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Relationship Between Class Academic Performance and Teachers' Motivational Behaviors

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Abstract: *The academic performance of students is influenced by various factors, among which teachers' motivational behaviors play a pivotal role. This review examines existing literature to understand how teachers' motivation impacts student engagement, learning outcomes, and overall academic achievement. Drawing on theories such as Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, the paper synthesizes findings from multiple studies to provide a comprehensive overview of this relationship*

Keywords*:* Academic Performance, Teacher support, Learning motivation

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is a multifaceted construct influenced by individual student characteristics, instructional practices, and the broader educational environment. Among these, the motivational behaviors exhibited by teachers significantly affect student outcomes. Teachers' actions, attitudes, and expectations can either foster or hinder student motivation and engagement, thereby impacting academic performance. Classrooms today are increasingly heterogeneous, comprising students with varying levels of cognitive abilities, learning preferences, and socio-emotional characteristics. The diversity of abilities in a single classroom presents both challenges and opportunities for teachers, who are expected to facilitate learning that accommodates every learner.

High-ability learners often display advanced cognitive skills, quick learning pace, and a propensity for independent thinking, whereas low-ability learners may struggle with understanding concepts, maintaining attention, and keeping pace with curriculum demands. In order to address this disparity effectively, teachers must adapt their behaviors, instructional strategies, and classroom management techniques to meet the distinct needs of both high- and low-ability learners (Tomlinson, 2014).

Behavioral adaptations by teachers are a critical aspect of instructional quality and play a significant role in enhancing student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. These adaptations are not limited to the content of instruction but also encompass teaching style, communication patterns, emotional support, and classroom interactions.

Teachers' behavioral adaptations often include differentiated instruction, scaffolding, flexible grouping, and tailored feedback, which aim to provide learning experiences that are appropriately challenging for each student. Differentiated instruction is a pedagogical approach that involves adjusting content, processes, and learning products according to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2014). For high-ability learners, this may involve presenting advanced materials, promoting inquiry-based learning, and encouraging independent exploration, whereas low-ability learners benefit from simplified tasks, step-by-step guidance, and additional practice opportunities.

Research has consistently shown that differentiated instruction positively impacts student engagement and achievement by allowing learners to work at a pace and level that aligns with their abilities (Subban, 2006). By providing tasks that are neither too easy nor overwhelmingly difficult, teachers help students maintain motivation and reduce frustration or boredom, which are common barriers to effective learning.

Scaffolding is another key behavioral adaptation that teachers employ to support learners of different abilities. Scaffolding involves providing temporary assistance to students as they develop new skills, gradually reducing support

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as learners gain proficiency (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). For low-ability students, scaffolding can include modeling problem-solving strategies, providing hints, or breaking tasks into manageable steps, which builds confidence and promotes mastery.

For high-ability learners, scaffolding may involve posing complex challenges that extend their critical thinking, encouraging independent exploration, and prompting reflective thinking. The strategic use of scaffolding ensures that all students remain engaged in learning tasks appropriate to their cognitive levels, supporting a continuum of achievement across the classroom (Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010).

Teachers also adjust their classroom management strategies to accommodate differences in students' abilities. Grouping practices, such as homogeneous or heterogeneous ability grouping, can be used to create learning environments that either challenge high-ability learners or provide targeted support to low-ability learners.

Ability grouping can allow teachers to tailor instruction and provide specific interventions, although care must be taken to avoid stigmatization or reduced self-esteem among low-ability students (Slavin, 1987). In heterogeneous groups, teachers may adopt flexible roles, facilitating peer-assisted learning, encouraging collaborative problem-solving, and promoting mentorship opportunities between high- and low-ability students. Research suggests that well-implemented grouping strategies can enhance engagement and learning outcomes for all students by leveraging peer interactions and promoting differentiated learning opportunities (Lou et al., 1996).

Teachers' emotional support and feedback are also essential components of behavioral adaptations. Positive teacher-student relationships contribute significantly to student motivation, self-efficacy, and resilience (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). High-ability learners may benefit from encouragement to take intellectual risks and pursue independent projects, while low-ability learners often require more frequent reinforcement, reassurance, and recognition of incremental progress.

Constructive feedback, tailored to students' ability levels, guides learners in understanding their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a growth mindset and promoting sustained engagement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The capacity of teachers to provide appropriate emotional and academic support is linked to improved academic performance and overall classroom climate, emphasizing the importance of teacher adaptability.

Furthermore, teachers' expectations and beliefs about students' abilities influence their behavioral adaptations. The Pygmalion effect illustrates that teachers' high expectations can positively impact students' academic outcomes, whereas low expectations can hinder achievement (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). High-ability learners are often given more challenging tasks, greater autonomy, and leadership opportunities in the classroom, reflecting teachers' confidence in their capabilities. Conversely, low-ability learners benefit when teachers demonstrate patience, provide structured guidance, and maintain high but achievable expectations, fostering motivation and persistence (Jussim & Harber, 2005). Teachers' awareness of students' abilities and potential, coupled with adaptive behaviors, is critical in creating equitable learning environments where all students have opportunities to succeed.

