

Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)**Effects of Classroom Teachers' Motivational Practices on Students' Learning Outcomes in Higher Education****Dr. Ijaz Hussain¹, Aghosh Zahra², Ali Hassan²**

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Abstract: Motivation is a core determinant of students' academic engagement, persistence, and learning outcomes in higher education. This study investigates the effects of classroom teachers' motivational practices on students' learning outcomes in selected higher education institutions of South Punjab. Using a quantitative descriptive correlational design, the research sampled 50 teachers and 120 students through cluster sampling. Two structured Likert-scale questionnaires measured motivational practices, motivational climate, and student learning outcomes. Data analysis through SPSS included frequencies, mean scores, standard deviations, t-tests, and Pearson correlation coefficients. Descriptive results showed that teachers frequently use motivational practices such as praise, constructive feedback, fairness, reinforcement, and encouragement. Students agreed that these practices significantly enhanced their academic performance, classroom participation, and overall motivation. Inferential statistics revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = .71, p < .01$) between motivational practices and learning outcomes. Gender-based differences in perceptions were statistically insignificant. The study concludes that motivational practices have a substantial positive effect on students' learning outcomes. It recommends institutional support for motivational training, reflective teaching, student-centered pedagogy, and motivational assessments in higher education.

Introduction

Motivation is widely acknowledged as a crucial determinant of students' academic engagement, persistence, and learning outcomes, particularly in higher education where learners confront increased autonomy, complex tasks, and higher expectations of self-regulated learning. Classroom teachers play a central role in fostering this motivation by creating a supportive and engaging instructional environment through their motivational practices such as constructive feedback, praise, encouragement, reinforcement, and fair treatment. These practices not only influence students' immediate classroom behaviors but also shape their long-term academic trajectories, including participation, achievement, and persistence in learning.

Educational psychology research typically conceptualizes motivation as a multifaceted construct influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Theories such as Self-Determination Theory emphasize the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in sustaining students' intrinsic motivation, while Expectancy Value Theory explains how students' expectations of success and perceived value of tasks influence their effort and achievement. Teachers' motivational practices are instrumental in satisfying these psychological needs and shaping students' motivational beliefs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Recent systematic reviews and empirical studies reinforce the significance of teacher motivational role in contemporary classrooms. A comprehensive systematic review published in the *European Journal of Psychology of Education* (2025) underscored that teaching practices including feedback quality, instructional structure, and teacher involvement strongly influence students' academic motivation and engagement, and that teacher motivational behaviors are among the most influential factors in motivating learners academically. These practices shape not only students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation but also their cognitive and emotional engagement, which subsequently impacts outcomes such as performance, persistence, and satisfaction with learning.

Background of the Study

Higher education is a critical stage of academic and professional development where students must be engaged, committed, and motivated to succeed. While course content and institutional resources shape learning experiences, the role of teachers remains central in influencing students' academic pathways. Teachers' motivational practices including praise, feedback, reinforcement, fairness, and responsive interaction substantially impact learners' self-efficacy and engagement.

In the context of higher education in Pakistan, particularly in South Punjab, students often face diverse academic and personal challenges. Limited resources, traditional teaching methods, lack of mentoring, and insufficient classroom engagement reduce student motivation. Teachers' motivational practices therefore become crucial in supporting students' academic trajectories.

Motivation is widely recognized as a key predictor of academic success. Motivated learners display persistence, deeper understanding, improved attendance, and higher achievement. Conversely, lack of motivation is associated with disengagement, absenteeism, low performance, and dropout. Thus, understanding motivational practices in higher education is a vital educational concern.

Empirical evidence from Pakistan and similar contexts also highlights the positive influence of teacher motivation on student outcomes. For instance, research examining the impact of teacher empathy and motivation on academic achievement found that teachers' motivational support significantly contributed to students' sense of belongingness and academic success in higher education settings. Another local study on teacher motivation and classroom participation demonstrated that higher levels of teacher motivation were associated with increased student critical thinking skills, an important component of academic achievement. Moreover, broader research on teacher attitudes and educational practices in Pakistan reported that teachers' behaviors and professional dispositions play a significant role in shaping student learning outcomes, suggesting that motivational dimensions of teaching should be integrated into teacher preparation and development programs.

In addition to direct effects on academic performance, teachers' motivational practices also enhance classroom participation, critical thinking, and self-efficacy, which are key predictors of academic success in higher education. Recent investigations in higher education psychology have demonstrated that university teachers' instructional styles significantly mediate student engagement through self-efficacy beliefs, underscoring the interplay between teacher behaviors, motivation, and learning outcomes.

