

Students' motivation to study and its association with psychological needs support among students of University of Jaffna

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Background: Very little is known about the factors that facilitate or constrain deep involvement in learning among undergraduates in Sri Lanka. There have been no studies on student motivation or the influence of psychological needs support on students' motivation to study at the University of Jaffna. The aim of our study was to describe the level of student motivation and psychological needs support, and to assess the association between motivation level (intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation) and psychological needs support (autonomy, competence and relatedness support) among students of the University of Jaffna.

Methods: A descriptive cross section study was conducted among 471 students of University of Jaffna. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from January to March 2018. The level of motivation was assessed using the Academic Motivational Scale (AMS). The items used to assess psychological needs support were adapted from the Learning Climate Questionnaire. Multistage stratified proportionate simple random sampling was used.

Results: The students of Jaffna University are fairly motivated to study both intrinsically ($M \leq 3.8601$; $SD \leq 0.66194$) and extrinsically ($M \leq 3.9704$; $SD \leq 0.63014$), and feel supported in terms of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Intrinsic motivation was significantly correlated positively with competence support ($r \leq 0.549$; $p < 0.0001$), autonomy support ($r \leq 0.448$; $p < 0.0001$), and relatedness support ($r \leq 0.504$; $p < 0.0001$). Extrinsic motivation significantly correlated positively with competence support ($r \leq 0.554$; $p < 0.0001$), autonomy support ($r \leq 0.421$; $p < 0.0001$), and relatedness support ($r \leq 0.448$; $p < 0.0001$).

Conclusion: The results support self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) which postulates that autonomy, relatedness and competence support are important drivers of student motivation.

Key words – Motivation, University of Jaffna, psychological needs support