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Intrinsic Motivation in the Post-Pandemic Education

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Abstract   The study aimed to explore the intrinsic motivation of students in the post-pandemic setting, on the specific factors: self-efficacy, social support, learning environment, goal orientation, and achievement anxiety. Using quantitative descriptive research design, the data was collected through a self-made research questionnaire administered to 338 respondents from the students of St. Francis Xavier College, Mount Carmel College of San Francisco, Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology, and Philippine Normal University - Mindanao. Slovin's formula was used to determine the appropriate sample size and stratified sampling was employed to divide the population into relevant subgroups. The study showed high level of intrinsic motivations of students in the post-pandemic learning environment particularly in the areas of social support and goal orientation. While majority of the respondents displayed high intrinsic motivation in all factors, some learners faced issues with self-efficacy and achievement anxiety.

Keywords   Intrinsic motivation, Post-pandemic education, Higher education, Educational Transition

1. Introduction

Students stand at the forefront of facing constant changes in the educational landscape, confronting the post-pandemic difficulties. These changes have disrupted traditional learning methods, altered student-teacher interactions, and presented barriers on teaching and learning, complicating students' ability to stay motivated. Research has consistently demonstrated strong correlation between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement (Javaeed et al., 2019; Mallick, De, & Mukhopadhyay, 2017). Lack of student motivation poses a critical problem hindering effective learning and achievement in education. This necessitates a study to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' learning motivation in the post-pandemic setup.

Research consistently highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation in formal education. A study of Taylor et al. (2014) recognized a significant positive association between intrinsic motivation and higher academic achievement. Similarly, Froiland and Worrell (2016) identified a chain reaction that intrinsic motivation fuels student engagement, which in turn leads to higher academic achievement (GPA). Studies have showed that motivation influence positive attitudes of students in school. Learners who are highly motivated will view schooling as enjoyable despites its challenges. In contrast, learners who are low in motivation is said to be easily bored and struggle to find joy in learning. Gottfried et al., (2007) and Scherrer & Preckel (2019) presents that students' intrinsic motivation tends to decline over the course of their school years. Gnambs & Hanfstingl (2016) offer a possible explanation for this decline, suggesting it might be linked to a decrease in students' sense of psychological need fulfillment within the educational environment.

While numerous studies have shed light on students learning motivation, a gap remains in our understanding of the multifaceted challenges faced by students in the post-pandemic educational landscape. Current studies often delve into specific motivational factors, but there's a lack of exploration into how self-efficacy, social support, learning environment, goal orientation, and achievement anxiety intertwine to influence students' motivation in this post-pandemic panorama specifically within the students of St. Francis Xavier College (SFXC), Mount Carmel College of San Francisco (MCCSF), Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology (ASSCAT), and Philippine Normal University - Mindanao (PNU-Mindanao). By focusing on this holistic perspective, the study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' intrinsic motivation in the new normal of education.

The relevance to conduct this research is evident due to the on-going need for research-based strategies to help academics navigate the complex challenges of the post-pandemic education. There is an urgent need for targeted interventions to improve or maintain students' motivation as it plays a key role in academic achievement and future careers. This study can guide educators and institutions in developing timely and effective interventions to support student success.

2. Literature Review

The pandemic has presented different dilemmas in all domains of life, most specifically in the field of education. To help control the spread of the virus, different institutions were forced to transition from traditional setup to different flexible learning strategies such as online and modular learning as per order of the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) (2020). Numerous studies have already showed how the pandemic significantly affects and challenge educational sector. The new normal education has greatly contributed to cases of students' anxiety, discomfort, and difficulties with their study habits (Villegas et al., 2024). In addition, learners particularly those who are from the underprivileged families faced issues with availability of gadgets and stable internet connectivity in which also causes mental stress (Mahyoob, 2020; Dayagbil et al., 2021, as cited in Estrellado, 2021). These barriers to learning in the new normal education have impacted students' motivation and attitudes in studying (Debowska et al., 2020, as cited in Brillo et al., 2024).

