Students' Perceptions About Motivating Factors Related to Teachers' Behavior at Secondary School Level

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ABSTRACT

Motivation plays an important role in students' performance since they consider teachers as role models. This study was designed to investigate students' perceptions about motivating factors that relate to teachers' behavior at secondary school level. The sample comprised 500 secondary school students of 10th class (male=250, female=250) who were selected on convenience basis. The data were collected through a questionnaire which contained 48 items, each at five-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The instrument was pilot tested and Cronbach Alpha reliability was established at 0.72. Results revealed that teacher-student relationship was considered as highly motivating. Also, there was a significant difference in male and female students' perceptions about teachers' personality, classroom environment and learning resources, and collegial support. On the other hand, no significant difference was found in male and female students' perceptions about the nature of teacher-student relationship, teachers' professional competence and commitment, reward and punishment.

Introduction

Teachers play an important role in helping students to learn. One of the critical issues in teaching learning process is the role of motivation during learning. Some psychologists view motivation as a study of goal directed behavior (e.g., Adelman & Taylor, 1990). Motivation plays a

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vital role in a student's learning. Students find it easier to learn when they want to learn, but they struggle with the content in which they are not interested.

Perception is the ability to understand and interpret something through the information collected through different senses. Tynjala (1997) states that, "perception is more than an observation, thinking, much more than the awareness of things by means of the senses". According to Struyven, Dochy and Janssens (2003), perception involves all acts through which people give 'meaning' and 'concept' to their surrounding world. Students can have perceptions about education system, behaviour, examination system, learning material, teaching methodology, as well as about teachers, parents, and administrators etc.

Motivation and Students' Learning

The term motivation is derived from the Latin verb "movers" which means 'to move'. Motivation is a process that initiates, guides and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. It can be considered as a driving force, one that reinforces a person for action toward a desired goal. Motivation is considered as driving force for the students in their academic life.

Oxford and Shearin (1994) argued that motivation is a complex construct to define. Different theorists have defined motivation in different ways with little agreement. Adelmen and Taylor (1990) perceive motivation as a driving force which drives the learners to try to solve their problems and improve their learning and achievements". According to Fisher (1990), three broad areas of motivation are explored in educational psychology including, a) the personal interest of learner and intrinsic satisfaction, b) the teacher/ institution/employment and extrinsic reward, and c) successful completion of tasks.

Motivation can be divided into two categories including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation involves rewards such as money, social gratitude, honour and trophies so that the performance of the individual can be increased. Dev (1997) argued that students engage in learning either to attain a reward or avoid punishment. However, when they are internally motivated to learn and solve complex problems, then this type of motivation is termed as intrinsic motivation. A student who is internally motivated does not require any type of rewards to accomplish a task. Huitt (2011) emphasized that there are numerous

ways for teachers to increase the motivation level of their students. Ministry of Information (2010) stressed that classroom environment plays an important role for motivating students to learn.

Teachers' motivation is a key element in triggering students' motivation. Unmotivated teachers cannot increase students' motivation. Teachers, who are motivated, have different characteristics and behaviors when compared with the teachers who are not motivated. Motivating teachers tend to create a positive, optimistic, warm-hearted classroom where learning is emphasized. Ames (1990) reviewed scholarly research on teachers' motivation and highlighted eight general instructional strategies to increase students' engagement and motivation during learning. These include: using extrinsic rewards, goal setting, encouraging social cooperation, developing students' self-confidence and offering choice, developing circumstantial interest and championships. Choice of tasks or activities is related to increased personal control, interest, and involvement in learning. Deci and Ryan (1985) stated that reinforcement encourages students to make choices and become self-regulated learners.

