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A Study on the Academic Motivation of Secondary School Students in Lalgola Block, Murshidabad District, West Bengal

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Abstract: *Academic motivation is a critical psychological construct that directs students' energy toward learning goals, sustains effort, and shapes the quality of cognitive engagement. This study investigated the academic motivation of Class VIII secondary school students in Lalgola Block of Murshidabad district, West Bengal. A stratified random sample of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls; 100 rural and 100 urban) was selected from five government and government-aided schools. Academic motivation was measured using the Academic Motivation Questionnaire developed by Dr. D. Bhattacharya, while academic achievement was operationalised as aggregate marks in the last Annual Examination. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square goodness-of-fit, independent-samples t-tests, Pearson correlation and simple linear regression were employed. Results indicated that motivation scores were approximately normally distributed ($\chi^2 = 3.072$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.800$). No statistically significant gender ($t = 1.655$, $p > 0.05$) or locale ($t = 1.003$, $p > 0.05$) differences were found. A moderate positive correlation existed between academic motivation and achievement ($r = 0.3245$, $p < 0.01$). The regression equation $Y = 0.444X + 436.358$ was derived for predictive purposes. Findings reaffirm the importance of fostering academic motivation and suggest that gender and rural–urban location are not major determinants of motivation in this localised context. Implications for classroom practice and directions for future research are discussed.*

Keywords: *Academic Motivation; Secondary School Students; Gender Differences; Rural–Urban Locale; Academic Achievement; Murshidabad; West Bengal.*

1. Introduction: Children differ in their potentialities for learning, and achievement must be judged in relation to those capacities. Education remains society's principal instrument for transmitting culture, values and modes of behaviour (Wall, 1968). Within this developmental process, academic motivation occupies a central place. It comprises the internal and external forces that direct a student's energy toward academic tasks, sustain effort in the face of difficulty, and influence the depth of cognitive engagement with learning material. Without adequate motivation, even well-designed curricula and competent teachers may fail to produce optimal outcomes.

Motivation affects the choices students make, the effort they expend, the persistence they display, and the cognitive strategies they employ. Motivated learners are more likely to attend carefully, seek deeper understanding, monitor their own comprehension and request help when needed. Thus academic motivation is both a cause and a consequence of academic success, forming a reciprocal relationship that educators must understand and nurture.

Despite extensive research, empirical evidence regarding the distribution of academic motivation among secondary school students in the specific socio-cultural setting of Lalgola Block, Murshidabad, and its relationship with gender, locale and achievement remains limited. Earlier Indian studies have produced mixed findings on gender and locale differences, while the strength of the motivation–achievement correlation varies across samples and instruments. The present investigation therefore addresses the following problem: "A Study on the Academic Motivation of Secondary School Students."

1.1 Objectives of the Study: The specific objectives were:

1. To test whether Academic Motivation scores of secondary school students deviate from a normal distribution.
2. To determine whether gender has any significant effect on Academic Motivation scores.
3. To investigate whether locale (urban or rural) significantly impacts Academic Motivation scores.
4. To examine whether Academic Motivation scores correlate significantly with total academic achievement.

1.2 Hypotheses: Four null hypotheses were formulated:

$H_0$1: Academic Motivation scores of secondary school students are not normally distributed.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in Academic Motivation due to gender variation.

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference in Academic Motivation due to locale variation.

$H_0$4: There is no significant relationship between Academic Motivation and total academic achievement.

1.3 Conceptual Framework: The study is informed by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000), Achievement Goal Theory (Dweck, 1986; Ames, 1992), Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983) and Social-Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997). These perspectives collectively frame academic motivation as a multidimensional construct shaped by autonomy, mastery orientation, expectancy and value beliefs, and self-efficacy.

