



Apathy in Academic Study: A Case Study of a University Student Exhibiting Parental-Driven Academic Motivation

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Abstract

Concern over student disengagement in higher education is growing, especially in situations where family expectations have a significant impact on academic decisions. This case study examines the academic, psychological, and behavioral traits of a male undergraduate student who exhibits open opposition to his course of study, poor self-care, and a continuous lack of interest in exams. The student states clearly that he enrolled mostly to fulfill his parents' expectations rather than to pursue his own goals. This study investigates the relationships between academic performance, identity conflict, and extrinsic motivation through qualitative observations and informal interviews. The results emphasize the detrimental effects of externally imposed academic pathways, such as emotional distress, lower academic achievement, and a higher chance of dropout. The study offers evidence-based intervention techniques, such as academic counselling, parental engagement, and institutional policy reforms, and also explores culturally relevant elements that affect student motivation. The necessity of a student-centered strategy in higher education systems is highlighted by this case, especially in developing nations where familial influence is still significant.

Keywords: case study, higher education, parental influence, intrinsic motivation, academic motivation, student disengagement

Abbreviations: SDT: self-determination theory

1. Introduction

A key factor in determining a student's performance is academic motivation, which affects learning results, perseverance, and psychological health. In general, there are two types of motivation: extrinsic motivation, which is driven by rewards or demands from outside sources, and intrinsic motivation, which is driven by engaging in an activity for its own sake [1]. Intrinsic motivation has been repeatedly linked to deeper learning, creativity, and long-term academic achievement, even if both types can affect academic behavior.

Parental influence is a major factor in determining students' educational and career choices in many communities, especially in developing nations. Because of their perceived prestige and financial stability, occupations like medicine, law, engineering, and laboratory sciences are frequently given priority in Nigeria and similar settings. On the other hand,

students may experience psychological distress, resistance, and disengagement if they are forced to take courses that are not in line with their interests [2].

Poor academic performance, absenteeism, lack of participation, and neglect of personal obligations are just a few ways that student disengagement shows up. In severe circumstances, it could result in long-term dissatisfaction with employment outcomes or resignation from academic programs [3].

This study provides a thorough case study of a college student who clearly shows indicators of disengagement due to parental pressure. By analyzing this scenario, the study hopes to advance knowledge of motivational dynamics in higher education and offer useful suggestions for teachers, parents, and legislators.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, which allows for an in-depth exploration of individual behavior within a real-life context.

2.2 Participant description

The subject is a male undergraduate student enrolled in a faculty of health science-based program at Imo State University. He is in his early twenties and comes from a family that strongly values professional careers.

2.3 Ethical considerations

The identity of the student has been anonymized to protect confidentiality. Observations were conducted in a non-intrusive manner, and no harm was inflicted on the participant.

2.4 Data collection methods

Data was collected through direct classroom observation, informal discussions with the student, and reports from lecturers and peers.

3. Results

The student demonstrated a consistent lack of interest in academic activities, particularly examinations. He openly stated that he had no intention of excelling academically.

The student frequently appeared with unkempt hair and untidy clothing. This behavior may reflect underlying psychological distress or reduced self-worth.

During informal conversations, the student stated:

“I am not interested in this course. I am only here because of my parents. My interest is to study Computer Science.”

This statement highlights the absence of intrinsic motivation. The student rarely participated in lectures, showed little interest in assignments, and maintained irregular attendance (Table 1).

Category	Observed behavior
Academic apathy	Persistent lack of interest in academic activities, especially examinations; openly expressed no intention to excel academically.
Poor personal grooming	Frequently appeared disheveled, with unkempt hair and untidy clothing.
Verbal expression of disinterest	Stated: “I am not interested in this course. I am only here because of my parents. My interest is to study Computer Science.”
Minimal academic engagement	Rarely participated in lectures, showed little interest in assignments, and had irregular attendance

Table 1: Case presentation of observed behaviors and characteristics of the student.

4. Discussion

The student's actions demonstrate a clear mismatch between externally imposed academic expectations and his intrinsic drive. According to self-determination theory (SDT), autonomy is a basic psychological need; when it is restricted, as it was in this instance, motivation, engagement, and general academic performance are severely harmed. The implications of externally controlled behaviour devoid of personal significance or relevance are highlighted by the student's overt lack of enthusiasm in his course of study [4].

Additionally, the student seems to be dealing with identity conflict, a developmental issue that frequently arises in late adolescence and early adulthood. Internal conflict, low self-efficacy, and a lessened feeling of purpose might result from being forced to follow an undesirable academic path, which can interfere with the process of identity building. His academic disinterest is mostly caused by this mismatch between his own goals and the expectations that have been placed upon him [5].

In addition to overall apathy, the observable disregard for personal grooming may also point to underlying psychological or emotional discomfort. These behaviors are often linked to depressive tendencies, low self-esteem, and withdrawal from social and academic duties, although they are not diagnostic in and of themselves. These symptoms should be closely monitored since they may indicate more serious mental health issues that need to be addressed [6].

From a societal standpoint, the instance illustrates a larger trend in many Nigerian households, where parental control frequently permeates important life decisions, such as professional choices. Students' autonomy and long-term well-being may be unintentionally compromised when their own interests are neglected, even if such influence is usually well-meaning and stems from the desire for social prestige and financial security [7, 8].

The repercussions of persistent academic disengagement can be severe if ignored. These include long-term dissatisfaction with employment outcomes, high dropout rates, persistent academic underperformance, and an increased chance of failing courses. These outcomes have wider ramifications for

social advancement and workforce productivity in addition to the individual student [9].

A diversified strategy is needed to address these issues. Expert academic counselling can help students explore other career options and match their academic goals with their interests and strengths. Psychological support services are equally crucial in recognising and handling possible emotional distress in order to improve self-esteem and general well-being [10].

Although it should be reframed to assist rather than dominate academic decisions, parental participation is still vital. It is crucial to educate parents on the value of encouraging autonomy and acknowledging individual diversity in skills and interests. Universities should provide flexible academic regulations at the institutional level so that students can switch programs with little difficulty [11].

Additionally, mentorship programs can be quite helpful in helping students who are struggling with similar issues. Mentors who have successfully handled academic and career challenges can offer direction, inspiration, and guidance [12, 13].

It is also the duty of educators to recognize early indicators of disengagement, such as behavioral retreat, absenteeism, and lack of participation. Early intervention can stop psychological and intellectual problems from getting worse [14]. Improving student involvement and results requires bolstering university counselling services and encouraging student-centered learning settings. In response, policymakers ought to give top priority to educational frameworks that prioritize adaptability, diversity, and students' overall development [15, 16].

5. Conclusion

The negative impacts of parental-driven academic motivation on student engagement, identity development, and psychological well-being are highlighted in this case study. The results highlight how important autonomy is to long-term performance and meaningful academic engagement. Students who are forced to follow educational pathways that are not in line with their interests may become disengaged, which can have long-term effects on their academic performance and emotional well-being.

Students, parents, teachers, and institutional stakeholders must work together systemically to address this problem. Higher education institutions can better assist students in attaining both academic achievement and personal fulfilment by encouraging autonomy, offering sufficient psychological and academic support, and putting in place flexible educational practices.

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