Ormrod (2010) stated that students' behavior and learning is influenced in a variety of ways through motivation. First, motivation directs students' behavior towards particular learning goals. It influences and regulates specific goals towards learning. It also helps students in deciding to perform a challenging task, thus, their energy and effort during learning is increased. In effect, learners like to engage in different activities which are directly related to their desired needs and goals. Motivation also determines specific abilities of the students whether they can accomplish a task successfully or not. Second, motivation brings consistency in different activities. Learners like to do their intended tasks and they wish to complete these tasks without any interruption. It increases students' concentration on their task. In this way, students' learning and achievement are positively influenced. Third, cognitive processes such as attention and productivity are also affected by motivation. The motivated students tend to develop conceptual knowledge in classrooms and apply this knowledge outside classrooms to solve real world problems. Fourth, motivation leads to various factors which reinforce certain behaviors. The learners feel proud if they achieve higher grades in exams and vice-versa. Similarly, if the learners perform well in academics, they are given respect by their peers, teachers, and other members of the society. Fifth, students' performance is influenced by motivation while other factors just help to identify effort and energy,

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goal directed behavior, consistency and commencement and cognitive processes. Overall, motivation helps to improve the performance of learners.

While motivation enhances students' learning, de-motivation diminishes or reduces the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or action. De-motivation often outplays motivation during the process of learning. It is also observed that the students who are less motivated take less interest in learning. Consequently, they fail to actively participate in the learning process. Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that de-motivation is not only related to lack of interest. Other important reasons for de-motivation include personal experiences and lack of appropriate skills to accomplish a task/goal. Similarly, outcomes expectation is another major causes of gradual decrease in motivation level of an individual.

According to Dornyei (2005), de-motivation contains specific external forces that reduce or devalue the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action. However, it is important to remain cautious that the meaning of de-motivation is not misinterpreted. De-motivation does not mean that all the positive aspects of motivation suddenly disappear. Rather, it is regarded as a strong negative factor that significantly influences the motivation level of an individual while other positive drives of the individual are yet to be stimulated. Yan (2009) argued that it is a very complex task to find the causes of de-motivation. However, teachers can certainly influence the motivation of students in positive or negative ways.

Oxford (1998) identified a number of factors that de-motivate students. Some of them include: lack of care, favoritism, lack of passion, interest and enthusiasm while teaching; students' behavior and classroom learning environment. According to Christensen and Menzel (1998), the motivation level of students can be increased with the help of linear relationship between students and teachers.

Gorhama and Milletteb (2009) explored the factors affecting the motivation and de-motivation level of students. They concluded that a majority of students perceive themselves as internally motivated, whereas they attributed their de-motivation to the behavior of the teachers. The teachers, who were optimistic in their approach, had greater influence on the motivation and de-motivation level of the students. Likewsie, Gorham and Christophel (1992) identified different factors of motivation and de-motivation that relate to teachers' behavior.

If the teacher is bored, unprepared and unorganized; dislikes the subject, uses poor material in teaching and is biased; then this is the major cause of students' de-motivation. This study offered an insight about the role of teachers in students' motivation.

Chambers (1993) conducted a study on the factors that affect students' motivation and de-motivation. He administered a questionnaire on 191 students as well as teachers. According to the teachers, the learning process was not affected by teachers' de-motivation; rather the main reasons which affect students' performance during learning include a lack of belief in their capabilities, laziness and unwillingness. However, students' perceptions were different from the teachers. They considered teachers as the main cause of their de-motivation because the teachers failed to explain different aspects of subjects effectively while teaching. Students also pointed out that their teachers used poor materials during lecture, which is another cause of de-motivation. Other reasons include class size and language. This discussion clearly indicates that teachers' perceptions about de-motivating factors were totally different when compared with students' perceptions. Chambers further suggested that students can be motivated if the teachers and students effectively communicate with each other.

This study examined students' perceptions about factors related to teachers' behavior that influence their motivation at secondary school level. The researchers examined students' perceptions because they could be important sources of information about what happens in classrooms. Students' feedback at secondary level adds value for teachers and administrators alike in their efforts to improve teaching and learning.

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of secondary grade students about their teachers' motivational strategies. However, the study has also noticed some of the key de-motivating factors which hinder students' learning. Based on this objective, following research questions were posed for the study.

1. What are the perceptions of secondary grade students regarding motivating factors for their learning?

2. What is the difference in male and female students' perceptions about motivating factors?

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Methodology

This study was undertaken to examine students' perceptions about motivating factors related to their teachers' behavior at secondary school level. The research was descriptive in nature. It was basically a small survey carried out in the secondary schools of Lahore, Pakistan. The researchers selected 10 government schools of which five were boys and five were girls' schools on convenient basis. From each school, 50 students were selected as a sample of study leading to a total sample of 500 students.