2.1 Post-Pandemic Education

With the government's efforts and vaccination campaign, the pandemic progressively declined and life slowly returned to normal. Under CHED Memorandum Order No. 16, higher education institutions once again open its gates to full physical learning or in hybrid learning for the second semester of Academic Year 2022-2023 (Bernardo, 2022). However, even the pandemic has subsided and classes returned to the full face-to-face, this does not mean that everything will transition back of how the it was before the pandemic (Baltazar, 2023).

In the aftermath of the pandemic, students are at the forefront of navigating the constant changes in educational landscape. The shift from pandemic to post-pandemic education alters the how teachers and students recognized the changes in academic tasks (Firmansyah et al., 2023). These changes have challenged traditional learning methods, altered student-teacher interactions, and introduced barriers to teaching and learning, making it difficult for students to stay motivated (Choi, Yu, Lee, & Choi, 2021). Students' motivation is essential in higher education as it influences academic achievement and in molding their professional endeavors (Okada, 2023). Thus, decline in learning motivation presents a serious challenge to effective learning and academic achievement. Thus, there is a pressing need to study the factors that influence students' intrinsic learning motivation in the post-pandemic context to develop strategies that can enhance and sustain it.

2.2 Intrinsic Motivation

Self-determination theory of Ryan and Deci (1985) determine 3 types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. The intrinsic definition pertains to activities done for the particular sake or inherent interest and enjoyment. People are intrinsically motivated to engage in activities that are fun and interesting, such as play, exploration, and curiosity. These activities are not dependent on external rewards or pressure, but rather it provides their own satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation is likely responsible for the majority of human learning, as contrasting to learning that is directed by others (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Motivation is essential in higher education as it influences academic achievement (Okada, 2023). Several studies have already showed that during the pandemic students become unmotivated, which can be seen with their poor exam scores and low attendance during online class (Sabates et al., 2021). Notably, the transition from online to face-to-face setup influenced high level of intrinsic motivations among students (Gronofillo, 2023). This shows that actual engagement inside the classroom is essential to students' learning process. On the other hand, Susanti et al., (2024) highlights that students in the post-COVID-19 era experienced low interest in studying and learning. These studies offer valuable insights into the evolving landscape and underscore the necessity of studying learning motivations in the post-pandemic landscape to develop strategies that promote student success and well-being.

Given the transition from pandemic to post-pandemic setup, exploring and studying students' intrinsic motivation is essential in preparation for future challenges to the learners' motivation (Firmansyah et al., 2023). It is significant for the institutions and educators to implement policies and learning strategies to support their interest and passion. This highlights the relevance of adopting approaches that aligns to the needs of students' intrinsic motivation and academic success.

3. Methods

The study uses a quantitative descriptive research method to collect numerical data about a population without manipulating the variables being studied. A quantitative approach yields numerical values, which is typically analyzed using statistics (Gay et al., 2009). In this study, various descriptive and inferential statistical tools were utilized to analyze the respondents' intrinsic learning motivation. These tools were selected based on the nature of the data and the study's objectives in examining students' motivation levels, challenges, and the relationships between their profiles and motivation. The study will present the response of the students of Saint Francis Xavier College in San Francisco (SFXC), Mt. Carmel College of San Francisco (MCCSF), Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology (ASSCAT) and Philippine Normal University – Mindanao (PNU-Mindanao) in Agusan del Sur on their level of intrinsic motivations in the post-pandemic panorama. The study's design aims to explore how the post-pandemic educational landscape influence students' intrinsic motivations through a survey method in which the variables are measured using numerical conditions.

