such as parental expectations, peer influence, and school environment) affect students' learning motivation. Additionally, a cross-sectional analysis will be performed to determine whether differences in motivation exist across student groups and how various influencing factors impact each group differently. This approach will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the key factors shaping students' motivation.

3.4 Instruments

This study uses a survey questionnaire to create a comfortable environment where students can freely express their opinions about learning motivation at the middle school level, without pressure from teachers or peers. To ensure accuracy and honesty, students are not required to write their names when completing the survey. This approach helps minimize response bias and enhances the reliability of the collected data.

Additionally, the study employs a measurement scale to assess the level of influence of motivation on various factors. A Likert scale (ranging from 1 = "No influence" to 5 = "Very strong influence") is used to quantify students' perceptions of how different internal and external factors impact their learning motivation. This standardized approach allows for a more precise analysis of the relationship between motivation and influencing factors, providing a stronger foundation for interpreting the results.

3.5 Data collection

The survey questionnaire was conducted at Chu Van An Secondary School in Binh Duong Province with 8th-grade students. Before administering the survey, the author provided

detailed instructions to ensure students clearly understood the questions, aiming for accurate and honest responses. To maintain objectivity and authenticity, students were not required to write their names, minimizing response bias.

The study employed a random sampling method to select participants, ensuring a representative sample of the 8th-grade student population. The questionnaire was administered in a classroom setting, where students were given sufficient time to complete it independently.

For data processing, the collected responses were coded and entered into statistical software for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize key trends, while Cronbach's Alpha was applied to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of internal and external motivation factors on students' learning motivation. The study also utilized cross-sectional analysis to determine whether differences in motivation exist across gender groups and other demographic factors.

4. Data collection and Analysis

4.1 Results and Analysis

The author distributed 375 survey questionnaires with 8 factors each, achieving a 100% response rate.

TABLE 1. General Survey Details

Classification	Scheme	Figure
1	Sum of releases	375
2	Number of survey factors	8
3	The achieved percentage	100%

This study conducted a survey examining eight factors that contribute to the loss of interest in learning among secondary school students. The author randomly selected 375 8th-grade students from various classes. The survey results are presented as follows:

TABLE 2. The factors influenced by gender and percentage rate

No	Influencing factors	Male		Female		Others	
		Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage
1	Pressure of grades	56	14.93	47	12.53	9	2.40
2	Unengaging teaching method	25	6.67	36	9.60	6	1.60
3	The curriculum is too difficult or too easy	24	6.40	20	5.33	4	1.07
4	Lack of rest time	23	6.13	12	3.20	1	0.27
5	Lack of encouragement from family	18	4.80	16	4.27	4	1.07
6	Uncomfortable learning environment	9	2.40	6	1.60	2	0.53
7	Concerned with many activities outside of studying (social media, ...)	17	4.53	11	2.93	5	1.33
8	Others	12	3.20	9	2.40	3	0.80

From Table 2, various factors influence students' learning motivation differently across gender groups. The most significant factors include pressure from grades and tests, unappealing teaching methods, and an overly difficult or easy curriculum.

- Pressure from grades and tests is the most commonly cited factor, affecting 14.93% of male students, compared to 12.53% of female students and 2.40% of students of other genders. This suggests that academic pressure has a more significant impact on male students' motivation, potentially leading to stress and reduced interest in learning.
- Unappealing teaching methods influence 9.60% of female students, a higher percentage than 6.67% of male students and 1.60% of students of other genders. This indicates that teaching styles play a more substantial role in affecting female students' engagement and motivation.
- An overly difficult or easy curriculum is cited by 6.40% of male students, 5.33% of female students, and 1.07% of students of other genders. This highlights that the curriculum's difficulty level impacts all groups but is slightly more pronounced among male students.

To further analyze the relationship between internal and external motivation factors, a regression analysis should be conducted to measure how these factors influence different types of motivation. Internal motivation (such as personal interest in learning) and external motivation (such as grades or parental expectations) may interact differently with these influencing factors. Cross-sectional analysis could also be applied to determine whether there are significant differences in motivation types based on gender and other demographic variables.

TABLE 3. Results of the factor of lack of rest time

Gender	Male	Female	Other
Percentage (%)	6.13	3.20	0.27

For the factor of lack of rest time, 6.13% of male students expressed the view that having no time for rest significantly affects their motivation to study; 3.20% of female students stated that the reason they can no longer focus on their studies is that they are too exhausted from schoolwork and have no time for play, entertainment, or relaxation; 0.27% of students of other genders also expressed their opinion on this issue.