Figure 1. Conceptual Mind Map of Academic Motivation and Related Constructs

ACADEMIC MOTIVATION (Central Construct)			
Intrinsic Factors	**Extrinsic Factors**	**Contextual Factors**	**Outcomes**
• Interest & Enjoyment• Self-efficacy• Mastery Goals	• Rewards & Approval• Educational Aspiration• Professional Aspiration	• Teacher Support• Classroom Climate• Home Environment	• Persistence• Deep Learning• Academic Achievement
Moderating Variables: Gender | Locale (Rural / Urban) | Socio-cultural Context of Murshidabad			

2. Review of Related Literature: The relationship between motivation and academic achievement has been extensively examined in both Indian and international contexts. In India, Reddy (1990) found no significant relationship between achievement motivation and academic achievement among 1,340 Karnataka students. Ahmed (1998) reported no significant gender difference in achievement motivation among Mumbai adolescents. Panda and Jena (2000) observed that parental educational qualification was positively related to students' achievement motivation. Sidhu and Parminder (2005) likewise found no statistically significant

effect of achievement motivation on scholastic achievement. In contrast, Gupta and Mili (2016) reported a significant positive relationship between academic motivation and achievement among Class IX students in Assam, together with differences between high and low achievers.

International studies have generally supported a positive link. Chowdhury et al. (2007) found both intrinsic (r = .327) and extrinsic (r = .251) motivation positively related to achievement among Bangladeshi college students. Green et al. (2012) demonstrated that academic motivation and self-concept predicted school attitudes, engagement and subsequent performance in Australian high-school students. Meta-analytic work by Bureau et al. (2021) highlighted teacher autonomy support as a stronger predictor of self-determined motivation than parental support, while Jansen et al. (2022) showed that both student and instructional variables contribute substantially to academic motivation in K-12 education.

Overall, the literature underscores the multidimensional nature of academic motivation. Gender differences are frequently non-significant or small; rural–urban differences appear inconsistent and may depend more on schooling quality than geography. The present study contributes localised evidence from Murshidabad to this body of knowledge.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Design, Population and Sample: A descriptive survey design with correlational elements was adopted. The population comprised all Class VIII students in government and government-aided secondary schools of Lalgola Block, Murshidabad district, West Bengal. A stratified random sample of 200 students was drawn—100 boys and 100 girls, equally distributed between rural (n = 100) and urban (n = 100) schools. Five schools were selected: two exclusively for boys, two exclusively for girls, and one co-educational institution, covering both rural and urban locations.

3.2 Tools and Procedure: Academic motivation was measured by the Academic Motivation Questionnaire developed by Dr. D. Bhattacharya, a five-point scale covering six dimensions: studies at home, activities at home, achievement in school, educational aspiration, professional aspiration, and liking for teachers. Higher total scores indicate higher motivation. Academic achievement was operationalised as the aggregate marks obtained in the last Annual Examination, obtained from school records. After securing institutional permission, the questionnaire was administered during regular school hours with assurances of confidentiality. Data were cleaned and analysed using descriptive statistics (Mean, SD, Skewness, Kurtosis), Chi-square goodness-of-fit, independent-samples t-tests, Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression. The significance level was set at 0.05 (and 0.01 where relevant).

4. Results

4.1 Normality of Academic Motivation Scores (H_o1): Descriptive statistics for the total sample (N = 200) yielded a mean of 67.325 (SD = 10.371). Skewness (0.042) and excess kurtosis (–0.340) were both close to zero. The Chi-square goodness-of-fit test produced $\chi^2 = 3.072$ (df = 6, p = 0.800). Since $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis that the scores are not normally distributed was rejected; the distribution may be regarded as approximately normal.

Table 1. Test of Normality of Academic Motivation Scores (N = 200)

Statistic	Obtained Value	Interpretation
Mean	67.325	Central tendency
Standard Deviation	10.371	Moderate variability

Skewness	0.042	Near symmetry
Excess Kurtosis	–0.340	Near normal peakedness
Chi-square (χ^2)	3.072 (df = 6)	p = 0.800 (> 0.05)
Decision	**Normality accepted**	**H_o1 rejected**

4.2 Gender Difference (H_o2): Girls obtained a slightly higher mean score (M = 68.50, SD = 10.786) than boys (M = 66.10, SD = 9.733). The mean difference of 2.40 was not statistically significant (t = 1.655, df ≈ 198, p > 0.05). Consequently H_o2 was retained: gender does not significantly influence academic motivation in the present sample.

Table 2. Comparison of Academic Motivation Scores by Gender

Statistic	Girls (N = 100)	Boys (N = 100)
Mean	68.50	66.10
S.D.	10.786	9.733
t-value	**1.655 (ns)**	

Note: ns = not significant at the 0.05 level.