4. Results And Discussion

Table 1. Respondents Profile

Profile	Frequency	Relative frequency (%)
YEAR		
Junior (3rd Year)	164	48.52

Senior (4th Year)	174	51.48
TOTAL	338	100
SEX		
Male	80	23.67
Female	254	75.15
Prefer not to say	4	1.18
TOTAL	338	100
TYPE OF SCHOOL		
Private School	106	31.36
Public School	232	68.64
TOTAL	338	100
TEACHING MODALITY		
Face-to-face	293	86.69
Online	0	0
Hybrid (combination of face-to-face and online)	45	13.31
TOTAL	338	100

4.1. Respondents Profile

The study involved a total of 338 respondents, categorized based on their year level, sex, type of school, and teaching modality. In terms of year level, the respondents were almost evenly distributed, with 164 students (48.52%) in their Junior (3rd Year) and 174 students (51.48%) in their Senior (4th Year), ensuring a balanced representation of students in the latter stages of their undergraduate education. Regarding sex, the majority of respondents were female (254 students, 75.15%), followed by male students (80 students, 23.67%), with a small proportion (4 students, 1.18%) opting for "Prefer not to say". In terms of type of school, 232 students (68.64%) were from public schools, while 106 students (31.36%) attended private schools. With regard to teaching modality, the majority of students engaged in face-to-face learning (293 students, 86.69%), while 45 students (13.31%) participated in a hybrid learning setup (a combination of face-to-face and online learning). Notably, no students reported engaging in fully online learning, indicating a strong return to in-person instruction in the post-pandemic period.

Table 2. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Social Support

Indicator	Mean	SD	Verbal interpretation
1. I am supported and encouraged by my parents/guardians in my interest and passion for my course.	4.46	0.84	Strongly Agree
2. I receive encouragement and feedback from my teachers inspires me to take on challenging academic tasks, contributing to my growth and sense of competence.	4.27	0.80	Strongly Agree
3. I feel encouraged by my friends to do my best in my studies which influence me to enjoy my studies and drive satisfaction from learning.	4.28	0.87	Strongly Agree
4. I receive enough support from my family, and/or guardian/s that make me feel confident in achieving my academic goals.	4.50	0.8	Strongly Agree
5. I am encouraged and supported by my loved ones which strengthen my motivation that finishing my degree is worth pursuing and meaningful.	4.46	0.83	Strongly Agree
OVERALL	4.39	0.84	Strongly Agree

4.2. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Social Support

The results indicate that students strongly agree that social support significantly contributes to their intrinsic learning motivation. With an overall mean of 4.39 (SD = 0.84), the findings suggest that students feel highly encouraged by their parents, teachers, friends, and loved ones, which enhances their academic engagement and personal satisfaction in studying.

Among the specific indicators, the highest-rated statement is "I receive enough support from my family and/or guardian(s) that make me feel confident in achieving my academic goals" (M = 4.50, SD = 0.80), followed closely by "I am supported and encouraged by my parents/guardians in my interest and passion for my course" (M = 4.46, SD = 0.84). These results highlight the strong role of familial support in boosting academic confidence.

Encouragement from teachers and peers also plays a key role, as students reported that feedback from their teachers (M = 4.27, SD = 0.80) and motivation from their friends (M = 4.28, SD = 0.87) positively influence their sense of competence and enjoyment in learning.

The consistency in high ratings across all indicators suggests that students experience strong and reliable social support, reinforcing their motivation to pursue academic success.

Table 3. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Self-efficacy

Indicator	Mean	Sd	Verbal interpretation
1. I am confident in my ability that I can solve most problems I encounter within my academic journey.	4.03	0.77	Agree
2. I am confident I can understand the lessons taught in my classes, even after the challenges of the pandemic.	3.95	0.71	Agree
3. I can rely on my capabilities expecting that I can complete my assignments and other school tasks successfully, despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic.	4.14	0.73	Agree
4. I believe that I can excel in my studies, even with the changes in the educational landscape due to pandemic.	4.11	0.80	Agree
5. I believe in my capabilities and that I can achieve my set goals.	4.34	0.76	Strongly Agree
OVERALL	4.11	0.77	Agree

4.3. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Self-Efficacy

The results indicate that students agree that self-efficacy plays a significant role in their intrinsic learning motivation. With an overall mean of 4.11 (SD = 0.77), the findings suggest that students generally feel confident in their ability to complete academic tasks, solve problems, and achieve their goals despite the challenges brought by the pandemic.

