

Exploring Differences in Academic Motivation Among Teacher Candidates in Higher Education

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the motivational patterns of the teacher candidates enrolled at the Bahrain Teachers College at the University of Bahrain. The study aimed to investigate the influence of variables, such as the teacher candidates' specialization, year of study, gender, and Cumulative Grade Point Average CGPA, on candidates' academic motivation. The sample consisted of 265 teacher candidates enrolled in the bachelor's program. The sample was drawn from all levels and specializations of the bachelor's program. Data was gathered using a demographics survey as well as the Academic Motivation Scale. The obtained results revealed that participants scored the highest on extrinsic motivation and they seem to be externally regulated. The results did not reveal any significant differences in the types of motivation based on the candidates' specialization, year of study, gender, and CGPA.

Keywords: academic motivation, extrinsic motivation, specialization, teacher candidates, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Motivation as a psychological concept is crucial to consider in the teaching and learning process as it influences an individual's behavior oriented towards a certain target objective or response (Ozder and Motorcan, 2013). According to the self-determination theory, different types of motivation underlie human behavior. Self-determination involves a true sense of choice, a sense of feeling free in doing what one has chosen to do. Listed on a continuum ranging from low to high levels of self-determination, these motivations are named intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

Intrinsically motivated students engage in certain activities for internal reasons, in other words, for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from performing certain behavior (Deci, 1971). However, extrinsic motivation pertains to a wide variety of behaviors where the goals of an action extend beyond those inherent in the activity itself. Different types of extrinsic motivations have been proposed in the self-determination theory that can also be organized along the self-determination continuum from lower to higher levels of self-determination; these are external and identified regulations (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

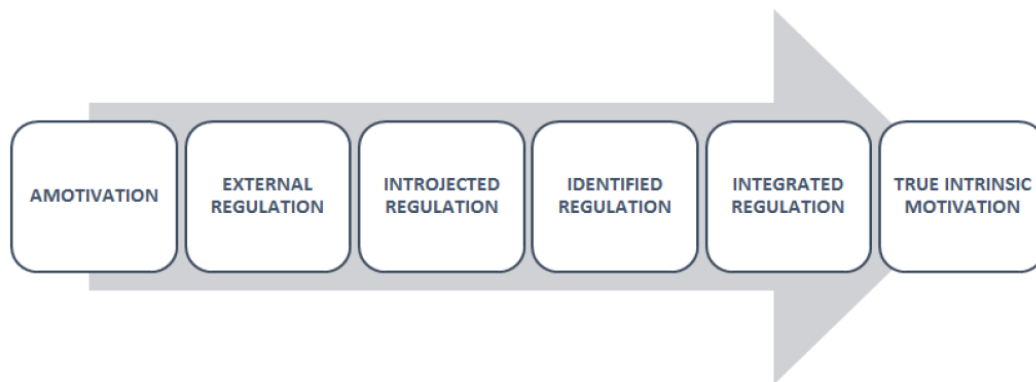
External regulation occurs when a behavior is regulated by rewards or the desire to avoid negative consequences. Thus, regardless of whether the goal of the behavior is to obtain rewards or to avoid sanctions, the individual feels obligated to behave in a specific way. In contrast, identified regulation occurs when a behavior is valued and perceived as being chosen by oneself. Yet, the motivation is still extrinsic because the activity is not performed for itself but as a means to an end. Besides intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the same researchers have proposed a third motivational concept, namely, amotivation, to understand human behavior fully. When amotivated, individuals perceive their behaviors and outcomes to

be unrelated. Their behaviors are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically motivated. Amotivated behaviors are the least self-determined because there is no sense of purpose, and no expectations of a reward or the possibility of changing the course of events. Thus, amotivation is similar to learned helplessness wherein the individual experiences feelings of incompetence and expectancies of uncontrollability.

In addition, the self-determination theory postulates that the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are central concepts in understanding the initiation and regulation of behavior. Competence implies a need for having an effect, for being effective in one's interactions with the environment. The need for autonomy is defined as a sense of feeling free from pressures and the possibility of making one's own choice from several courses of action. Lastly, relatedness refers to interpersonal attachments and bonds developed between individuals, and is based on striving for contact with others (see Deci and Ryan, 1985; Vallerand, 1997).