The integration of technology in classrooms has further enhanced teachers' ability to adapt their behaviors for different learner abilities. Digital learning platforms allow teachers to offer personalized content, provide immediate feedback, and monitor students' progress in real-time, facilitating data-driven instructional adaptations (Pane et al., 2015).

For high-ability learners, adaptive software can provide accelerated learning paths, enrichment activities, and self-directed challenges. Low-ability learners can benefit from scaffolding features, remedial exercises, and interactive tutorials that reinforce foundational concepts. The combination of teacher behavioral adaptations and technology-enhanced instruction represents a promising approach to meeting the needs of diverse learners in contemporary classrooms.

Despite extensive research on teachers' behavioral adaptations, gaps remain in understanding the long-term impact of these strategies on student outcomes across diverse contexts. Many studies focus on short-term academic performance, while the influence of adaptive teaching on motivation, engagement, and socio-emotional development over time is less explored.

Additionally, cultural, socio-economic, and contextual factors may shape how teachers adapt their behaviors and how students respond to these adaptations (Hattie, 2009). Therefore, ongoing research is needed to identify best practices,

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develop teacher training programs that emphasize adaptive pedagogy, and ensure that all students, regardless of ability, have access to high-quality instruction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT posits that individuals are most motivated when their basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied. Teachers who create an autonomy-supportive classroom environment, characterized by providing choices, acknowledging student perspectives, and minimizing control, can enhance students' intrinsic motivation and academic performance.

2. Expectancy-Value Theory

This theory suggests that students' motivation and achievement are influenced by their expectations of success and the value they place on the task. Teachers' expectations can shape students' self-perceptions and aspirations, thereby influencing their academic outcomes.

3. Teachers' Motivational Behaviors and Their Impact

Teachers' motivational behaviors play a pivotal role in shaping students' academic performance, engagement, and overall development. Motivation is a critical determinant of learning, as it influences students' willingness to participate in classroom activities, invest effort in learning tasks, and persevere through challenges. Teachers serve not only as knowledge providers but also as key facilitators of students' motivation, and their behaviors significantly impact learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Motivational behaviors include strategies that enhance students' interest, confidence, and engagement, such as providing meaningful feedback, setting high but achievable expectations, offering autonomy-supportive instruction, recognizing students' efforts, and fostering a positive classroom climate.

Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory suggests that students are most motivated when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, and teachers' behaviors are central to creating such environments (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

For instance, autonomy-supportive teaching involves providing students with meaningful choices, acknowledging their perspectives, and minimizing controlling behaviors, which promotes intrinsic motivation and encourages students to take ownership of their learning. Conversely, controlling or authoritarian teaching styles, where students are pressured to comply with rigid instructions without input, can undermine motivation and hinder learning outcomes (Reeve, 2006).

Teachers' motivational behaviors also include the ability to inspire curiosity and interest in learning materials. By designing tasks that are relevant, challenging, and engaging, teachers stimulate students' desire to learn, which has been linked to higher achievement and sustained academic effort (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

High-ability learners often respond positively to enrichment activities and advanced tasks that challenge their cognitive capacities, whereas low-ability learners benefit from scaffolded tasks that build confidence and reinforce foundational skills. Effective motivational behaviors involve adapting instruction to the needs of different learners while maintaining high expectations for all, which fosters a sense of competence and self-efficacy.

The Pygmalion effect further emphasizes the importance of teachers' expectations, as students tend to internalize the beliefs and expectations of their teachers, which can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies that influence academic performance (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). When teachers demonstrate confidence in students' abilities, provide consistent encouragement, and maintain high standards, learners are more likely to develop a positive academic self-concept, persist in challenging tasks, and achieve higher levels of performance.

Teachers' feedback practices constitute a critical component of motivational behaviors and significantly influence students' learning outcomes. Feedback that is constructive, timely, and specific helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement, guiding their efforts toward meaningful progress (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Positive reinforcement, recognition of effort, and acknowledgment of achievements can enhance motivation, particularly for students who may struggle with self-confidence or experience repeated academic difficulties. Conversely, negative or overly critical feedback can demotivate students, reduce engagement, and hinder performance. The effectiveness of motivational feedback is also mediated by the relationship between teacher and student; supportive

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and trusting teacher-student relationships amplify the impact of motivational behaviors on learning outcomes (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

Emotional support, warmth, and empathy from teachers create a safe and encouraging learning environment, where students feel valued and capable, which fosters engagement, curiosity, and resilience in the face of academic challenges. Motivational behaviors are further linked to classroom management strategies that create an environment conducive to learning.