The researchers used questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The items were developed on a 5-point rating scale. There were 48 items in the questionnaire. The five-point rating scale was: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Undecided (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5).

The researchers identified key factors that motivate students, through a review of related literature and questions were developed against each factor. These include: teachers' personality, classroom environment, learning resources, teachers' relationship with students, reward and punishment, teachers' professional competence and commitment, and collegial support. A total of 11 items in the questionnaire related to teachers' personality, seven items to classroom environment, eight items to learning resources, nine items to teacher-student relationship, eight items to rewards and punishments and five items related to teachers' professional competence and commitment, and collegial support.

The questionnaire was also translated into Urdu so that the participants who do not have a good command of English language may not face any difficulty in responding to the questions. To ensure the compatibility between English and Urdu versions of the questionnaire, 'forward and backward method of translation' was adopted by involving two experts having expertise in Urdu and English language. Furthermore, the researchers consulted three experts for validation purposes of the research instrument. The instrument was piloted on a sample of 50 students to determine reliability. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the final questionnaire was established at 0.72 which allowed the researchers to collect data at a larger scale.

The data were collected through questionnaires from 10 government schools of Lahore Cantt, including five boys and five girls' schools. The students from Grade 9 and 10 participated in this study.

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Table 1

Sample Description with Respect to Gender (Male and Female) (N=500)

Sr.#	Gender	N	Percentage
1	Male	250	50.0
2	Female	250	50.0
	Total	500	100.0

Table 1 shows that the sample comprised equal representation of both genders i.e. 50% male students and 50% female students. It is important to note that the researchers tried to include students from different streams in the sample i.e., arts, science, and computer. Almost same number of students was included in the sample from these three streams.

The researchers collected data after seeking permission from the heads of the schools. Uniform procedures were followed during the administration of the questionnaires. The students were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire; however, caution was taken not to permit students to discuss or copy each others' responses while filling questionnaires. The participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential in compliance with the research ethics.

Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 19. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used according to the nature of data. The responses were appropriately interpreted. Consequently, the results are presented in the form of percentages, frequencies, and Independent Sample t-test.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the motivating factors that are related to teachers' behavior. The mean score values for teachers' professional competence and commitment (M = 3.89), and collegial support (M = 3.81) indicate that secondary school students consider these as critical motivating factors. However, teachers' collegial support received the lowest mean score among all factors. This implies that the participants perceived that teachers' good relations with other teachers have no effect on their learning. On the other hand, most of the respondents perceive that teacher's personality is an important motivating factor (M = 3.97). It implies that teachers' personality influences students' motivation in positive ways. Similarly, classroom environment

and learning recourses (M = 3.85) are perceived as significant factors that positively affect students' motivation at secondary school level.

Table 2

Description of Data Across Major Motivating Factors (N=500)

Sr.#	Factors	Mean	SD
1	Teachers' personality	3.97	0.737
2	Classroom environment and learning recourses	3.85	0.770
3	Teachers' relationship with students	4.08	0.814
4	Reward and punishment	4.02	0.782
5	Teacher professional competence and commitment	3.89	0.794
6	Collegial support	3.81	0.742

A major factor that influence students' motivation is the use of reward and punishment by the teacher (M = 4.02). One of the most significant evidence surfaced for teachers' relationship with students as a motivating factor for secondary school students with a mean score of 4.08. In fact, this is the highest mean score for all six motivating factors related to teacher's behavior. So, it can be implied that most of the secondary school students perceive positive teacher-student relationships as a motivating factor.

Overall, the participants of our study perceived teacher's personality, classroom environment and learning resources, teacher's relationship with students, reward and punishment, teacher's professional competence and commitment, and collegial support as major factors that influence their motivation in positive ways. However, teacher-student relationship was perceived as the greatest motivating factor by secondary school students.

The second research question of our study examined if there is any difference between male and female students' perceptions about motivating factors that relate to teachers' behavior at secondary school level.