TABLE 4. Results of the factor of an uncomfortable learning environment

Gender	Male	Female	Other
Percentage (%)	2.40	1.60	0.53

According to the survey, an uncomfortable learning environment does not significantly affect students' motivation to study, as indicated by 2.40% of male students, 1.60% of female students, and 0.53% of students of other genders expressing this view.

TABLE 5. Results of the fifth, seventh, and eighth factors

Influencing factors	Gender		
	Male	Female	Other
Lack of encouragement from family	4.80	4.27	1.07
Concerned with many activities outside of studying (social media, ...)	4.53	2.93	1.33
Others	3.20	2.40	0.80

According to the survey, an uncomfortable learning environment does not significantly affect students' motivation to study, as indicated by 2.40% of male students, 1.60% of female students, and 0.53% of students of other genders who expressed this view. Specifically, 4.80% of male students and 4.27% of female students believe that a lack of encouragement from family directly affects their motivation to study, while 1.33% of students of other genders are more focused on activities outside of studying.

4.2 Discussions of the Results

Through the survey, factors affecting students' learning motivation, such as pressure from grades and tests, a curriculum that is either too difficult or too easy, and teaching methods that fail to engage students, were identified as the most significant influences. It can be seen that middle school students are under considerable pressure from school, peers, and family regarding academic performance. Additionally, a curriculum that is either too challenging or too simple, combined with monotonous teaching methods, directly impacts students' learning motivation.

Furthermore, students lack time for rest due to the pressure of grades, leaving them exhausted after intense study sessions. Indeed, external factors such as an uncomfortable learning environment, insufficient attention and encouragement from family, and extracurricular activities like games and social media also divert their focus. As a result, they lose concentration and gradually become disinterested in studying. Moreover, gender differences also lead to distinct outcomes in learning motivation.

According to the analysis, students' learning motivation can be enhanced if we address the three most crucial factors: grade pressure, curriculum design, and teaching methods.

5. Suggestion

Some suggestions to enhance learning motivation for middle school students

5.1 Actively Innovate Teaching and Education Methods

- (1) Utilize technology and visual tools: Incorporate videos, interactive games, and educational software to enrich lessons.
- (2) Apply Information Technology in Teaching and Learning: Use digital platforms, online resources, and interactive applications to enhance student engagement and participation.
- (3) Diversify teaching approaches: Transition from traditional lectures to group discussions, role-playing, or hands-on learning experiences such as field trips, experiments, and project-based learning.

5.2 Create a Positive Learning Environment

- (1) Provide a comfortable learning space: Improve facilities such as desks, lighting, and classroom decorations to foster a friendly atmosphere.
- (2) Encourage peer support: Establish study groups where students can support each other and gain motivation through collaboration.
- (3) Reduce academic pressure: Implement diverse assessment methods beyond grades, such as evaluations through extracurricular activities or projects.

5.3 Align Learning Content with the General Education Program 2018

- (1) Implement flexible teaching strategies: While the curriculum follows the framework set by the General Education Program 2018, teachers can enhance lesson delivery by adapting teaching methods and supplementary materials to suit students' needs.
- (2) Emphasize real-life applications: Integrate practical examples and real-world contexts to help students connect theoretical knowledge with everyday life, aligning with the curriculum's objectives.

5.4 Strengthen Support from Families and Schools Family

- (1) Parents should provide care, encouragement, and opportunities for their children to rest and relax.
- (2) School: Teachers and staff should listen to students' opinions and organize counseling sessions to provide psychological support.

5.5 Integrate Life Skills Education and Experiential Learning into the Curriculum

- (1) Incorporate life skills education: Ensure that essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork are systematically integrated into the curriculum as part of mandatory lessons rather than optional extracurricular activities.
- (2) Enhance experiential learning: Implement hands-on activities, such as project-based learning, simulations, and real-world problem-solving tasks, as core components of the teaching process to engage students actively in their learning journey.

5.6 Personalize Learning

- (1) Develop individualized learning plans tailored to each student's abilities and interests.
- (2) Use personalized feedback to help students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to adjust their learning methods.
- (3) Implementing these measures will not only improve learning motivation but also create opportunities for students to develop more comprehensively.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the factors influencing middle school students' learning motivation, with data collected through a survey of 375 students from Chu Van An Middle School in Binh Duong Province. The findings indicate that grade pressure, curriculum difficulty, and teaching methods are the most significant factors impacting students' motivation. These results suggest that addressing these factors could help improve students' focus and engagement in their studies. Based on the data, it is clear that a more balanced curriculum, innovative teaching strategies, and reduced pressure from grades would likely enhance motivation. However, due to the study's limited scope, future research should explore a broader range of factors and include different school contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. By applying these conclusions, educators and policymakers can work towards creating an environment that fosters greater motivation and academic success.

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