Despite the recognized importance of teacher motivational practices, research specifically examining the direct link between these practices and students' learning outcomes in higher education within the South Punjab context remains limited. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by exploring the effects of classroom teachers' motivational practices on students' learning outcomes in higher education institutions, thereby contributing to the literature and informing institutional policies and teacher development strategies.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in established motivational theories that explain how teachers' instructional behaviors influence students' motivation and learning outcomes. These theories collectively provide a conceptual basis for understanding the mechanisms through which classroom teachers' motivational practices shape students' engagement, persistence, and academic achievement in higher education.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) proposes that human motivation is driven by the fulfillment of a sequence of needs, ranging from basic physiological requirements to higher-order psychological and self-actualization needs. According to this theory, individuals must satisfy lower-level needs before progressing toward higher levels of motivation.

In higher education classrooms, teachers contribute significantly to fulfilling students' psychological and social needs, including feelings of belonging, respect, and self-worth. When teachers create supportive learning environments, demonstrate fairness, and acknowledge students' efforts, they help satisfy students' esteem needs, which are essential for confidence and academic persistence. Furthermore, opportunities for intellectual growth, creativity, and independent thinking facilitate self-actualization, enabling students to realize their academic potential.

Thus, teachers' motivational practices such as encouragement, recognition, and emotional support serve as mechanisms through which students' higher order motivational needs are met, ultimately enhancing learning outcomes.

Herzberg's Motivation–Hygiene Theory

Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) distinguishes between two categories of factors influencing motivation: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and personal growth, directly enhance satisfaction and performance. Hygiene factors, including institutional policies, supervision, and working conditions, prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily promote motivation.

In the classroom context, teachers' motivational practices function primarily as motivators rather than hygiene factors. Praise for academic achievement, constructive feedback, acknowledgment of effort, and opportunities for student responsibility increase intrinsic satisfaction and academic engagement. When teachers focus on motivational factors rather than merely enforcing rules or procedures, students are more likely to experience a sense of accomplishment and purpose in their learning.

Therefore, Herzberg's theory supports the premise that teacher-initiated motivational strategies play a crucial role in improving students' learning outcomes by fostering satisfaction and sustained academic effort.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes that optimal motivation arises when three fundamental psychological needs are fulfilled: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy

refers to students' sense of control over their learning, competence involves feeling capable of mastering academic tasks, and relatedness reflects meaningful connections with teachers and peers. Teachers influence intrinsic motivation by adopting autonomy-supportive instructional practices, such as encouraging independent thinking, offering choices, and respecting students' perspectives. Constructive feedback enhances students' sense of competence, while positive teacher-student relationships foster relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, students demonstrate increased engagement, deeper learning strategies, and higher academic performance.

SDT provides a robust theoretical explanation for how teachers' motivational practices contribute to sustained student motivation and improved learning outcomes in higher education settings.

Expectancy Value Theory

Expectancy Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) posits that students' motivation to engage in academic tasks is determined by two key beliefs:

1. **Expectancy for success** – the belief that effort will lead to successful performance.
2. **Task value** – the perceived importance, usefulness, or interest of the task.

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping both expectancy and value through instructional clarity, encouragement, feedback, and relevance of course content. When teachers communicate high expectations, provide academic support, and connect learning activities to real-world applications, students are more likely to believe in their ability to succeed and perceive learning tasks as meaningful. Consequently, effective motivational practices enhance students' willingness to invest effort in academic activities, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

Collectively, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the effects of classroom teachers' motivational practices on students' learning outcomes. Maslow's theory explains the fulfillment of psychological needs, Herzberg's theory highlights the role of recognition and achievement, Self-Determination Theory elucidates intrinsic motivation mechanisms, and Expectancy Value Theory clarifies students' engagement decisions.

Together, these perspectives support the assumption that teachers' motivational practices are central to fostering student motivation, engagement, and academic success in higher education.

Literature Review

Teacher Motivation and Student Outcomes

Teachers' motivational practices have been widely recognized as a key determinant of student learning outcomes. Research demonstrates that when teachers employ strategies that support students' psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness students exhibit higher academic engagement, persistence, and achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This aligns with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that motivational support fosters intrinsic motivation, leading to better learning behavior and outcomes.