In their theory of self-determination, Gagné and Deci (2005) proposed a continuum with different levels of motivation. As illustrated in Figure 1, The lowest level of motivation is Amotivation, this occurs when a person refrains from acting because success is either doubtful or impossible. External regulation is the next level of self-determination, when someone engages in behavior for compensation or reward. The higher level is Introjected regulation, this occurs when a person follows a behavior because of an internalized guilt. The next level is the identified regulation, where the person pursues behavior because the outcomes are evaluated as important. Integrated regulation comes next as the next level, where the behavior is sought because it represents the things that are significant to the person's self-worth. The ultimate degree or the highest level of intrinsic motivation, in which a person acts in pursuit of knowledge and the pleasure of accomplishment.

FIGURE 1
THE SELF-DETERMINATION CONTINUUM



(Adapted from Gagne & Deci, 2005)

Further, motivation can also be approached from the perspective of achievement and the student's need to achieve. Atkinson (1964) calls this achievement motivation, as the premise here, according to him, is that students differ quite markedly in their need to achieve or feel that they are successful. However, Burden and Williams (1997) argue that the achievement theory places little emphasis on how people make sense of the tasks with which they were presented. This implies that there are other factors that play crucial roles in influencing the achievement motivation of students such as the type of tasks, facilities provided to the learners, and the learning environment (Burden and Williams, 1997). Overall, students' motivation is viewed as a crucial factor in influencing their academic performance as it shapes the learners' and teachers' roles in the teaching and learning process; it also has a significant impact on the performance of both teachers and students (Dornye, 2003).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite the fact that motivation is recognized as an essential aspect in the teaching and learning process, many instructors do not have an adequate understanding of the underlying causes of low motivation among students and do not have enough skills to stimulate or promote the motivational level of students. Consequently, teachers might feel frustrated when they are challenged by unmotivated students and they might not know how to address their concerns (Acharya and Joshi, 2009).

Therefore, the present study is an attempt to explore the differences in academic motivation types and levels among teacher candidates at Bahrain Teachers College (BTC). The objective of this study is also to investigate the influence of variables, such as the candidates' year of study, Cumulative Grade Point Average CGPA, and the candidates' specializations on their motivational patterns. These factors correspond to the economic vision (2030), which focuses on motivating fresh graduates to become teacher candidates by providing them with quality academic and educational services that respond to those candidates' needs and motivate them to become innovative teachers in their schools after they graduate from college. To achieve the above stated objectives, the following questions were framed:

- 1) What are the basic motivation types of the teacher candidates?
- 2) Is there a significant difference in the motivation types of the teacher candidates due to their specialization, year of study, gender, and CGPA?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several researchers have asserted the facts mentioned above in their studies. For instance, Deci and Ryan (2000), and Gagné and Deci (2005) found that there is a strong correlation between students' motivational patterns and their academic performance.

Other researchers have pointed out that it is not only motivation that has a powerful effect on students' academic achievement as there are some personal and environmental variables that could be associated with students' motivation, which influence their efforts while studying. For instance, Güven (2013) pointed out that academic motivation could be related to the religious orientation of the students, which indirectly encourages or discourages the students to work towards achievement in their academic field. In addition, Gillet, Vallerand, and Lafrenière (2012) found that students' motivation is correlated with their age. Further, Brouse et. al. (2013) proved that there is a significant correlation between the students' source of financial support and their motivational efforts related to studying, while Acharya and Joshi (2009) showed that the parents' education plays a fundamental role in the students' level of academic motivation. Other researchers, such as Guiffreda et. al (2013), have found that there is a relationship between the students' motivation to study and their reasons for attending a particular college, which influences their overall motivation towards achievement during their study at university.

Although students' motivation is one of the key challenges faced by parents, teachers, and school leaders in Bahrain, a literature analysis finds that just a few studies have been undertaken to investigate students' motivation. For instance, Al Ansari et. al. (2021) evaluated the validity and reliability of the Academic Motivation Scale AMS among medical students at the College of Medicine at the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain. The findings demonstrated that AMS is valid and reliable for application among Middle East students. Zukan, S. and Aldulaimi, S. (2020) investigated the influence of students' motivation on academic performance among undergraduate students enrolled at a private university in Bahrain. The findings of the study revealed that there is a strong and positive correlation between learning skills and academic achievement and the level of motivation to learn. In reviewing different research related to students' attitudes and motivation towards learning at Bahrain Polytechnic, Askar (2019) indicated that students' attitudes and motivation are central elements in determining success in learning. Al-Ammary and Essam (2013) explored the factors that influence postgraduate students' use of e-learning at the Arab Open University (AOU) in Bahrain. The findings revealed that motivation is the most important element influencing the use of e-learning at the AOU.

