

***Investigating the Effect of Employment on College Students’  
Academic Motivation (Case Study: Universities and Academic  
Institutions in the North of Afghanistan)***

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**Abstract**

The relationship between employment and academic motivation among college students is a critical issue that requires in-depth research. With the increasing higher education costs, more students take part-time or full-time jobs during their studies to pay for their tuition and living expenses. While employment can provide college students valuable work experience and financial support, it can also negatively impact their motivation and academic performance. The present applied-descriptive study is organized into two parts. The first part used documentary and library studies to compile the topics, and the second analyzed the research findings through the distribution of questionnaires and the use of SPSS software. In this study, 50 of the 100 participants were men, and 50 were women. Of these participants, 75 were in the age range of 18-25 and 25 in the age range of 26-30 years. The findings of inferential statistics demonstrated that employment, foresight, and extrinsic motivation have a strong positive and significant relationship with students’ academic motivation. In addition, a relatively weak relationship existed between intrinsic motivation and students’ academic motivation.

**Keywords:** Intrinsic motivation; Extrinsic motivation; Foresight; Career visualization; College students; University

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## Introduction

Education is a process highly related to the motivational system. Activating and strengthening students' intrinsic motivation will fulfill their learning-based goals and ensure their durability and reliability. Intrinsically motivated students will go beyond the goal of getting top grades, receiving awards, and achieving special privileges and will work based on their intrinsic motivations. In fact, those who endure hardships to achieve their goals use their intrinsic motivation as a source of strength and reinforcement.

The relationship between employment and college students' academic motivation is a critical issue that requires further in-depth research. With the increasing higher education costs, more students take part-time or full-time jobs during their studies to pay for their tuition and living expenses. While employment can provide students with valuable work experience and financial support, it can also negatively affect their motivation and academic performance.

The Afghanistan government has been struggling with this issue more than other countries in the region. Some young people and families in Afghanistan pursue education regardless of opportunity cost to achieve a prosperous life. Meanwhile, some others pursue it in the hope of earning more income through a higher academic degree.

According to a report published by the World Bank and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan ("Afghanistan poverty status update: progress at risk"), 50,000 male youths were unemployed from 2013 to 2014. About 72% of this population were living in rural areas and were either uneducated or had primary education. In another report by the online data and statistics platform Statista, the youth unemployment rate in Afghanistan in 2021 increased by 4.1% compared to the previous year. Thus, the peak of the youth unemployment rate in Afghanistan was 20.23% in 2021.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between employment and students' academic motivation and to identify the key factors influencing this relationship. Having identified the effect of employment on academic motivation, universities and policymakers can gain a deeper insight into how to support students in creating a work-study balance and improving academic outcomes. This study used a mixed methods research approach integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected using surveys, interviews, and case studies.

The findings of this study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the relationship between employment and academic motivation and provide practical recommendations for universities and policymakers on how to support students in their efforts to create a work-study balance. In summary, this study was designed to clarify the complex relationship between employment and college students' academic motivation and provide evidence-based recommendations for universities and policymakers on supporting students in pursuing work and academic success. The results of this study will have important implications for college students, universities, and society as a whole.

## Main question:

Does employment affect college students' academic motivation?

### **Sub-questions:**

Does intrinsic motivation affect college students' academic motivation?

Does extrinsic motivation affect college students' academic motivation?

Does the spirit of foresight affect college students' academic motivation?

Does career visualization affect college students' academic motivation?

### **Methodology**

This applied-descriptive study was organized into two parts. The first part used documentary and library studies to compile the topics, and the second part analyzed the research findings through the distribution of questionnaires and the use of SPSS software in the following steps: The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to assess the normality of the data. A significance level smaller than 0.05 in this test indicates the non-normality of the variable distribution. On the other hand, a significance level greater than that value indicates the normality of the variable distribution. This test determines whether a rank variable of two unrelated samples has a significant difference. One-sample t-test was used to confirm or reject the research hypothesis.

### **Literature Review**

Sharifi *et al.* (2019) investigated "The Relationship between Academic Motivation and Students' Attitude toward Future Jobs in the Students of Torbat Heydariyeh University of Medical Sciences. They showed that academic motivation has a significant positive relationship with mental imagery and the spirit of foresight. More specifically, the higher and more positive the score of the general attitude towards the future (spirit of foresight, mental imagery, and general attitude toward the future job), the higher the academic motivation and intrinsic motivation of students in their study field (Sharifi, Ebrahim Bay *et al.*, 2020).

Deepa *et al.* (2020) studied "The Gap between Education and Employment". The results showed that education is the most important factor for employment, with a greater effect on employment than skill and experience. They also showed that all levels of education positively affect employment. As the level of education increases, the probability of finding a job increases accordingly (Deepa and Jayaram, 2020).