A recent systematic review identified multiple dimensions of how teachers influence student academic motivation, including teacher support, teacher-student relationships, instructional practices, and teacher characteristics (e.g., enthusiasm, self-efficacy). Among these, teacher support emerged as the most influential dimension affecting students' motivational experiences (Jansen et al., 2025). Positive feedback, structured instruction, and autonomy support were consistently linked with improved student motivation and engagement (Guo & Zhou, 2021; Katsantonis et al., 2023). Teacher feedback, in particular, was shown to significantly predict both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, underscoring the importance of responsive and scaffolded communication in the classroom.

Beyond student perceptions, teacher motivation itself is an important antecedent to instructional behavior. Studies indicate that teachers' intrinsic motivation and educational interest positively influence their teaching practices, which then affect student motivation (Lam et al., 2009; Schiefele & Schaffner, 2015; Zou et al., 2024). Teachers who feel competent and intrinsically motivated are more likely to adopt autonomy-supportive practices, fostering environments where students feel empowered and willing to participate actively in learning tasks.

Motivational Practices and Learning Outcomes

The literature also highlights specific motivational practices that have been empirically linked to improved academic outcomes. These include constructive feedback, praise, clear expectations, reinforcement, and supportive classroom environments. For example, positive reinforcement and specific praise have been reported to increase academic engagement and behavioral participation, while acknowledging effort rather than outcomes fosters a growth mindset among students (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Similarly, teacher-student relationships characterized by support and responsiveness contribute to positive emotional engagement and sustained academic effort. When teachers provide social support such as encouragement, problem solving guidance, and esteem building interactions students report increased motivation, higher levels of class participation, and deeper learning strategies (Jia & Cheng, 2025). This effect is particularly important in higher education, where students' emotional and cognitive engagement directly influences academic success and long-term learning outcomes.

These findings suggest that teacher practices that validate students' contributions and create psychologically safe environments significantly impact not only students' immediate academic performance but also their long-term attitudes toward learning.

Contextual and Pedagogical Considerations

The impact of motivational practices is also shaped by instructional context and teacher behavior style. Student-centered and autonomy-supportive teaching positively influences intrinsic motivation, whereas overly directive or controlling approaches may hinder motivational engagement (Cheng & Chen, 2022; Guo & Zhou, 2021). Structured scaffolding and clear instructional guidance were particularly effective in enhancing student engagement and self-regulation both crucial predictors of learning success in higher education.

Moreover, motivational strategies are not one-size-fits-all; individual student differences and perceptions moderate their effectiveness. Some students may respond more to relational support, while others benefit more from structured feedback or academic challenges. This finding underscores the need for adaptive teaching that recognizes diverse learner profiles within higher education settings (Su & Cheng, 2015).

The Mediating Role of Teacher Motivation

Teacher motivation itself has been identified as a mediating factor between teacher practices and student outcomes. Systematic reviews of teaching motivation suggest that teachers who are internally motivated are more likely to engage in practices that elicit high levels of student engagement and achievement (Han & Gao, 2025). This implies a feedback loop wherein teacher motivation promotes effective instructional behavior, which in turn enhances student motivation, thus improving learning outcomes.

Empirical Evidence from Higher Education

Although much of the literature has focused on primary and secondary education, similar patterns have been observed in higher education contexts. Research shows that when lecturers use motivational

strategies such as constructive feedback, active learning, and autonomy-supportive tasks, students report higher motivation, deeper engagement, and better academic performance. These effects are magnified in university settings where learners are expected to take greater responsibility for their own learning (Ibrahim & Nat, 2019). Studies highlight the importance of teacher motivation strategies in shaping student performance (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2021; Shah & Khan, 2019).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the present study is grounded in motivational and learning theories that explain how teachers' instructional behaviors influence students' learning outcomes through motivational processes. The framework posits those teachers' motivational practices function as the primary independent variable, directly shaping students' motivational states, which in turn influence learning outcomes.

Independent Variable: Teachers' Motivational Practices

Teachers' motivational practices refer to the instructional and interpersonal strategies employed by classroom teachers to enhance students' academic engagement and persistence. These practices include:

- **Praise and Recognition:** Verbal acknowledgment of students' academic efforts and achievements, which enhances self-esteem and confidence.
- **Reinforcement:** Systematic encouragement and rewards that strengthen desirable learning behaviors.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Timely, specific, and supportive feedback that guides students toward academic improvement.
- **Fairness and Equity:** Consistent and unbiased treatment of students, fostering trust and psychological safety.
- **Encouragement:** Verbal and non-verbal support that motivates students to participate and persist in learning tasks.
- **Academic and Emotional Support:** Teacher assistance during academic challenges, promoting resilience and confidence.