Among the specific indicators, the highest-rated statement is "I believe in my capabilities and that I can achieve my set goals" (M = 4.34, SD = 0.76), highlighting the strong belief students have in their ability to succeed academically. This is followed by "I can rely on my capabilities, expecting that I can complete my assignments and other school tasks successfully, despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic" (M = 4.14, SD = 0.73) and "I believe that I can excel in my studies, even with the changes in the educational landscape due to the pandemic" (M = 4.11, SD = 0.80), both of which indicate confidence in their academic performance.

While all statements received positive ratings, the lowest mean score was for "I am confident I can understand the lessons taught in my classes, even after the challenges of the pandemic" (M = 3.95, SD = 0.71). This suggests that while students generally feel capable, some may still experience challenges in fully comprehending lessons compared to their confidence in completing tasks and achieving goals.

The consistency in ratings across all indicators suggests that students maintain a strong sense of self-efficacy, particularly in their ability to complete academic tasks and achieve their goals, though some uncertainty remains in fully understanding lessons post-pandemic.

Table 4. Students Level of Intrinsic in Motivation Learning environment

Indicator	Mean	Sd	Verbal Interpretation
1. I have a learning environment where I feel comfortable interacting regularly with my teacher, classmates, and others around me.	4.21	0.76	Strongly Agree
2. I have a learning environment equipped with technology and tools that enhance my learning experience.	4.12	0.82	Agree
3. I have a learning environment that includes natural elements, such as plants or views of the outdoors, which improve my mood and motivation.	4.05	0.87	Agree
4. I have a learning environment that offers good lighting, comfortable seating, and proper ventilation.	4.04	0.85	Agree
5. I have a learning environment where I feel safe and supported, allowing me to enjoy the learning process.	4.25	0.77	Strongly Agree
OVERALL	4.13	0.82	Agree

4.4. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Learning Environment

The results indicate that students agree that their learning environment contributes to their intrinsic learning motivation. With an overall mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.82), the findings suggest that students generally perceive their learning environment as supportive, comfortable, and conducive to their academic engagement.

Among the specific indicators, the highest-rated statement is "I have a learning environment where I feel safe and supported, allowing me to enjoy the learning process" (M = 4.25, SD = 0.77), followed closely by "I have a learning environment where I feel comfortable interacting regularly with my teacher, classmates, and others around me" (M = 4.21, SD = 0.76). These results emphasize the importance of social interaction and emotional security in fostering a positive learning experience.

Students also agree that having access to technology and tools enhances their learning experience (M = 4.12, SD = 0.82), and that elements like natural surroundings (M = 4.05, SD = 0.87) and good physical conditions (M = 4.04, SD = 0.85) contribute to their academic motivation.

The consistency in ratings across all indicators suggests that students perceive their learning environment as generally supportive and conducive to learning, particularly in terms of social interaction, safety, and access to learning resources.

Table 5. Students Level of Intrinsic in Motivation Achievement Anxiety

Indicator	Mean	Sd	Verbal Interpretation
1. Even though I encounter anxiety about academic challenges but, it fuels my desire to excel and learn.	4.20	0.78	Agree
2. The fear of not meeting expectations drives my strong determination to learn.	4.12	0.78	Agree
3. Overcoming academic hurdles, despite anxiety, reinforces a sense of accomplishment.	4.14	0.77	Agree
4. The pressure to meet high standards increases my focus and effort in learning.	4.02	0.90	Agree
5. My fear of failing the subjects motivates me to learn more.	4.29	0.80	Strongly Agree
OVERALL	4.15	0.81	Agree

4.5. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Achievement Anxiety

The results indicate that students agree that achievement anxiety influences their intrinsic learning motivation. With an overall mean of 4.15 (SD = 0.81), the findings suggest that while students experience anxiety related to academic challenges, they generally view it as a motivating factor that drives them to excel and persevere in their studies.

