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ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AMONG INDIAN UNDERGRADUATES: A LITERATURE REVIEW ON INFLUENCING FACTORS AND TRENDS

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews studies on undergraduates' academic motivation through the analysis, synthesis, and generalization of 42 publications (32 international and 10 from India). The analysis identifies six key research approaches: (1) fundamental theories, (2) current state and manifestations, (3) classification, (4) measurement, (5) influencing factors, and (6) prevention, intervention, and enhancement.

Based on these findings, the article proposes future research directions, including: integrating diverse theoretical frameworks, examining the continuum from amotivation to extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, exploring transitions between motivation types, analyzing motivation across different student demographics and academic disciplines, investigating the impact of subjective (e.g., autonomy, self-awareness, resilience), cultural (e.g., school, family, community, caste, ethnicity), and socio-economic and political factors, and developing preventive measures and evidence-based interventions to enhance academic motivation.

KEYWORDS: *Undergraduates, academic motivation, research approaches, research directions.*

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduates' academic motivation (AM) is the driving force that directs, empowers, and sustains learning activities, helping students meet their educational goals while stimulating their own interests. The undergraduate years are a critical stage in personal and intellectual development, marking the transition from youth to adulthood. During this period, students accumulate knowledge, life skills, and foundational vocational competencies that shape their future careers.

In reality, while some students are passionate about their chosen fields, engaging in active and independent learning to prepare for their professional futures, others lack clear academic goals and interest in their studies. Some may study diligently due to external pressures rather than intrinsic motivation, leading to passive learning behaviors, limited creativity, and a lack of self-discipline in academic and self-development activities.

Amidst ongoing educational reforms in India and worldwide, both lecturers and students are expected to adopt more proactive and creative approaches to teaching and learning. Understanding the current state of students' AM is essential to identifying their strengths and weaknesses in academic activities, as well as the subjective and objective factors influencing their motivation. This understanding provides a foundation for fostering autonomous motivation (intrinsic AM and learning interest) and developing active learning habits.
This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of domestic and international research on AM in general and Indian undergraduates' AM in particular. By analyzing and synthesizing existing publications, the study identifies fundamental theoretical frameworks commonly used in AM research and examines current research trends on undergraduate AM in both global and Indian contexts. Based on these findings, the paper proposes future research directions to enhance AM among Indian university students.

2.1. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic review approach, involving a comprehensive search and a rigorous inclusion and exclusion process to identify relevant studies. The search was conducted using databases and search tools such as Google Scholar, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, ERIC, Sociofile, and the Social Science Citation Index. Additionally, Indian academic sources, including the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), and various central and state university repositories, were consulted.
To guide the search, linked descriptive search phrases were developed. The search terms included:

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- Part 1: “academic motivation” OR “learning motivation” OR “intrinsic academic motivation” OR “academic amotivation” OR “learning amotivation”
- Part 2: “undergraduates” OR “university students” OR “college students”

These terms were applied in both English and major Indian languages, such as Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, and Marathi.
The initial search yielded 1,245 results. After reviewing the titles and eliminating duplicates from multiple search channels, 275 articles remained. Next, abstracts were screened based on the following inclusion criteria:

a) Studies discussing theories, models, and the structure of academic motivation, primarily among undergraduates
b) Basic quantitative and qualitative research
c) Studies published in English or Indian regional languages
d) Publications from reliable and reputable sources between 1983 and 2023

Following this screening process, 42 papers met all criteria and were selected for data synthesis in this study.

2.2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of 42 publications (10 Indian regional language studies and 32 English studies) reveals six main research approaches to undergraduate academic motivation (AM):

2.2.1. Research on Fundamental Theories of Undergraduates’ Academic Motivation

Theoretical models on AM are highly diverse. This review focuses on several in-depth theoretical models, including:

- Behaviorism and Activity Theory
- Cognitive Theory
- Self-Efficacy Theory
- Expectation-Value Theory
- Mindset Theory
- Goal Achievement Theory
- Self-Determination Theory
- Social Comparison Theory
- Humanistic Theory

According to behaviorism, reinforcement strengthens behaviors and fosters AM. The effectiveness of reinforcement strategies varies by age, being more effective for younger students (primary and secondary school) than for older students. Meanwhile, activity theory explores AM in the context of students' interactions at home, university, and the broader community. Both theories primarily focus on extrinsic motivation, emphasizing reinforcement strategies and their role in developing AM.