Based on the above-mentioned studies and after surveying the existing literature related to students' motivation in Bahrain, there seems to be a knowledge gap in research exploring the different types of academic motivation and whether these types of motivation are influenced by certain variables. Therefore, the current study can be considered a leading attempt to examine differences in academic motivation at the tertiary level in general and among pre-service teachers in particular.

There are multiple factors that could influence students' academic motivation during their university studies; thus, determining the type of motivation that could affect the university students' academic achievement is fundamental. In the context of this study, this is significant as the Bahrain Teachers College (BTC) was founded in 2008 as one of the reform initiatives that seek to create an education system that is 'fit-for-purpose' in equipping future generations with skills required in the 21st century. To achieve this aim, students enrolled in the BTC's bachelor's program enjoy several benefits, such as financial stipends, guaranteed hiring after graduation, and being given priority in nomination for professional development opportunities after graduation. This is because the BTC college was established to invest in Bahrain's citizens to help them achieve the goals of Bahrain's economic vision 2030 (Al-Cheikh, 2013).

Therefore, this study attempted to identify the different types of motivation among BTC students to better understand the type of motivation the learners exhibit and whether these types of motivation are influenced by certain variables and characteristics. This paper also contributes to theory and research by providing a theoretical basis underlying the development of the academic motivation based on the self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted at the Bahrain Teachers College (BTC) to investigate the types of motivation among teacher candidates as related to the candidates' specialization, year of study, gender, and CGPA. This study may add to the existing body of literature by identifying the variables that have the strongest relationship with candidates' motivation. This will help ensure the fulfilment of candidates' needs during their study at the university. This study may also be helpful to the teacher candidates by providing them with insight to facilitate self-awareness regarding their own motivational patterns during their study at the BTC.

Nevertheless, the results of this study shall empower faculty members at the BTC to guide their teaching process so that they can choose the appropriate teaching methods, strategies, and activities to fit candidates' motivational patterns. The results of this study can also contribute to the development of the academic advising process where academic advisors and the staff working in academic advising can have a better understanding of the candidates' motivational patterns particularly among at-risk candidates or those on probation.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

The sample of this study consisted of 265 teacher candidates (246 females 93%, and 19 male 7%) who were chosen using stratified random sampling to ensure the representation of all candidates in the bachelor's program from all year levels and all specializations. The limitation of the sample is that the distribution of the participants by gender was not even, where the number of male participants was small compared to that of female students. The main reason known for this gender imbalance is here is a major gap in the tertiary enrolment ratio for males; in addition, that more women than men apply to join the teaching profession (Aydrus, et. al., 2019). The participants' characteristics are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
THE PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Variables		N (265)	%
Gender	Female	246	92.8
	Male	19	7.2
Year of study	Year one	76	28.7
	Year two	75	28.3
	Year three	55	20.8
	Year four	59	22.3
CGPA	Low (< 2.50)	29	10.9
	Average (2.50–2.99)	104	39.2
	High (>3.00)	132	49.8
Specialization	Cycle one	83	31.3
	Arabic and Islamic studies	53	20.0
	Math and science	62	23.4
	English	67	25.3

Data for the present study were collected using the Vallerand Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand, Pelleder, Biais, Briere, Senecal, & Vallieres 1992). This Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was developed in 1992 by Vallerand et al. It consists of 28 items rated on a seven-point Likert scale aimed at measuring motivation based on the cognitive approach. The scale comprises seven factors, three of which measure intrinsic motivation (to know, to accomplish, and to experience stimulation), three measure both extrinsic motivation and amotivation (identified regulation, introjected regulation, and external regulation). The AMS was developed based on the self-determination theory as presented by Deci and Ryan (1985). It was designed to assess the extent to which an individual's academic motivation is intrinsically or extrinsically driven.

