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THE IMPACT OF ONLINE LEARNING ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

Abstract: This study examines the impact of online learning on university students' academic motivation. The research focuses on students' engagement, participation, and perceived effectiveness of online instruction. A quantitative survey was conducted among undergraduate students to identify key factors influencing motivation in virtual learning environments. The results show that while online learning provides flexibility and supports independent learning, it also presents challenges related to reduced interaction and technical difficulties, which may negatively affect motivation. The findings suggest that a blended learning model may be more effective in supporting students' academic engagement.

Keywords: online learning, academic motivation, higher education, student engagement, digital learning environment

Introduction

In recent years, digital technologies have become an essential part of higher education. Online platforms, virtual classrooms and digital learning materials are now widely used to support teaching and learning processes. This rapid development has significantly changed the traditional organization of university education and the way students interact with learning content and instructors. Academic motivation plays a central role in students' learning success. It influences their level of engagement, persistence and academic performance. When students are motivated, they are more likely to participate actively in classes, complete learning tasks and take responsibility for their own learning. However, the learning environment can strongly affect students' motivational levels. Although online learning provides flexibility and access to a wide range of educational resources, it may also reduce direct interaction between students and teachers and increase feelings of isolation. These factors may influence students' interest and commitment to learning. Therefore, it is important to examine how online learning affects university students' academic motivation. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of online learning on students' academic motivation and to identify the key factors that influence their learning engagement in an online environment.

Methods

This study was conducted during the 2025–2026 academic year among undergraduate students studying at a higher education institution. A total of 78 students from the first, second and third years of study participated in the research. A quantitative research design was adopted. Data were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of 12 items focusing on students' interest in online classes, perceived effectiveness of online learning, level of participation during online lessons, self-reported

motivation to complete assignments, and challenges faced during online learning. Most of the questions were based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to

“strongly agree”. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to summarize the collected data and identify general trends in students’ responses. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their answers would be used only for academic purposes.

Results

The results of the survey indicate that students have mixed attitudes toward online learning. Forty-six percent of the respondents stated that online learning increased their flexibility and helped them manage their study time more effectively. However, only 34% of students reported that online classes were as motivating as traditional face-to-face lessons. More than half of the participants (57%) reported a decrease in their level of concentration during online lectures. In addition, 61% of students indicated that they felt less motivated to participate in discussions and group activities in virtual classrooms. At the same time, 49% of the respondents agreed that access to recorded lectures and digital materials positively supported their independent learning. Nevertheless, technical problems and unstable internet connection were reported by 38% of students as a significant barrier to effective learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that online learning offers important benefits such as flexibility and easy access to learning resources. These results are consistent with previous research indicating that digital environments can promote self-directed learning and autonomy. However, the decrease in motivation and classroom engagement reported by many participants suggests that the lack of direct social interaction may negatively affect students’ emotional involvement in learning. Face-to-face communication with instructors and peers often plays an important role in maintaining attention, interest and academic commitment. Another important issue identified in this study is the influence of technical difficulties on motivation. Students who experience frequent internet problems or limited access to digital devices are more likely to lose interest and feel frustrated during online lessons.

Conclusion

The present study shows that online learning has both positive and negative effects on university students’ academic motivation. While flexibility and access to digital resources support independent learning, reduced interaction and technical challenges may lower students’ engagement and motivation. Therefore, online learning should not fully replace traditional classroom instruction. A blended learning approach that combines online and face-to-face teaching is more likely to enhance students’ academic motivation and learning outcomes. Future research should involve larger samples and examine the relationship between online learning and academic performance in greater depth.

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