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Research on Learning Motivation of International High School Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the learning motivation of 40 international high school students. The results from the motivation scale show that the group exhibits a relatively high level of learning motivation. The overall score for intrinsic motivation is 3.13, with a challenge score of 3.06 and an enthusiasm score of 3.23. The overall score for extrinsic motivation is 2.91, with a reliance on others' evaluations scoring 2.74, preference for simple tasks scoring 3.1, concern for interpersonal competition scoring 3, and pursuit of rewards scoring 2.87. Overall, the group's intrinsic motivation scores higher than their extrinsic motivation. In terms of gender differences, female students show higher intrinsic motivation than males, while male students show higher extrinsic motivation compared to females.

Keywords

Learning Motivation, International High School Students, Adolescents, Academic Pressure

1. Research Objectives

Learning motivation is a critical internal driving force in students' learning processes (Liu & Xiao, 2009). Over the past few decades, scholars in China have conducted numerous studies on the learning motivation of middle school and university students (Liu et al., 2000; Wang & Yi, 2021). As times change, some students begin participating in international curricula during high school as preparation for overseas university studies. These students often enter international schools at a younger age, with the goal of studying abroad in a relatively short period. Due to the unique nature of international curricula, such as the high demand for self-directed learning and the relatively relaxed school management, these students need to demonstrate higher levels of self-discipline and self-

management. Additionally, they face challenges such as cultural adaptation, academic pressure, and planning for future studies and careers. However, existing research on this particular group is limited. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring the learning motivation of high school students enrolled in international curricula, providing educators with more data to better understand and support this unique student population, thereby helping them achieve better academic outcomes and personal growth in an international educational environment.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Participants

From August 18 to August 20, 2023, a survey was conducted among 40 international high school students to explore their learning motivation. An online questionnaire was randomly distributed to the target group, with students voluntarily participating. A total of 44 questionnaires were collected, of which 40 were valid, yielding a response rate of 90.9%. Of the respondents, 40% were male, and 60% were female. 60% of the sample came from Guangdong Province, while the remaining 40% were from other regions.

2.2. Research Instruments

This study used the Learning Motivation Scale developed by Amabile, Hill, Hennessey, and Tighe, revised by Chi Liping and Xin Ziqiang (2006), along with 9 self-designed questions. The Learning Motivation Scale consists of 30 items, divided into two subscales: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation subscale includes two dimensions: challenge and enthusiasm. The extrinsic motivation subscale includes four dimensions: reliance on others' evaluations, preference for simple tasks, concern for interpersonal competition, and pursuit of rewards. Two items are reverse-scored. The scale uses a 4-point Likert scoring system, with higher scores indicating stronger motivation. The internal consistency coefficients for the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation subscales are 0.80 and 0.78, respectively, indicating that the scale is a reliable and valid tool for measuring learning motivation. Detailed scale is provided in Appendix.

The self-designed questions cover three areas: background information (2 items), academic pressure (4 items), and academic planning (3 items), all in multiple-choice format. An example of an academic pressure question is: "How would you rate the academic pressure between international and traditional curricula?" with options including "Neither has much pressure, international curriculum has more pressure, traditional curriculum has more pressure, both are equally stressful." An example of an academic planning question is: "What factors influence your choice of university major?" with options such as "Job prospects, family expectations, personal interests, personal strengths." Detailed information is provided in Appendix.

2.3. Administration and Data Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed via the Wenjuanxing platform and shared with eligible students through WeChat. Students participated voluntarily. After data collection, invalid responses were excluded, and the data were processed and analyzed using both Wenjuanxing and Excel software.

3. Conclusion

1) Background Information: Grade distribution: 5% of participants were in Grade 9, 12.5% in Grade 10, 25% in Grade 11, and 57.5% in Grade 12.

Years in international schools: 7.5% had been in international schools for 0 - 6 months, 17.5% for 6 months to 1 year, 25% for 1 - 2 years, 40% for 2 - 3 years, 0% for 3 - 4 years, and 10% for over 4 years.

2) Academic Pressure: Comparison of academic pressure between international and traditional curricula: Only 10% of participants reported that neither curriculum was particularly stressful. 12.5% believed that international curricula were more stressful, 40% believed traditional curricula were more stressful, and 37.5% reported that both were equally stressful. Overall, most students felt that academic pressure in international curricula was relatively lower or at least not higher than in traditional curricula. However, 72.5% of participants still felt academic supervision from both schools and parents, with only 10% reporting no supervision. Another 15% felt supervision only from the school, and 2.5% only from parents. Self-assessment of academic performance showed a normal distribution: 30% rated their performance as good, 50% as average, and 20% as needing improvement.