With the exception of the identification subscale, which had a value of .62, Vallerand et al. (1992) showed adequate temporal stability, with test re-test correlations ranging from .71 to .83, and acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .83 to .86.

For the purpose of the current study, modifications were made to the AMS according to the current study's aims and context. To ensure internal validity of the modified instrument, content validation of the draft scale was conducted by sending an invitation letter to eight independent reviewers requesting their participation for reviewing the content of the scale. The invitation letter explained the purpose of the study, the content evaluation procedure, and also comprised a description of the scale. The reviewers were asked to assess all items in terms of clarity, appropriateness, and relevance, and were requested to provide recommendations for revision.

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as illustrated in Table 2, as 0.82 for the whole measure. The coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale ranged between 0.57 and 0.82. Test-retest reliability over a two-week period ranged from .67 to .86 for the main subscales. Teacher candidates were asked to rate how closely each question matches their motivations for attending college from 1 (does not match at all) to 7 (matches exactly).

TABLE 2
CRONBACK'S ALPHA RELIABILITY COEFFICIENT

Indicators	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha	Test-retest
Intrinsic Motivation	12	0.571	0.67
Extrinsic Motivation	12	0.742	0.83
Total	28	0.826	0.86

Data Analysis

Out of the 300 questionnaires that were distributed, 280 were retrieved. Fifteen questionnaires were excluded due to missing data. Therefore, 265 questionnaires were included in the statistical analysis. Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS software, mainly for descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, and frequencies), t-tests, Pearson moment correlations, and one-way ANOVA analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study in relation to the research questions are presented below.

What Are the Basic Motivation Types of the Teacher Candidates?

To answer research question one, the mean and standard deviations were calculated for all participants. The results are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE THREE MAIN TYPES OF MOTIVATION

Type of motivation	Mean	SD	%
Extrinsic motivation	4.16	1.02	83.2
Intrinsic motivation	3.98	0.95	79.6
Amotivation	3.56	0.99	71.2

The results of the statistical descriptive analyses in Table 3 reveal that participants scored the highest on extrinsic motivation ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.02$) and the lowest on amotivation ($M = 3.56$, $SD = .99$).

To identify the subtypes of motivation among the participants further, the mean and standard deviations were calculated for the three subtypes of motivation. The results are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE SIX SUBTYPES OF MOTIVATION

Subtypes of motivation	Mean	SD	%
<i>Extrinsic motivation - external regulation</i>	4.36	0.85	87.2
<i>Extrinsic motivation - identified regulation</i>	4.19	0.96	83.8
<i>Extrinsic motivation - introjected</i>	4.16	0.9	83.2
<i>Intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation</i>	3.71	1.03	74.2
<i>Intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments</i>	3.56	0.9	71.2
<i>Intrinsic motivation to know</i>	3.38	1.03	67.6

The results of the statistical descriptive analyses in Table 4 reveal that participants had the highest mean scores on extrinsic motivation as external regulation (M = 4.36, SD = 0.85) and the lowest for intrinsic motivation to know (M = 3.38, SD = 1.03).

The above results may be linked to the current context of the Bahrain Teachers College in which candidates receive different types of support, such as financial stipends and secure jobs after graduation. These factors are believed to help encourage students to achieve more academically and succeed in passing their courses more than any other variables related to amotivation, or intrinsic motivations related to experience, accomplishment, or knowledge. Ames (1992) asserts this finding and describes it in terms of ‘performance versus mastery’ goals. In this regard, the focus and concern for the learners is to appear to be successful in academics, and this occurs when they perform better than others do. Dweck and Leggett (1988) mention similar rationale to justify the relationship between the same descriptors, ‘learning’ and ‘performance’. According to them, the distinction between learning and performance is that learning focuses more on the goal of gaining knowledge and increasing awareness of facts, mastering skills, or understanding new facts. This is related to the current study’s results as the BTC teacher candidates do not consider learning as their academic motivator, rather, they consider the level of their performance to be evidence of academic success since the latter predicts their stipends, hiring, and even the level of academic support received.

Is There a Significant Difference in the Motivation Types of the Teacher Candidates Based on Their Gender, Year of Study, Specialization, and CGPA?

To investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference in the motivation types of teacher candidates as related to gender, a t-test was conducted for both male and female candidates (Table 5).

