

Early Adolescents Motivation and Engagement Levels in Learning in Low Socio-Economic Districts in Sri Lanka (Based on T-Tests Results)

Authors : Ruwandika Perera

Abstract : Even though the Sri Lankan government provides a reasonable level of support for students at all levels of the school system, for example, free education, textbooks, school uniforms, subsidized public transportation, and school meals, low participation in learning among secondary students is an issue warranting investigation, particularly in low socio-economic districts. This study attempted to determine the levels of motivation and engagement amongst students in a number of schools in two low socio-economic districts of Sri Lanka. This study employed quantitative research design in an attempt to determine levels of motivation and engagement amongst Sri Lankan secondary school students. Motivation and Engagement Scale-Junior School (MES-JS) was administered among 100 Sinhala-medium and 100 Tamil-medium eighth-grade students (50 students from each gender). The mean age of the students was 12.8 years. Schools were represented by type 2 government schools located in Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya districts in Sri Lanka. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to measure the construct validity of the scale. Since this did not provide a robust solution, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. Four factors were identified; Failure Avoidance and Anxiety (FAA), Positive Motivation (PM), Uncertain Control (UC), and Positive Engagement (PE). An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare PM, PE, FAA, and UC in gender and ethnic groups. There was no significant difference identified for PE, FAA, and UC scales based upon gender. These results indicate that for the participants in this study, there were no significant differences based on gender in the levels of failure avoidance and anxiety, uncertain control, and positive engagement in the school experience. But, the result for the PM scale was close to significant, indicating there may be differences based on gender for positive motivation. A significant difference exists for all scales based on ethnicity, with the mean result for the Tamil students being significantly higher than that for the Sinhala students. These results indicate those Sinhala-medium students' levels of positive motivation and positive engagement in learning was lower than Tamil-medium students. Also, these results indicate those Tamil-medium students' levels of failure avoidance, anxiety, and uncertain control was higher than Sinhala-medium students. It could be concluded that male students levels of PM were significantly lower than female students. Also, Sinhala-medium students' levels of PM and PE was lower than Tamil-medium students, and Tamil-medium students levels of FAA and UC was significantly higher than Sinhala-medium students. Thus, there might be particular school-related conditions affecting this situation, which are related to early adolescents' motivation and engagement in learning.

Keywords : early adolescents, engagement, low socio-economic districts, motivation

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