3) Academic Planning: Regarding whether participants had a plan for their intended university major, 82.5% reported having a plan, while 17.5% lacked one. Only students who had a plan were asked to rate the factors influencing their choice of major on a scale of 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating greater importance. The results show that the most important factors were personal interests (3.7), personal strengths (3.58), job prospects (3.12), cost (2.67), and family expectations (2.61). For factors influencing learning interest, all students were invited to rate each factor on a scale of 1 to 4. The most significant factors were: personal preferences (3.7), subject content (3.43), sense of personal achievement (3.4), teaching style (2.95), peer influence (2.7), and relationships with teachers (2.58), indicating that personal preferences had the greatest influence on learning interest.

4) Learning Motivation Scale: Overall results: The Learning Motivation Scale showed an overall intrinsic motivation score of 3.13, with a challenge score of 3.06 and an enthusiasm score of 3.23. The overall extrinsic motivation score was 2.91, with reliance on others' evaluations scoring 2.74, preference for simple tasks scoring 3.1, concern for interpersonal competition scoring 3, and pursuit of rewards scoring 2.87 (See Table 1).

Table 1. Scores of each subscale of the learning motivation scale.

Item	Score
Intrinsic Motivation	3.13
Challenge	3.06
Enthusiasm	3.23
Extrinsic Motivation	2.91
Reliance on Others' Evaluation	2.74
Preference for Simple Tasks	3.1
Concern for Interpersonal Competition	3
Pursuit of Rewards	2.87

Gender Differences in Intrinsic Motivation: In both male and female groups, intrinsic motivation scores were higher than extrinsic motivation scores, with enthusiasm scoring the highest. Females scored higher in intrinsic motivation, while males scored higher in extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation score for males was 3.09, and for females, it was 3.14. The extrinsic motivation score for males was 2.94, while for females, it was 2.89. Among males, enthusiasm (3.29) scored higher than challenge (2.95). For females, enthusiasm (3.16) and challenge (3.12) were relatively balanced (See Table 2).

Table 2. Gender differences in scores of various subscales of the learning motivation scale.

Item	Male Score	Female Score
Intrinsic Motivation	3.09	3.14
Challenge	2.95	2.12
Enthusiasm	3.29	3.16
Extrinsic Motivation	2.94	2.89
Reliance on Others' Evaluation	2.72	2.74
Preference for Simple Tasks	3.30	2.97
Concern for Interpersonal Competition	2.95	3.03
Pursuit of Rewards	2.88	2.85

Gender Differences in Extrinsic Motivation: In the male sample, the order of extrinsic motivation scores from highest to lowest was: preference for simple tasks (3.30), concern for interpersonal competition (2.95), pursuit of rewards (2.88), and reliance on others' evaluations (2.72). In the female sample, the order was: concern for interpersonal competition (3.03), reliance on others' evaluations (2.74), preference for simple tasks (2.97), and pursuit of rewards (2.85). Females

scored higher than males in "concern for interpersonal competition" and "reliance on others' evaluations," while males scored higher in "preference for simple tasks" and "pursuit of rewards."

4. Discussion

The majority of the samples in this study came from international course high school students in Guangdong Province. The majority of the sample felt that their study pressure was smaller after entering the international course, but they still felt the dual supervision from the school and parents on academic performance. Both male and female students had higher intrinsic motivation scores than extrinsic motivation scores, and the highest score was enthusiastic motivation. Female students had higher intrinsic motivation than male students, while male students had higher extrinsic motivation than female students.

In similar study on students' learning motivation using the same revised learning motivation scale by Chi Liqing and Xin Ziqiang, the average intrinsic motivation score for male students was 2.86 (in this study it was 3.09), the average score for female students was 2.81 (in this study it was 3.14), the average extrinsic motivation score for male students was 2.59 (in this study it was 2.94), and the average score for female students was 2.65 (in this study it was 2.89) (Wang, 2022). The sample in this study showed higher levels of learning motivation, reflecting higher positivity, and was consistent with their self-assessed interest in learning and the greater consideration of their own preferences in choosing a major. However, like domestic students, international course students had stronger intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation, with enthusiastic motivation scoring highest (Wang, 2022). Higher freedom in international course learning is crucial, and it is important for students to have high levels of motivation and autonomy. Students with high intrinsic motivation levels may be more adaptable to international course learning.

5. Limitations

However, this study also has certain limitations. For example, the sample size is relatively small, and no factors that may affect the results, such as family socioeconomic status and changes in motivation levels before and after enrollment, have been considered.

Research on students taking international courses is still relatively limited, and future studies can expand the sample size or conduct longitudinal studies to explore changes in motivation before and after entering international courses. It is hoped that further research can enrich and improve the study of motivation, providing more scientific and practical guidance for educational practice.