Khaleghkhah & Najafi (2017) investigated the effect of different factors (i.e., age, gender, type of university, employment status) on reducing the academic motivation of students using a multilevel model approach. They found no significant relationship between gender, age, type of university, and dropout, meaning that such variables do not affect increasing or decreasing the dropout rates at universities ( $p=0.506$ ,  $0.185$ , and  $0.145$ ). However, employment and dropout had a significant relationship (Khaleghkhah and Najafi, 2018).

Dastranj (2013) investigated the effect of students' employment on their academic success. To this end, they evaluated factors such as age, gender, marital status, time of the study, students'

residence, parents' income, working and non-working students, the high school-college interval, and academic success. According to their results, age and academic success are significantly correlated, suggesting that students' success decreases as their age increases. However, the relationship between gender and academic success was not statistically significant, meaning that the academic success of boys and girls was the same. The relationship between study time and academic success was significant. In other words, the more time students spend studying, the more academic success they achieve. In addition, students who lived with their families had more academic success than those who lived in dormitories. The relationship between parents' income and academic success was also significant, indicating that parents' income affected the student's academic success. Working students were shown to have less academic success than non-working students. Furthermore, students who entered the university immediately after obtaining a diploma had more academic success than those with a time gap between their diploma and entrance to the university (Dastranj, 2013).

Bigdely *et al.* (2012) investigated the relationship between education and the employment status of psychology and educational science alumni at Tehran University. The results showed a significant relationship between the study field, employment, and education-job fit. The employment status and education-job fit were better in clinical psychology, counseling, librarianship, and education of exceptional children than in other fields. However, the two mentioned variables were unfavorable in fields such as educational technology and educational administration. The relationship between the average education and the employment type in the study field was not statistically significant (Bigdely, Keramati *et al.*, 2012).

Wambugu, Anthony (2011) investigated "The effects of educational attainment on employment outcomes in Kenya". These researchers evaluated the importance of education and the allocation of employment and earnings to propose an employment allocation covering a wide range of jobs in Kenya. They found that education is no barrier to the entrance to agricultural jobs, and people with low education have a significantly higher probability of entering informal sectors, while educated people are unmotivated to enter such sectors. According to these authors, highly educated people are more likely to be selected for contract jobs, and high education in both men and women increases the probability of employment in government offices (Wambugu, 2011).

Thomas *et al.* (2009) investigated the contribution of education to job performance, hypothesizing that "education level is positively related to job performance". The result of their study confirmed this hypothesis. Education level was related to objective measures of task performance at 0.24, peer-rated task performance at 0.18, supervisor-rated task performance at 0.09, and self-rated task performance at 0.06 (Ng and Feldman 2009).

Education has a substantial impact on employment prospects. On average, 83% of the population with tertiary education is employed across OECD countries. In Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland, the average employment rate of tertiary-educated individuals is over 88%. The OECD average falls to about 74% for people with upper secondary and post-

secondary non-tertiary education and to just below 56% for those without an upper secondary education.

Although the gap narrows among people with higher levels of education, the employment rate of women is far below that of men at all levels of education. Among those with only a lower secondary education, the employment rate is 69% for men and 49% for women. Also, among those with university-level education and advanced research programs, this rate is 88% for men and 79% for women. The gender difference in employment rates for tertiary-educated individuals, which exists in all OECD countries without exception, is particularly large in Chile, the Czech Republic, Japan, Korea, Mexico, and Turkey, where the difference reaches 29% (OECD, 2012).

Overwhelming correlations between work hours and academic performance are negative, i.e., those working longer hours tend to do less well in their university work. However, this tendency is statistically significant for first-level students only. For individual faculties, the only significant correlation was for social science students. In some cases, the failure to find significant relationships may be attributable to the small sample size. For first-year students, there was neither a significant association between having a part-time job and socio-economic status as presently defined nor between socio-economic status and work hours (McKechnie, Dunleavy *et al.* 2005).

### **The concept of motivation**

Currently, there is no consensus on a precise definition of “motivation” in various disciplines (Gneezy, Meier *et al.* 2011). Motivation is generally defined by the behavior direction and intensity to explain how and why goals emerge and how they are maintained (Frey and Jegen, 2001).

In everyday life, motivation is often used to explain a person’s behavior, e.g., why people buy a particular brand or why students study all night for an upcoming exam. These questions have one thing in common: motivated behavior aims to fulfill a specific need or want (Bettina Studer, 2016). The term “motivation” refers to the factors that activate, direct and maintain goal-directed behavior.

Motivations are the “whys” of behavior, i.e., the need or want that drives behavior and what they explain to us. They are not actually observable, but we infer their existence based on the behavior we observe (Bettina Studer, 2016).