Teachers who establish clear behavioral expectations, consistent routines, and an organized classroom structure reduce distractions and allow students to focus on academic tasks, enhancing both motivation and achievement. Moreover, teachers' ability to model enthusiasm, persistence, and a positive attitude toward learning serves as a powerful motivator, as students often emulate the behaviors and attitudes of influential educators (Wentzel, 1997). Motivation in the classroom is not a static phenomenon but rather a dynamic process that can be influenced by teachers' ongoing interactions, instructional strategies, and responsiveness to students' needs.

Research indicates that motivational behaviors have differential effects on high- and low-ability learners. High-ability learners tend to thrive when teachers provide opportunities for exploration, problem-solving, and creativity, which challenge their higher-order thinking skills and sustain intrinsic motivation (Subotnik et al., 2011). Low-ability learners, on the other hand, benefit from encouragement, structured support, and scaffolded instruction that help them experience success and develop self-efficacy.

Teachers' motivational behaviors that emphasize mastery goals, rather than performance comparisons, reduce anxiety, encourage persistence, and promote a growth mindset among all students (Dweck, 2006). By fostering a culture of learning that values effort, progress, and curiosity, teachers can enhance motivation across diverse ability levels.

Furthermore, motivational behaviors are closely tied to student engagement, which mediates the relationship between teacher actions and academic outcomes. Engaged students demonstrate sustained attention, active participation, and emotional investment in learning activities, which contribute to improved understanding, retention, and application of knowledge (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Teachers' ability to promote engagement through motivational strategies directly affects students' learning trajectories and long-term academic success.

In addition, teachers' motivational behaviors extend beyond academic performance to influence socio-emotional development, resilience, and lifelong learning attitudes. Motivated students are more likely to take initiative, set personal learning goals, and persist in the face of challenges, which contribute to the development of self-regulated learning skills (Zimmerman, 2002).

Teachers who actively encourage autonomy, provide meaningful choices, and support students' interests foster intrinsic motivation that persists beyond the classroom. The integration of technology and interactive learning tools further enhances teachers' capacity to implement motivational behaviors by providing adaptive learning experiences, real-time feedback, and personalized challenges that maintain student interest and motivation (Pane et al., 2015).

The cumulative effect of teachers' motivational behaviors is evident in improved academic achievement, increased engagement, enhanced self-efficacy, and the development of positive learning attitudes that extend beyond formal education. Therefore, understanding and promoting effective motivational behaviors among teachers is essential for improving student outcomes, fostering inclusive classrooms, and preparing learners for lifelong success.

Teachers' motivational behaviors encompass a wide range of strategies, including autonomy-supportive instruction, high expectations, constructive feedback, emotional support, and effective classroom management, all of which have profound effects on students' academic performance, engagement, and socio-emotional development. High- and low-ability learners respond differently to specific motivational strategies, highlighting the importance of adaptive and responsive teaching practices. Research consistently demonstrates that teachers' motivational behaviors foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, enhance engagement, and promote academic achievement, self-efficacy, and persistence. By creating supportive and challenging learning environments, teachers serve as catalysts for students' personal, cognitive, and emotional growth, underscoring the critical role of motivational behaviors in educational practice and student success.

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AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE TEACHING

Teachers who adopt autonomy-supportive behaviors such as providing rationale for tasks, offering choices, and acknowledging student perspectives tend to foster greater student engagement and better academic performance. Research indicates that students perceive their teachers' autonomy-supportive behaviors as more motivating, leading to increased engagement and achievement.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

Teachers' expectations can significantly influence student achievement through mechanisms like the Pygmalion effect. When teachers hold high expectations, they are more likely to provide positive reinforcement and support, which can enhance student performance. Teacher expectations are among the most influential factors shaping student learning, motivation, and achievement, encompassing the beliefs and assumptions educators hold about their students' potential and capabilities. These expectations function as a lens through which teachers interpret student behavior, performance, and engagement, ultimately guiding the instructional strategies, feedback, and support they provide.

The concept of teacher expectations is closely associated with the Pygmalion effect, a phenomenon in which teachers' beliefs about students' abilities can create self-fulfilling prophecies, whereby students internalize these beliefs and adjust their performance accordingly (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

High expectations from teachers often result in more positive interactions, greater instructional support, and increased opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks, fostering enhanced academic outcomes. Conversely, low expectations can lead to reduced attention, limited instructional opportunities, and less rigorous academic demands, which may impede student achievement and self-efficacy (Jussim & Harber, 2005).