- Cognitive theory suggests that motivation stems from learners' drive to acquire knowledge and solve problems. Research in this area focuses on intrinsic motivation, particularly how curiosity and the need for understanding influence AM in Indian undergraduates.
- Self-efficacy theory argues that students' beliefs in their abilities impact their learning behaviors, including effort, persistence, and strategy use. Indian studies highlight how socio-economic factors, family expectations, and peer influence shape students’ self-efficacy.
- Expectation-value theory proposes that AM is influenced by students' expectations of success and the value they place on learning outcomes. In India, this model is particularly relevant due to the high emphasis on competitive exams and career-oriented education.
- Mindset theory explores how students’ beliefs about intelligence and ability affect their AM. Indian studies focus on how caste, socio-economic background, and gender influence students’ mindsets and academic performance.
- Goal achievement theory analyzes different types of goal orientations in learning. Indian research highlights how parental expectations and cultural factors contribute to performance-approach and performance-avoidance goal orientations.
- Self-determination theory (SDT) describes AM along a continuum of autonomy. This model is gaining traction in India, especially in research exploring how students in urban and rural settings experience motivation differently.
- Social comparison theory focuses on extrinsic motivation, emphasizing how students compare their performance with others to enhance their AM. In India, this theory is particularly relevant in competitive academic environments like IITs and medical colleges.
- Humanistic theory views motivation as an innate internal force driving individuals toward personal growth. Indian studies based on this theory often explore the impact of the guru-shishya (teacher-student) relationship in fostering AM.

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In summary, the review indicates that:

- Self-determination theory is the dominant framework in global AM research.
- Expectation-value theory, mindset theory, and goal achievement theory are commonly used to study AM-related factors in India.
- In India, research tends to focus on cognitive theory and socio-cultural factors.

There is a need for more diverse, multi-theoretical approaches in India, incorporating cultural, economic, and political influences. Future studies should also examine AM across the entire motivation continuum.

2.2.2. Research on the Current State of Undergraduates' Academic Motivation

Studies on AM have examined various student groups across states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh. Indian studies employ diverse research methods, including questionnaires, scales, interviews, and observations.

Findings indicate that students' motivation is driven by factors such as:

- **Intrinsic motivations:** Enjoyment, interest, autonomy, curiosity, and personal growth.
- **Extrinsic motivations:** Academic performance, parental expectations, career stability, financial success, and social recognition.

Studies also suggest that AM, particularly autonomous AM, declines during adolescence. However, research in India remains limited, with small sample sizes and insufficient empirical data to support effective intervention strategies. There is a need for large-scale, cross-cultural studies to examine variations in AM and develop targeted strategies for different academic disciplines and socio-cultural contexts.

2.2.3. Research on the Classification of Undergraduates' Academic Motivation

Some studies classify AM based on behavioral and expectation-value perspectives. Indian researchers have identified three classification criteria:

Timing of Motivation's Influence

- Broad motivation (e.g., long-term academic goals, career preparation).
- Narrow motivation (e.g., studying to receive rewards or avoid punishment).

Relation to Personality

- Cognitive motivation (related to learning activities).
- Social motivation (influenced by external social factors).

Impact Direction

- Intrinsic motivation (driven by internal interests).
- Extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards).

A More Contemporary Approach Categorizes AM along a continuum of autonomy

- Deci & Ryan (SDT): 6 types of motivation, arranged from amotivation to intrinsic motivation.
- Vallerand et al.: 7 types of motivation, distinguishing between different extrinsic and intrinsic motivation subtypes.

Global research increasingly explores AM as a multidimensional, dynamic process. However, there is insufficient research on the transitions between different types of AM in India. Future studies should focus on longitudinal analyses to better understand these motivational changes over time, particularly in the context of India's socio-cultural diversity and economic challenges.

2.2.4. Research on Measurement of Undergraduates' Academic Motivation

To assess academic motivation (AM) in education, researchers have developed several measurement tools, primarily designed for younger populations. These include:

- Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Orientation Scale
- Children Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory
- The Self-Regulation Questionnaire-Academic

Harter's scale considers intrinsic motivation as the opposite of extrinsic motivation, making it difficult to independently evaluate these constructs. Additionally, it does not measure different types of extrinsic motivation or amotivation. Gottfried's Inventory assesses interest and intrinsic AM in specific subject areas (e.g., reading, social sciences) and general school interest but does not measure extrinsic motivation or amotivation. The Self-Regulation Questionnaire-Academic evaluates intrinsic motivation and three types of extrinsic motivation regulation; however, it lacks fully measurable attributes.

For college students, the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was developed. It has been widely implemented across various student populations, including postgraduate students in education and business in North America, university students in India, and students in

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Brazil, Canada, the U.S., and Europe. Research findings indicate high reliability and consistency across different applications of the scale.

In summary, research on developing and adapting AM assessment tools demonstrates that accurate evaluation can be achieved with validity, reliability, and stability. However, the availability of tools to measure AM remains limited both globally and in India. Further research is needed to develop new measurement instruments, refine existing scales, and adapt them to different socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, measurement tools must be appropriate for students' age, field of study, and cultural background.

2.2.5. Research on Factors Affecting Undergraduates' Academic Motivation

A common approach to studying AM involves examining its influencing factors. Among these, researchers have focused on psychological and physiological characteristics, needs, goals, mindset, and personality.

Studies have established that AM is linked to three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Other significant factors influencing AM include mindset, achievement goal orientation, personality traits, self-efficacy, and career goals. Additionally, personal characteristics such as gender and age have been found to impact AM.