4.3 Locale Difference (H_o3): Urban students recorded a marginally higher mean (M = 67.60, SD = 10.320) than rural students (M = 66.10, SD = 10.825). The difference of 1.50 points was not significant (t = 1.003, p > 0.05). H_o3 was therefore retained: locale does not significantly affect academic motivation among the sampled students.

Table 3. Comparison of Academic Motivation Scores by Locale

Statistic	Rural (N = 100)	Urban (N = 100)
Mean	66.10	67.60
S.D.	10.825	10.320
t-value	**1.003 (ns)**	

Note: ns = not significant at the 0.05 level.

4.4 Relationship with Academic Achievement (H_o4): Pearson's product-moment correlation between Academic Motivation scores and aggregate marks was r = 0.3245 (N = 200), significant at the 0.01 level. The relationship is positive and of moderate magnitude. H_o4 was rejected. Sub-group correlations remained positive and significant: boys (r = 0.445), girls (r = 0.375), rural (r = 0.319) and urban (r = 0.473). The simple linear regression equation predicting aggregate marks (Y) from motivation score (X) was:

Y = 0.444 X + 436.358

with an estimated standard error of approximately 13.24. Teachers may use this equation cautiously as a rough forecasting tool.

Figure 2. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Outcomes

Hypothesis	Test Statistic	p-value / Decision	Implication
$H_0$1 (Normality)	$\chi^2 = 3.072$	p = 0.800 Rejected	Scores approx. normal
$H_0$2 (Gender)	t = 1.655	p > 0.05 Retained	No gender difference
$H_0$3 (Locale)	t = 1.003	p > 0.05 Retained	No locale difference
$H_0$4 (Correlation)	r = 0.3245	p < 0.01 Rejected	Significant positive link

5. Discussion: The approximate normality of Academic Motivation scores supports the use of parametric techniques and is consistent with the distribution of many psychological variables in reasonably large samples. The absence of significant gender differences aligns with earlier Indian findings (Ahmed, 1998) and with a substantial body of international research indicating that overall academic motivation at the secondary level is not strongly differentiated by sex. While girls recorded a slightly higher mean, the difference lacked practical and statistical significance in this context.

Similarly, the non-significant rural–urban difference suggests that, within the sampled schools of Lalgola Block, geographical location per se is less influential than the quality of schooling, teacher support and home environment. This observation resonates with critical reviews noting that locale effects are often mediated by institutional and familial resources rather than by rurality or urbanity alone.

The significant positive correlation between motivation and achievement (r = 0.3245) corroborates national and international evidence (Chowdhury et al., 2007; Gupta & Mili, 2016; Green et al., 2012; Bureau et al., 2021). Although moderate in magnitude, the relationship proved robust across gender and locale sub-groups, underscoring the practical value of interventions that nurture students' willingness to engage, persist and learn deeply. The derived regression equation offers teachers a concrete, if approximate, tool for identifying students who may benefit from motivational support.

6. Conclusion and Educational Implications: This study examined academic motivation among Class VIII students in Lalgola Block, Murshidabad. Motivation scores were approximately normally distributed; neither gender nor locale produced statistically significant differences; and a moderate, positive, statistically significant relationship existed between academic motivation and aggregate academic achievement. These findings reaffirm the importance of academic motivation as a contributor to educational success and indicate that, in the present localised context, demographic variables of gender and rural–urban location are not major determinants of overall motivational level.

Practical recommendations for educators and policy-makers include:

- Encouraging goal-setting, self-monitoring and help-seeking to promote self-regulated learning.
- Fostering autonomy-supportive classroom climates that enhance students' sense of ownership.
- Strengthening parental involvement through regular communication and shared goal-setting.
- Promoting a growth mindset by framing challenges as opportunities for development.
- Providing constructive, timely feedback and opportunities for collaborative learning.

Limitations of the study include the restriction to a single block and a single grade, the modest sample size, the exclusive use of total motivation scores, and the cross-sectional design. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, analyse the separate dimensions of the motivation questionnaire, incorporate longitudinal designs, and examine additional variables such as self-efficacy, parental education and teacher support. Interventions designed to enhance academic motivation also merit systematic evaluation.

In conclusion, academic motivation remains a vital lever for improving educational outcomes. By creating supportive environments, offering meaningful autonomy and strengthening home–school partnerships, schools can help students realise their academic potential more fully.

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