

ABSTRACT

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design to determine levels of motivation and engagement, and the school-related conditions that might influence such levels among Sri Lankan secondary school students. This study surveyed 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 the Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya districts in Sri Lanka. Twenty-four low-motivated students (12 from each gender) were selected based on the MQ scores of the MES-JS. Students who attained the lowest MQ scores for booster thoughts and booster behaviours, and highest MQ scores for mufflers and guzzlers were selected for conducting semi-structured interviews. The mean age of interviewed students was 12.9 years. Twelve teachers and 12 principals were also interviewed.

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to measure the construct validity of the scale. Since this did not provide a robust solution, exploratory factor analysis was also conducted. Four factors were identified; Failure Avoidance and Anxiety (FAA), Positive Motivation (PM), Uncertain Control (UC), and Positive Engagement (PE). Based on those four factors, parametric tests – *t*-tests, two-way MANOVA, two-way ANOVA, one-way ANOVA – and non-parametric tests – Kruskal-Wallis *H* tests – were employed to analyse quantitative data and thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data.

The findings of the quantitative phase of the study indicated that early adolescents’ motivation and engagement was not a major problem across the study population but there was a group of students who exhibiting low motivation and engagement. Interviews were conducted with this group. This qualitative phase of the study indicated that the quality of classroom relationships and the curriculum and resources impacted on the least motivated and engaged students’ learning. Especially, negative teacher-student relationships, lack of intrinsic motivation, the influence of peers, harsh punishments, inadequate encouragement, un-engaging teaching, unfriendly teaching-learning environment, inadequate quality learning activities, difficult subject matter, difficult and excessive homework, regular tests, inadequate classroom resources, and inadequate quality teaching-learning resources were revealed as contributing to low motivation and

engagement. Some teachers and principals stated that they had employed: raising parental awareness, providing individual support, and short-term initiatives. It was revealed that, there was a link between the least motivated and engaged early adolescents' learning and the impact of school-related conditions in low socio-economic districts in Sri Lanka, particularly in Tamil-medium schools.

This study proposes a model to increase the motivation and engagement in learning of early adolescents in low socio-economic districts in Sri Lanka through a self-determination theory approach.

Conference Presentations

Paper 8. A. Mahalingam, "Self-Determination Theory and Early Adolescent Learning in Low Socio-Economic Districts in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Tamil-Medium Schools." Paper presented at the 12th International Conference on Educational Psychology, 2014, Singapore.

Paper 9. A. Mahalingam, "Self-Determination Theory and Early Adolescent Learning in Low Socio-Economic Districts in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Tamil-Medium Schools." Paper presented at the 12th International Conference on Educational Psychology, 2014, Singapore.

Paper 10. A. Mahalingam, "Self-Determination Theory and Early Adolescent Learning in Low Socio-Economic Districts in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of Tamil-Medium Schools." Paper presented at the 12th International Conference on Educational Psychology, 2014, Singapore.