6. Summary

This study explores the level of learning motivation among high school students studying international curriculum in China, and finds that the overall level of

learning motivation among this group is high, with intrinsic motivation being higher than extrinsic motivation. Female students have higher intrinsic motivation than male students, while male students have higher extrinsic motivation than female students. Most of the sample felt that their learning pressure was smaller after entering the international curriculum, but they still felt the dual supervision of school and parents on their academic performance.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix

Survey used in the present study

Dear fellow students: Hello! In order to better assist you in strengthening your correct learning motivation and improving your learning effect, we are conducting this survey. Please answer the following questions based on your actual situation and be honest and forthright. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential, and the survey results will only be used as research materials and will not affect your learning. Thank you for your cooperation!

1. What is your gender?

1) Female

2) Male

2. What is your grade?

1) Grade 9

2) Grade 10

3) Grade 11

4) Grade 12

3. How many years have you studied in international courses?

1) 0 to 6 months

2) 6 months to 1 year

3) 1 year to 2 years

4) 2 years to 3 years

5) 3 to 4 years

6) More than 4 years

4. How stressful do you think it is to study international courses and institutional courses?

1) There is not much pressure.

2) International courses are more stressful.

3) The curriculum in China's system is more stressful.

4) The pressure is as great.

5. After entering the international course study, what is the supervision of your study by the school or parents?

1) The school will urge me to study.

2) The parent-teacher meeting urged me to study.

3) Both the school and parents will urge me to study.

4) None of them

6. What is the overall situation of your academic performance?

1) Better

2) Medium

3) Need to work hard

7. Learning Motivation Scale (Compiled by Amabile, Hill, Hennessey and Tighe, revised by Chi Liping and Xin Ziqiang)

Guidance: Please read each statement carefully, according to your own actual situation or choose the most suitable answer (score from 1 - 4, 1 point means very

disagree, 4 points means very agree), the answer is not right or wrong, thank you for your cooperation!

7.1. I don't care so much about what others think of my academic performance.

7.2. I prefer to have someone set clear goals for me at work.

7.3. The more difficult the problem, the more willing I am to try to solve it.

7.4. I am very clear about my goal or purpose to pursue good grades.

7.5. I hope my job can provide me with the opportunity to increase my knowledge and skills.

7.6. For me, success means doing better than others.

7.7. I like to think independently to solve difficult problems.

7.8. No matter what the result of what I do, as long as I can feel that I have gained new experience, I will feel satisfied.

7.9. I like relatively simple and direct tasks or homework.

7.10. I am very clear about the goals I want to achieve in terms of academic performance.

7.11. Many things I do are driven by curiosity.

7.12.What I care more about is not what I do, but what I get in return from it.

7.13. I am happy to delve into those problems that are completely new to me.

7.14. I like to choose the jobs that I am sure to do well, not those that require me to do my best.

7.15. I care about how others react to my point of view.

7.16. I rarely think of scores and rewards.

7.17. When I can set my own goals, I will be more satisfied.

7.18. I don't think it's meaningful if you do well at work but no one knows about it.

7.19. For me, the achievements I can achieve are the main motivation for me to work hard.

7.20. It is very important for me to be able to do the job I like.

7.21. I like to do work or tasks with very clear procedural steps.

7.22. As long as I do what I like to do, I don't care so much about scores and rewards.

7.23. I am willing to do interesting work that will make me concentrate and forget everything.

7.24. Winning the affirmation and appreciation of others is the main motivation for me to work hard.

7.25. No matter what I do, I always want to be paid or compensated.

7.26. I am willing to try to solve complex problems.

7.27. For me, it is very important to have the opportunity to express myself.

7.28. I want to know how well I can do in my studies.

7.29.I hope others will find out how excellent I am in my studies.

7.30. For me, the most important thing is to love the work I am doing.

8. Do you have a plan for the major you want to apply for in the university?

1) Yes

2) No (direct to Question 10)

9. What are your considerations for applying for a college major? Please read each statement carefully, according to your own actual situation or choose the most suitable answer (score from 1 - 4, 1 point means very disagree, 4 points means very agree)

1) It's easier to find a job

2) The needs of the family

3) Own interests

4) Own advantages

5) Cost

10. What affects the interest in learning? Please read each statement carefully, according to your own actual situation or choose the most suitable answer (score from 1 - 4, 1 point means very disagree, 4 points means very agree)

1) The influence of peers

2) Teacher's teaching method

3) Personal sense of accomplishment

4) Subject content

5) Personal preference

6) The relationship with the teacher

11. Fill in the above carefully?

1) Yes

2) No