These practices collectively create a supportive learning environment that nurtures students' psychological needs and promotes positive learning behaviors.

Mediating Variable: Student Motivation

Student motivation acts as a mediating mechanism through which teachers' motivational practices influence learning outcomes. Motivation in this framework is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising:

- **Engagement:** Students' active involvement in learning activities, including attention, effort, and persistence.
- **Interest:** Students' curiosity and intrinsic attraction toward academic content and classroom tasks.
- **Participation:** Willingness to contribute to discussions, collaborates with peers, and engage in classroom interactions.

When teachers employ effective motivational practices, students experience increased motivation, which enhances their cognitive and behavioral involvement in the learning process.

Dependent Variable: Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes represent the measurable academic and behavioral results of the teaching–learning process. In this study, learning outcomes are conceptualized across three domains:

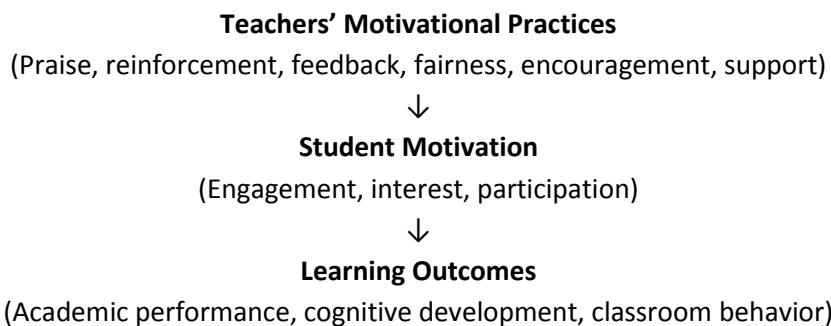
- **Academic Performance:** Achievement reflected in grades, test scores, and assignment completion.
- **Cognitive Development:** Growth in conceptual understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities.
- **Classroom Behavior:** Positive learning behaviors, including discipline, cooperation, and sustained academic effort.

Improved student motivation leads to enhanced learning outcomes by increasing effort, persistence, and effective learning strategies.

Proposed Relationship among Variables

The framework proposes a causal pathway in which teachers' motivational practices exert both direct and indirect effects on students' learning outcomes. The indirect effect occurs through student motivation, which mediates the relationship between teacher practices and academic success. Thus, motivational practices are expected to improve learning outcomes primarily by enhancing students' engagement, interest, and participation.

Graphical Representation (Narrative Form)



Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides empirical evidence on the influence of classroom teachers' motivational practices on students' learning outcomes in higher education. By examining the role of motivational strategies such as praise, reinforcement, constructive feedback, fairness, encouragement, and academic support, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how teacher behavior shapes student motivation and academic performance. The findings address an important gap in higher education research by emphasizing motivation as a key mediating factor between teaching practices and learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study offers practical and theoretical insights that can support instructional improvement, teacher professional development, and policy formulation aimed at enhancing the overall quality of higher education.

- It provides teachers with evidence-based insights into motivational practices that can enhance student engagement, participation, and academic achievement.
- It highlights the importance of supportive and motivating classroom environments in improving students' learning experiences and self-confidence.
- It offers institutional administrators empirical findings that can inform professional development programs and teaching evaluation frameworks.
- It supports curriculum planners and policymakers in integrating motivational strategies into higher education teaching and training policies.
- It contributes to teacher education programs by reinforcing the need to include motivation-focused pedagogical training.

- It enriches the existing body of research on motivation in higher education and offers a foundation for future empirical studies.
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Problem Statement

Motivation is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing students' engagement, persistence, and academic success in higher education. Classroom teachers play a central role in fostering motivation through instructional strategies, feedback, reinforcement, and supportive interactions. However, despite the acknowledged importance of motivational practices, there is limited empirical evidence examining how these practices systematically influence students' learning outcomes within higher education institutions, particularly in developing educational contexts.

In many higher education classrooms, teaching practices vary considerably in terms of motivational support, fairness, feedback, and student engagement. As a result, students' learning experiences and academic outcomes are often inconsistent, with some learners demonstrating high engagement and achievement while others exhibit low motivation and poor academic performance. The lack of clear understanding regarding which motivational practices are most effective hinders efforts to enhance teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is the insufficient empirical understanding of the extent to which classroom teachers' motivational practices affect students' learning outcomes in higher education. Addressing this problem is essential for informing instructional improvement, teacher professional development, and evidence-based policy decisions aimed at improving the effectiveness of higher education teaching and learning.