The driving forces of behavior refer to motivations and may originate in biological, social, emotional, or cognitive aspects. Observed behavior is understood by the motivation behind it. Motivation is a separate factor that directs human behavior. For instance, eating a banana is an observed behavior, while hunger may be the inferred motive for that behavior (Bettina Studer, 2016).

### **Definition of motivation**

Motivation is an internal process. Whether we define it as a stimulus or a need, it is an internal condition that wants change, whether in itself or the environment. When we tap into this well of energy, motivation endows the person with the drive and direction needed to engage with the environment in an adaptive, open-ended, and problem-solving sort of way (Reeve, 2015).

### **Intrinsic motivation**

Intrinsic motivation refers to a stimulus that causes one to adopt or change behavior for personal satisfaction. Such motivation leads a person to perform an activity for intrinsic, personally satisfying reasons, as opposed to extrinsic motivation, with the prospect of obtaining some extrinsic rewards such as money (Inc. 2022).

In other words, with intrinsic motivation, the motivation to do a task is to perform it. For example, when a person decides to eat ice cream, they usually want to enjoy the pleasure of eating it; they do not do it for external rewards (Inc. 2022).

Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

### **Extrinsic motivation**

Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done to attain some separable outcome. Extrinsic motivation thus contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing an activity simply for the enjoyment of the activity itself rather than its instrumental value (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation is defined as a desire to engage in an activity to fulfill an external goal, gain praise and approval, win a competition, or receive a prize or payment (Seton, 2020).

### **Employment**

According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), an employed person is a person aged 15 years or older who has worked at least one hour during a given week (for payment or profit) or has a job from which he has been absent only during holidays, sick leave, maternity leave, etc. (Statistique, 2021).

Employment must be based on work activity or job attachment during a specified calendar week and includes part-time workers regardless of the number of working hours or the reason for part-time work (Stein, 1967).

### **Relationship between employment and academic motivation**

Man is known as a motivated being, so he does all his activities and work based on motivation. Learning and studying, which are considered the main activities of students, is a

motivation-based process. In fact, motivation is regarded among the essentials of learning, something that gives intensity and direction to the behavior and helps the learner maintain and continue it (KH and AR Fadaee, 2007).

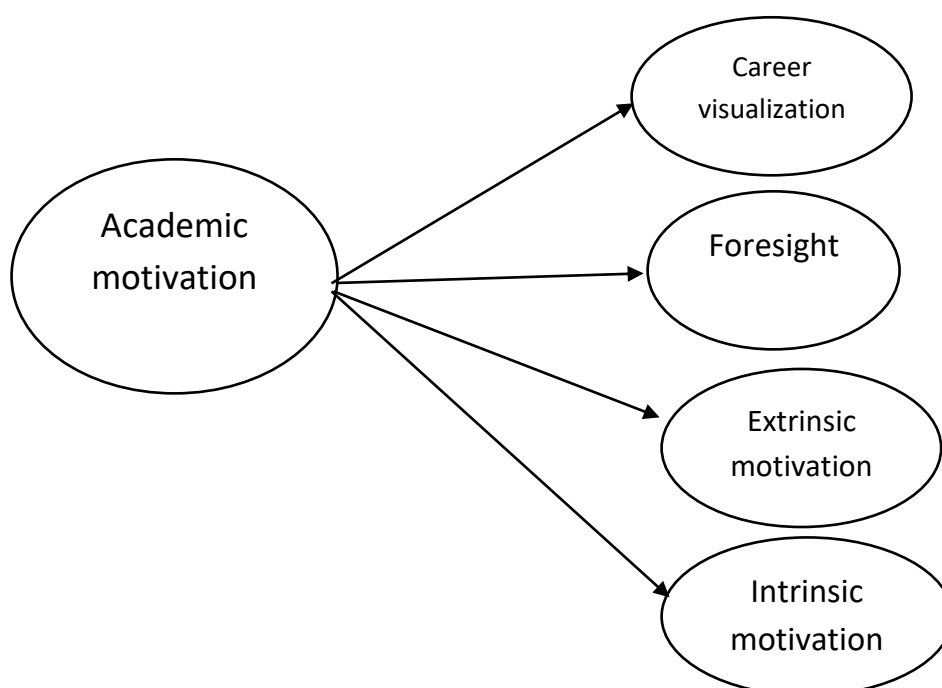
In fact, students enter the university with the motivation to acquire the knowledge, skills, and capabilities required for employment. In this respect, graduates are also expected to acquire the necessary skills during their studies to perform their jobs well. Therefore, higher education should be able to increase the students' motivation and adopt a process that can differentiate its students from their peers and make them successful in the competition process. This improvement is possible when the employability of students is institutionalized. Through this approach, we can train students to be capable people regardless of the pressures of the labor market and their organizations so that they can feel that they can work in the labor market and can use their expertise and field efficiently after graduation (Knight and Yorke, 2004).