TABLE 5
RESULTS OF THE T-TEST FOR THE AFFECT OF GENDER ON MOTIVATION TYPE

	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviation	df	t-value	Level of significance
Intrinsic motivation	Female	246	3.2710	.40414	263	-0.367	0.714
	Male	19	3.3965	.42967			
Extrinsic motivation	Female	246	3.8551	.49762	263	1.078	0.282
	Male	19	3.9896	.34365			
Amotivation	Female	246	3.6341	.56516	263	0.767	0.444
	Male	19	3.7616	.51322			

Table 5 shows that although the mean for males was higher for the types of motivation as compared to the mean for females, there were no significant differences between the two groups (alpha = 0.05).

To investigate whether there was a statistically significant difference in the motivation types of the teacher candidates based on their year of study, specialization, or CGPA, one-way ANOVA was conducted (Tables 6, 7, and 8).

TABLE 6
ONE-WAY ANOVA MEASURING THE EFFECT OF THE YEAR OF STUDY

ON MOTIVATION	CANDIDATES'					Level of significance
		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	
Intrinsic motivation	Between groups	.176	3	.059	.354	.786
	Within groups	43.186	261	.165		
	Total	43.361	264			
Extrinsic motivation	Between groups	.628	3	.209	.874	.455
	Within groups	62.443	261	.239		
	Total	63.071	264			
Amotivation	Between groups	.225	3	.075	.236	.871
	Within groups	82.955	261	.318		
	Total	83.180	264			

TABLE 7
ONE-WAY ANOVA MEASURING THE EFFECT OF CGPA ON
CANDIDATES' MOTIVATION

						Level of significance
		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	
Intrinsic motivation	Between groups	.351	2	.176	1.069	.345
	Within groups	43.010	262	.164		
	Total	43.361	264			
Extrinsic motivation	Between groups	.258	2	.129	.539	.584
	Within groups	62.812	262	.240		
	Total	63.071	264			
Amotivation	Between groups	.027	2	.013	.042	.959
	Within groups	83.153	262	.317		
	Total	83.180	264			

TABLE 8
ONE-WAY ANOVA MEASURING THE EFFECT OF SPECIALIZATION ON
CANDIDATES' MOTIVATION

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Level of significance
Intrinsic motivation	Between groups	.892	3	.297	1.826	.143
	Within groups	42.470	261	.163		
	Total	43.361	264			
Extrinsic motivation	Between groups	1.752	3	.584	2.486	.061
	Within groups	61.319	261	.235		
	Total	63.071	264			
Amotivation	Between groups	4.456	3	1.485	4.924	.072
	Within groups	78.724	261	.302		
	Total	83.180	264			

Results in tables 6, 7, and 8 did not reveal any significant difference among the three main types of motivation due to different year levels, different levels of CGPA, nor different candidates' specialization

The main results of the current study can be summarized in two points. First, the obtained data revealed that participants scored the highest on extrinsic motivation and they seem to be externally regulated. Second, there were no significant differences in the types of motivation based on the candidates' specialization, year of study, gender, and CGPA.

CONCLUSION

Overall, in the present study, it was found that the teacher candidates at Bahrain Teachers College scored the highest on extrinsic motivation. This implies that the college could provide some guidance programs for candidates to guide them toward intrinsic motivation. It can be concluded from this study that all major subtypes of motivation were not influenced by any of the demographic characteristics of the candidates such as their specialization, year of study, gender, and Cumulative Grade Point Average CGPA. This may imply that all the candidates experience similar types of motivation regardless of these differences. Therefore, the researcher recommends that BTC instructors should work towards enhancing academic motivation and emphasize the importance of intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation. Furthermore, the instructors should implement teaching strategies that would spark the students' interest in learning and help them recognize the value of knowledge. Further research could investigate whether there is a relationship between personality traits and types of motivation. Moreover, research could also explore the motivation of graduates who are currently working in the field.

LIMITATIONS

Due to the nature of the sample drawn from the candidates at the BTC, the results of the study can only be generalized to similar students in similar contexts. A further limitation of this study was the possible lack of accuracy and honesty of the respondents while responding to the questionnaire. Nonetheless, the major disparity in the number of participants based on gender might not allow for conclusive results.

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