Table 3 indicates the gender-wise students' difference in the perceptions of the sampled secondary grade students. The results of Independent Sample t-test reveal that mean scores of female students are significantly higher than that of male students on four of the six

motivating factors i.e., teachers' personality, classroom environment and learning resources, reward and punishment, and collegial support.

Table 3

Difference in Students' Perceived Motivating Factors with Respect to Gender (N=500)

Factor	Gender	N	M	SD	df	t-value
Teachers' personality	Male	250	3.84	0.88	498	-3.86**
	Female	250	4.09	0.52		
Classroom environment and learning resources	Male	250	3.82	0.90	498	-.778**
	Female	250	3.88	0.60		
Teachers' relationship with students	Male	250	4.08	0.89	498	0.082
	Female	250	4.08	0.72		
Reward and punishment	Male	250	3.91	0.88	498	-3.136**
	Female	250	4.13	0.63		
Teachers' professional competence and commitment	Male	250	3.90	0.83	498	0.079
	Female	250	3.90	0.75		
Collegial support	Male	250	3.76	.83	498	-1.615**
	Female	250	3.87	.63		

*Note. **p< 0.01, *p<0.05*

It is indicated that female students' mean score ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 0.52$) is significantly higher than that of males ($M =3.84$, $SD = 0.88$) on teachers' personality as motivating factor t (498) = 3.86, $p<$ .001. Regarding classroom environment and learning resources, this difference was significant, t (498) = -.77, $p < $ .001. Female students ($M = 3.88$, $SD = $ .60) scored higher than male students ($M = 3.82$, $SD = $ .90). The mean difference was significant, t (498) = -3.13, $p<$ .001 for reward and punishment as well. Female students ($M = 4.13$, SD = .63) scored higher than male students ($M = 3.91$, $SD = $ .88). Additionally, female students ($M = 3.87$, SD = .63) scored higher than their counterparts ($M = 3.76$, $SD = $ .83) on collegial support. This difference was significant, t (498) = -1.61, $p<$ .001. Both the groups did not differ significantly on teachers' relationship with students and teachers' professional competence and commitment.

The table indicates that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of males and females towards the second factor "Classroom Environment and Learning Resources". This is also evident from the mean scores of male and female respondents (M=3.82, F= 3.88).

Third factor "Teachers' Relationship with Students" identify that there is no significant difference (p<0.05) between male and female perceptions. This is also evident from the mean scores of male and female respondents (M=4.08, F=4.08). The mean score of the fourth factor "Reward and Punishment" indicate that there was a significant difference (p>0.05) between males and females perceptions with respect to gender. This is also evident from the values of mean scores for both male and female students (M= 3.91, F=4.13).

Table 3 also reveals that there was no difference in the perception of males and females about fifth factor "Teachers' professional competence and commitment". This is also evident from the mean values (M=3.90, F=3.90). As regards the sixth factor "Collegial support", it was found that there was no significant difference between male and female perceptions. This is also evident from the mean scores of male female respondents (M=3.76, F=3.87).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the highest motivating factor is Teachers' Relationship with Students. There is no significant difference between males and females perceptions about motivating factors like Teacher's personality, classroom environment and learning recourses, reward and punishment, and collegial support. There is no significant difference in males and females perception about Teacher's relationship with students, and teacher's professional competence and commitment as motivating factors.

The scope of the study was limited to the public sector secondary classrooms and selected factors of motivation. Therefore, the researchers suggest some suggestions for further researchers. The work may be further extended on exploring other motivating and de-motivating factors which affect teachers' behaviour towards study. Therefore, it is recommended that;

- Teachers may use different types of motivational strategies in their classrooms. They should design activities to enhance the

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students' learning.

- Teachers should be a role model which enhances students' interest in learning.

- Teachers should show mutual cooperation with their colleagues because students copy their behavior and take them as role models.

- Further research should be conducted to determine the perceptions of private school students about motivating and de-motivating factors to see the difference between public and private secondary school students in the country.

- The present study was conducted with a sample of 500 respondents, which was rather a small sample to generalize the findings; hence a large survey may be conducted at divisional or provincial levels.

- The present study was conducted in secondary schools. This relationship may be investigated about the motivating and de-motivating factors that influence students' learning at higher education level.

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