Research Objectives

This study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify and analyze the motivational practices employed by classroom teachers in higher education settings.
2. To determine the relationship between teachers' motivational practices and students' learning outcomes in higher education.

Research Questions

1. What motivational practices do teachers employ in higher education classrooms?
2. How do students perceive teachers' motivational practices?
3. Are there significant gender-based differences in motivational practices?
4. What is the relationship between teachers' motivational practices and learning outcomes?

Hypotheses

Based on the stated research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0: There is significant relationship between teachers' motivational practices and students' learning outcomes in higher education.

H01: There is no significant relationship between teachers' motivational practices and students' learning outcomes in higher education.

H02: There is insignificant difference between male and female regarding the effects of motivational techniques on students' learning outcomes.

Delimitations

The study was limited to:

- Selected public sector higher education institutions in South Punjab.
- Teachers and students of under graduate level programs

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive–correlational design to assess the relationship between motivational practices and learning outcomes.

Population

Population included:

- All teachers in selected higher education institutions
- Students enrolled in the same institutions

Sample

Group	Sample Size
Teachers	50
Students	120

Sampling Technique

Convenient sampling was used due to geographical clustering of institutions.

Instruments

The following two structured questionnaires at 5-point Likert type scale were used for data collection containing the level of degree of opinion from strongly disagreed to strongly agreed.

1. Teacher Motivational Practices Scale (TMPS)
2. Student Learning Outcomes Scale (SLOS)

Reliability & Validity

The validity of the questionnaires was assured by the research experts and the reliability of the questionnaires was measured by the following Cronbach's Alpha values.

- TMPS = .88
- SLOS = .83

Data Collection

Data were collected through personal visits and online forms.

Data Analysis

SPSS Version 20 was used:

- Descriptive (Mean, SD)
- Inferential (t-test, Pearson correlation)

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Teachers' Motivational Practices (N = 120)

Item	Mean	SD
Praise for performance	4.23	.71
Constructive feedback	4.11	.68
Fair treatment	4.19	.74
Encourages participation	4.30	.66
Academic reinforcement	4.09	.82
Maintains supportive environment	4.25	.63
Uses technology to motivate	4.02	.79

Provides help during difficulties	4.18	.70
Overall Mean	4.17	0.71

Interpretation

Students strongly agreed teachers frequently use motivational strategies.

Students' Learning Outcomes

Table 2: Learning Outcomes (N = 120)

Item	Mean	SD
Academic performance	4.12	.73
Conceptual understanding	4.08	.70
Class participation	4.16	.67
Motivation improvement	4.21	.64
Critical thinking	4.05	.75
Learning retention	3.98	.79
Assignment completion	4.09	.71
Self-confidence	4.13	.68
Overall Mean	4.10	0.72

Gender Differences

Table 3: Gender Differences (t-Test)

Gender	n	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	60	4.15	.69	1.21	.229
Female	60	4.22	.74		

Interpretation:

Gender difference is insignificant (p > .05).

H02 accepted.

Correlation

Table 4: Correlation between Motivational Practices and Learning Outcomes

Variables	r	p
Motivational Practices ↔ Learning Outcomes	.71	.000

Interpretation:

Strong positive correlation (p < .01).

H0 accepted.

Discussion

The study's findings highlight the critical role of teacher motivation in higher education. Teachers' use of praise, reinforcement, fairness, and constructive feedback significantly enhances student motivation and learning outcomes. The overall mean of 4.17 for motivational practices indicates active use of varied motivational strategies.

The correlation coefficient ($r = .71$) suggests that 71% of learning outcome variation is associated with teacher motivational practices. This aligns with theoretical assumptions from Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, showing that students respond positively to supportive environments.

Gender differences were insignificant, demonstrating that motivational practices affect both male and female students similarly, affirming equity across the classroom environment. These results also

resonate with prior research (Hilmi & Ali, 2016; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2021), confirming that teacher behavior significantly influences academic achievement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that motivational practices employed by teachers have a clear and positive effect on students' learning outcomes in higher education. Teachers' praise, fairness, reinforcement, and support help foster improved engagement, conceptual understanding, and academic performance.

Recommendations

1. Institutions should implement professional development programs on motivational strategies.
2. Teachers should use constructive feedback, praise, and recognition consistently.
3. Classroom environments should be supportive, respectful, and fair.
4. Technology and active learning strategies should be integrated to enhance motivation.
5. Institutions should regularly monitor student motivation indicators.
6. Future research should utilize mixed-method designs for deeper insights.

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