Beyond individual factors, AM is also shaped by various social influences, including:

- Family environment and parenting styles
- Family economic status
- School environment, including learning atmosphere and teachers' motivational styles
- Teachers' teaching methods and student-teacher relationships
- Peer influence
- Academic materials and resources

Overall, research on the factor's affecting AM is extensive. However, given the continuously evolving sociocultural landscape, further studies are required to explore AM in new contexts, among different student populations, and over time to understand emerging influences on motivation.

2.2.6. Research on Enhancement of Undergraduates' Academic Motivation, Prevention, and Intervention of Negative Impacts

Undergraduates' AM can be fostered through various approaches involving teachers, parents, and university management.

- Role of University Management
- Institutions play a crucial role in shaping students' motivation by:
- Ensuring high-quality faculty, administrators, and staff.
- Providing ongoing professional training to improve teaching standards.
- Creating a balanced learning environment that accommodates students' personality traits and fosters motivation.
- Designing curricula aligned with practical needs to enhance education quality.
- Offering a supportive learning environment that facilitates optimal student performance.
- Encouraging autonomy-supportive management, which positively impacts AM and reduces dropout rates.

Role of Teachers

- Teachers contribute to AM development through:
- Promoting positive values such as respect, honesty, cooperation, and peace.
- Integrating life skills like listening, sharing, and caring into their teaching approach.
- Adapting teaching methods to align with students' needs and personality traits.

Role of Parents

Parental support is crucial in fostering autonomous motivation and positive learning attitudes. Parents can enhance AM by:

- Providing warmth and care through active engagement in their children's education.
- Encouraging autonomy by allowing children to express opinions and make independent decisions.
- Supporting their children's education in a way that surpasses the influence of lecturers and schools.
- Interventions for Students with Low Academic Motivation

For students struggling with AM, motivational interviewing has proven effective in improving learning performance, satisfaction, and engagement. This intervention is based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and helps students find intrinsic meaning in their learning activities.

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In India, scholars emphasize the importance of structured learning activities in shaping and sustaining AM. This approach involves analyzing students' task orientation, learning strategies, and engagement levels.

2.2.7. Discussion

The overall research findings indicate the following key points:

- Theoretically, there are nine major trends in academic motivation (AM) research worldwide, based on nine fundamental theories. In India, AM research primarily follows the activity psychology approach. Additionally, there are studies that adopt the humanistic theory, behavioral and cognitive theory, as well as the self-determination theory.
- In terms of AM classification, several studies in India focus on categorizing AM using a criteria-based approach. This approach closely aligns with the principles of behavioral/activity theory and expectation-value theory.
- Indian psychological research on AM mainly explores its manifestations and examines the objective and subjective factors that influence students' motivation.
- Research on Indian students' AM also includes experimental studies aimed at understanding the formation and development of motivation through structured learning activities. Indian scholars emphasize the importance of structured learning activities in shaping and sustaining AM. This approach involves analyzing students' task orientation, learning strategies, and engagement levels. Overall, Indian scholars have built upon and expanded the perspectives of Western and Soviet psychologists, contributing both theoretically and practically to the study of AM.

Based on these research directions and approaches, several recommendations emerge for future studies on undergraduate AM:

- AM research should integrate diverse theoretical perspectives.
- It should be examined along a continuum, encompassing both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.
- Studies should explore the transformation and interplay between different types of AM along this continuum.
- Research should include students of different ages and academic disciplines.

Future studies should consider the influence of subjective factors (e.g., autonomy, positivity, self-awareness, and resilience), school culture, family background, community and ethnicity, as well as economic and political factors on students' AM.
Preventive measures and evidence-based interventions should be explored to support and enhance undergraduates' AM.
For India, in particular, the following research directions are suggested:

- There is a need to diversify the approaches used in studying undergraduates' AM, incorporating integrated and up-to-date theoretical models.
- Research should focus on the reciprocal relationships between AM and both subjective and objective variables.
- Empirical studies aimed at improving AM—especially autonomous or intrinsic motivation—should take into account family and socio-cultural factors, as well as the unique characteristics of Indian universities and colleges.
- Positivist and experimental studies that provide strong empirical evidence on undergraduates' AM can be effectively applied within India's higher education system.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations that should be addressed in future research. Specifically, there is a need for a more comprehensive overview of AM studies across different periods and a broader search for diverse publications on undergraduates' AM in various academic disciplines. This will ensure a more extensive, updated, and in-depth understanding of research trends and approaches related to university students' AM.

3. CONCLUSION

This study provides an overview of six key research approaches and six future directions for deeper investigation into undergraduates' AM continuum.

Future research in India should incorporate globally updated AM research approaches and apply them to larger sample groups. Special attention should be given to analyzing student motivation across different academic disciplines. This approach will generate practical evidence for developing measures to prevent, intervene, and enhance AM among undergraduates in general, as well as students from specific fields of study.

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