Among the specific indicators, the highest-rated statement is "My fear of failing the subjects motivates me to learn more" (M = 4.29, SD = 0.80), suggesting that the possibility of failure serves as a strong motivator for students to engage in their studies. This is followed by "Even though I encounter anxiety about academic challenges, it fuels my desire to excel and learn" (M = 4.20, SD = 0.78), indicating that students acknowledge the role of anxiety in pushing them to perform better.

Students also agree that overcoming academic hurdles reinforces their sense of accomplishment (M = 4.14, SD = 0.77) and that the fear of not meeting expectations strengthens their determination to learn (M = 4.12, SD = 0.78). The lowest-rated statement, although still in agreement, is "The pressure to meet high standards increases my focus and effort in learning" (M = 4.02, SD = 0.90), suggesting that while pressure is a motivating factor, its effects may vary among students.

The consistency in ratings across all indicators suggests that students perceive achievement anxiety as a challenge that enhances their motivation, allowing them to stay focused and committed to academic success despite the stress it brings.

Table 6. Students Level of Intrinsic in Motivation Achievement Anxiety

Indicator	Mean	Sd	Verbal Interpretation
1. Doing well in my studies is another step in my journey of lifelong learning.	4.50	0.73	Strongly Agree
2. Learning new things and improving my performance at school challenges me.	4.46	0.72	Strongly Agree
3. Staying engaged and interested in lessons supports my academic goals.	4.41	0.73	Strongly Agree
4. Mastering new skills gives me personal happiness and accomplishments.	4.41	0.75	Strongly Agree
5. Challenging myself academically because I enjoy mastering new concepts.	4.21	0.83	Strongly Agree
OVERALL	4.40	0.76	Strongly Agree

4.6. Students Level of Intrinsic Motivation in Goal Orientation

The results indicate that students strongly agree that goal orientation plays a significant role in their intrinsic learning motivation. With an overall mean of 4.40 (SD = 0.76), the findings suggest that students are highly motivated by the process of learning, personal growth, and academic achievement.

Among the specific indicators, the highest-rated statement is "Doing well in my studies is another step in my journey of lifelong learning" (M = 4.50, SD = 0.73), highlighting students' strong recognition of education as an essential part of their continuous learning journey. This is followed by "Learning new things and improving my performance at school challenges me" (M = 4.46, SD = 0.72), emphasizing their enthusiasm for academic progress.

Students also strongly agree that staying engaged in lessons supports their academic goals (M = 4.41, SD = 0.73) and that mastering new skills provides them with a sense of personal happiness and accomplishment (M = 4.41, SD = 0.75). The lowest-rated statement, though still within the strongly agree range, is "Challenging myself academically because I enjoy mastering new concepts" (M = 4.21, SD = 0.83), indicating that while students find academic challenges fulfilling, some may still experience difficulties in consistently embracing them.

The consistently high ratings across all indicators suggest that students are highly goal-oriented and find motivation in continuous learning, self-improvement, and academic mastery.

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the intrinsic motivation of students in the post-pandemic setting, focusing on the specific factors such as self-efficacy, social support, learning environment, goal orientation, and achievement anxiety. The result showed that students exhibit high levels of intrinsic motivation, specifically in social support and goal orientation, which means that in the post-pandemic educational landscape, these factors significantly influence their intrinsic motivation. While majority of the respondents displayed high intrinsic motivation, some learners faced issues with self-efficacy and achievement anxiety.

Based on the findings of this study, institutions and teachers can help maintain and improve students' intrinsic motivation by providing academic support, create a welcoming learning environment, and also by providing constructive yet encouraging feedbacks to students. Although the scope of this study is limited only in the selected higher education institutions in the province of Agusan del Sur, the result it still has significant contribution in the understanding of intrinsic motivation in the context of different factors such as self-efficacy, social support, learning environment, goal orientation, and achievement anxiety. Future researchers could magnify the findings of the study in different educational context and exploring how other factors may influence intrinsic motivation.

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