In a study in Portugal, Eurico *et al.* (2015) found that employability plays an essential role in the formation of motivation in higher education (Eurico, Da Silva *et al.* 2015). Trede and McEwen showed that creating a learning experience in a real work environment significantly contributes to the formation of students' employability (Trede and McEwen 2015).

## Methodology

The statistical population of this study consisted of the students of universities and public and private higher education institutions in Balkh province. Data were collected using the desk-based research method through a review of books, articles, Internet, and fieldwork method through a questionnaire. This is an applied-descriptive study conducted on a statistical sample of 100 students. After collecting the required data, they were entered into SPSS software and analyzed.

## Conceptual Model



**Data analysis:****Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the respondents in terms of gender**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
	Woman	50	50	50	51.5
	Man	50	50	50	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics on the respondents' gender. According to this table, there are 100 students (50 men and 50 women) in this study.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the respondents in terms of age**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	18-25	75	75.0	75.0	75.0
	26-35	25	25.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics on the respondents' age. According to this table, of the 100 respondents, 75 were in the age range of 18-25 years, and 25 in the age range of 26-35 years (75% and 25%, respectively).

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the respondents in terms of education level**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Married	26	26.0	26.0	26.0
	Single	74	74.0	74.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 gives the descriptive statistics on the respondents' education level. As can be seen, of the 100 respondents, 26 were married, and 74 were single (26% and 74%, respectively).

**Main hypothesis**

Employment affects students' academic motivation.

**Table 4. Effect of employment on students' academic motivation**

		Employment	Academic motivation
Employment	Pearson Correlation	1	0.708**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Academic motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.708**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

The results of Pearson's correlation coefficient indicate a significant positive relationship between employment and academic motivation; that is, an increase in the employment rate leads to an increase in college students' academic motivation. Therefore, the main hypothesis of the research is confirmed.

#### **The first sub-hypothesis:**

Intrinsic motivation affects college students' academic motivation.

**Table 5. Relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic motivation**

		Intrinsic motivation	Academic motivation
Intrinsic motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	0.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Academic motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.721**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

The results of Pearson's correlation coefficient revealed a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic motivation. Based on the obtained data, an increase in the students' intrinsic motivation leads to an increase in their academic motivation. Therefore, there is a relationship between the students' intrinsic motivation and their academic motivation.

#### **The second sub-hypothesis**

Extrinsic motivation affects college students' academic motivation.

**Table 6. Relationship between the students' extrinsic motivation and their academic motivation**

		S1	S3
S1	Pearson Correlation	1	.608**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
S3	Pearson Correlation	.608**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

Pearson's correlation coefficient results show a significant positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic motivation. In other words, an increase in the students' intrinsic motivation leads to an increase in their academic motivation. Therefore, the relationship between the students' intrinsic motivation and their academic motivation is confirmed.

#### **The third sub-hypothesis:**

The spirit of foresight affects college students' academic motivation.

**Table 7. Relationship between the students' foresight and their academic motivation**

		Foresight	Academic motivation
Foresight	Pearson Correlation	1	0.508**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Academic motivation	Pearson Correlation	0.508**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

Pearson's correlation coefficients revealed a significant positive relationship between foresight and academic motivation. As can be seen, an increase in the students' foresight level leads to an increase in their academic motivation.

#### **The fourth sub-hypothesis**

Career visualization affects college students' academic motivation.

**Table 8. Relationship between college students' career visualization and their academic motivation**

		Career visualizati on	Academic motivation
Career visualizati on	Pearson Correlation	1	0.308**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Academic motivatio n	Pearson Correlation	0.308**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

Pearson's correlation coefficient results show a weak and significant relationship between the students' career visualization and their academic motivation.

## Conclusion

One of the major factors affecting the quality of a university is the existence of highly motivated and energetic students who are supposed to rotate the cycles of production and industry. This applied-descriptive study was conducted in two parts. The first part used documentary and library studies to compile the topics. In contrast, the second part analyzed the research findings by distributing questionnaires and using SPSS software. The findings revealed that 50 of the 100 participants were men and 50 were women. Of these participants, 75 were in the age range of 18-25 and 25 in the age range of 26-30 years. The findings of inferential statistics demonstrated that employment, foresight, and extrinsic motivation have a strong positive and significant relationship with students' academic motivation. Moreover, a relatively weak relationship was identified between intrinsic motivation and students' academic motivation.

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