The impact of teacher expectations is particularly pronounced in heterogeneous classrooms, where students display diverse abilities, prior knowledge, and socio-emotional skills. In such environments, teachers' perceptions of student potential influence not only the type and difficulty of tasks assigned but also the manner and intensity of instructional support provided. For example, high-ability students may be encouraged to pursue independent inquiry, engage in critical thinking, and tackle complex problem-solving tasks, while low-ability students may receive additional scaffolding, step-by-step guidance, and frequent feedback to ensure mastery of foundational concepts (Hattie, 2009).

The interplay between teacher expectations and student outcomes is mediated by multiple factors, including classroom climate, teacher-student relationships, and students' prior achievement and motivation levels. Research suggests that students are highly sensitive to teachers' verbal and non-verbal cues, such as tone of voice, eye contact, and body language, which can communicate expectations implicitly.

Positive reinforcement, recognition of effort, and constructive feedback contribute to an environment in which students perceive their abilities positively and are motivated to exert effort, whereas negative cues, such as dismissive comments or lower levels of engagement with certain students, can undermine confidence and reduce persistence in learning tasks (Harris & Rosenthal, 1985). Teacher expectations also interact with students' self-concept and motivation, shaping their beliefs about their own competence and influencing their approach to learning.

High expectations foster a growth mindset, encouraging students to embrace challenges, persist through difficulties, and view effort as a pathway to mastery (Dweck, 2006). In contrast, low expectations can contribute to learned helplessness, where students feel that their efforts have little impact on outcomes, potentially leading to disengagement and poor academic performance. The effects of teacher expectations extend beyond academic achievement to encompass social-emotional development and classroom behavior.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Teachers' emotional support, characterized by warmth, empathy, and encouragement, can positively affect student motivation and academic outcomes. Studies have shown that students who perceive high levels of emotional support from their teachers exhibit better engagement and achievement.

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MEDIATING FACTORS

Teacher expectations are widely recognized as a critical factor influencing student learning outcomes, motivation, and overall academic achievement. The concept refers to the beliefs and assumptions that teachers hold regarding their students' abilities, potential, and likelihood of success in academic tasks. These expectations, whether high or low, can significantly shape instructional decisions, classroom interactions, and the learning environment. Research has consistently demonstrated that teacher expectations can function as a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby students tend to perform in ways that confirm the beliefs held about them by their teachers (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

When teachers hold high expectations for students, they are more likely to provide challenging tasks, offer supportive feedback, and create opportunities for students to engage in higher-order thinking, all of which contribute to improved academic performance. Conversely, low expectations may result in reduced opportunities for intellectual growth, limited feedback, and less encouragement, potentially hindering students' learning and achievement (Jussim & Harber, 2005).

Teacher expectations are shaped by multiple factors, including prior knowledge of students' academic history, socio-economic background, gender, race, and even classroom behavior. Implicit biases may also influence expectations, often unconsciously, and can lead to differential treatment of students, thereby perpetuating achievement gaps (McKown & Weinstein, 2008). High-ability students frequently benefit from elevated expectations, receiving more complex assignments, additional support for independent learning, and greater autonomy in their academic work.

These expectations encourage students to stretch beyond their current abilities, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and self-regulated learning. On the other hand, low-ability students may be subject to lower expectations, which can limit exposure to challenging content and reduce opportunities for meaningful engagement. The literature suggests that even subtle variations in teacher expectations can have measurable effects on student outcomes, emphasizing the importance of awareness and reflective practice among educators (Rubie-Davies, 2006).

The impact of teacher expectations is not only academic but also socio-emotional; students' self-concept, motivation, and attitude toward learning are influenced by how teachers perceive their potential. Students who internalize high expectations often develop a growth mindset, believing that effort and persistence can lead to improvement, whereas students who experience low expectations may develop fixed mindsets, doubting their ability to succeed and disengaging from challenging tasks (Dweck, 2006).

Teacher expectations also influence classroom interactions and the allocation of teacher attention. Teachers tend to devote more time, provide richer feedback, and engage in more meaningful discussions with students for whom they hold high expectations, while offering less detailed explanations and lower levels of support to students perceived as less capable. This differential treatment can exacerbate learning disparities and affect peer dynamics within the classroom. Moreover, teacher expectations intersect with other instructional strategies, such as differentiated instruction and scaffolding.

High expectations can motivate teachers to implement adaptive teaching techniques that challenge high-ability learners while simultaneously providing appropriate support to low-ability learners, thereby fostering equitable learning opportunities. Conversely, low expectations may limit teachers' willingness to differentiate instruction or provide scaffolding, restricting the academic growth of all students, particularly those who require additional support (Brophy, 1983). Longitudinal studies have highlighted the enduring effects of teacher expectations on student trajectories.

II. CONCLUSION

The relationship between teachers' motivational behaviors and student academic performance is complex and multifaceted. However, existing research consistently highlights the significant role teachers play in shaping student motivation and achievement. Further studies are needed to explore this relationship in diverse educational contexts and among different student populations.

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