


# Assessing Student Academic Motivation in Selected Faith-Based Universities

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## Abstract

*This study examines the motivational factors influencing university students in a faith-based higher education context, focusing on a sample of 311 students enrolled in Adventist colleges and universities. The study applied Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify key academic motivation factors by modifying and validating measuring scales derived from Academic Motivation Scale-College version and Orientation Toward Religion. The analysis identified four distinct components: personal-driven motivation, self-value motivation, social motivation, and achievement motivation. The findings indicate that faith-based education promotes both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students with high personal-driven motivation demonstrated deeper perseverance and academic engagement. The self-value factor reflected the alignment of education with self-identity and long-term aspirations. Social motivation was driven by the need to meet external expectations, while achievement motivation was linked to personal fulfillment and career preparation. These factors provide unique contributions to student retention, academic satisfaction and holistic development. The study provides insights for educators and administrators in designing strategies to enhance motivation in faith-based institutions. Future research should explore how these motivational components evolve and compare them to secular education contexts.*

**Keywords:** Academic Motivation, Faith-based Education, Intrinsic Motivation, Career Aspirations, Social Engagement, Spiritual Development

## Introduction

Understanding student academic motivation is essential for fostering quality education. As a core area of psychological inquiry, motivation is deeply intertwined with biological, cognitive, and social regulation, profoundly influencing human behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In higher education, motivation drives students' decisions to enroll and shapes their commitment and academic success. Kember et al. (2008) emphasize that the type and intensity of motivation significantly influence students' learning approaches, while Ballman and Mueller (2008) highlight its role in promoting retention and career readiness. Additionally, Research suggested that motivation in higher education is shaped by various extrinsic and intrinsic factors, including career goals, personal aspirations, and external influences such as institutional mission and religious beliefs (Ballman & Mueller, 2008). Faith-based educational context presents distinctive motivational challenges compared to secular ones. Students in faith-based institutions often face push to align their academic pursuits with spiritual values, a dynamic less emphasized in secular environment. These institutions may prioritize moral development as well as community-oriented goals which can impact students' perceptions of academic success.

In spite of extensive research on motivation in secular institutions, there is a breach in understanding how faith-based settings shape students' academic commitment and drive. This study seeks to address that gap by examining the motivational factors at involvement in faith-based institutions. By doing so, the study directs to suggest educators and administrators' actionable insights to enhance both spiritual and academic outcomes for students.

To address this issue, the study adopts a dual-framework approach, integrating Vallerand's academic motivation model with the intrinsic/extrinsic religious orientation framework by Gorsuch and McPherson. These frameworks provide an integrated lens to explore how self-efficacy, educational value, external influences, and religious orientation interact to shape students' motivations. Intrinsic motivation, as described by [Tiliopoulos et al. \(2007\)](#), reflects a mature, profoundly personal faith influencing life decisions, whereas extrinsic motivation serves pragmatic or social ends.

By integrating these frameworks, this study focuses on providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' academic motivation in faith-based education.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to enlighten administrators and educators about the unique motivational dynamics in faith-based institutions. Faith-based colleges and universities manage under missions that emphasize both spiritual growth and academic excellence. Considering student motivation in these contexts can help educators design curriculum and support systems that enhance both religious engagement and academic performance. This study can contribute to shaded light in broader discourse on how educational environment impacts motivation and learning outcomes. As higher education continues to evolve, institutions must adapt to the diverse needs of students. This study seeks to explore how these insights can be used to improve students' academic achievement and retention. By shedding light on the interplay between religious orientation and academic motivation, this study will contribute valuable knowledge to both faith-based institutional development and educational psychology.

## Literature Review

Academic motivation plays a vital role in students' educational outcomes, especially, in faith-based institutions where both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators interact with spiritual values. Research highlights two primary forms of motivation: intrinsic motivation, where students engage in learning for personal satisfaction, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards such as recognition or

grades ([Deci & Ryan, 2000](#)). This study examines how extrinsic and intrinsic motivation impact student success and how faith-based education fosters moral values, spirituals, and community engagement. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a strong framework for understanding academic motivation by emphasizing the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation ([Ryan & Deci, 2017](#)). The role of academic motivation has been extensively explored in higher education, with studies showing its impact on student success and engagement ([Pintrich, 2000](#)). Moreover, faith-based education presents a unique perspective by integrating religious beliefs with academic instruction, thereby influencing students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through moral and spiritual development.

Self-Determination Theory asserts that individuals are naturally prone toward growth and self-regulation when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. Furthermore, in an academic setting, autonomy refers to students feeling a sense of control over their learning, competence requires their confidence in mastering academic engagement, and relatedness reflects their sense of belonging within the educational community. Intrinsic education is closely tied to religious values and spiritual development in faith-based education. Studies specify that students who internalize religious beliefs as personal values demonstrate greater academic curiosity, persistence, and self-driven learning ([Deci & Ryan, 2008](#)). [Neimiec and Ryan \(2009\)](#) explain that when religious teachings orient with students' intrinsic goals, they naturally engage more deeply in their studies. Extrinsic motivation also plays a role in faith-based education, as students may engage in learning for external rewards such as academic recognition, social acceptance, or career advancement ([Deci & Ryan, 2008](#)). Other researcher argue that goal setting within faith-based institutions significantly enhances student motivation. However, research cautions against overreliance on external motivators, as excessive use of extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic interest in learning ([Deci et al., 2001](#)). Faith-based educators are encouraged to balance intrinsic and extrinsic

motivators to create an enriching learning environment. Academic motivation is a vital factor in student success across different educational settings, with Self-Determination Theory providing a foundational understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In higher education, motivation influences engagement, persistence, and achievement, with intrinsic motivation paramount to deeper learning while extrinsic motivation sustains academic participation. Faith-based education presents a unique pattern where religious orientation and moral development intersect with academic motivation, fostering both intellectual and spiritual growth. A balanced approach that integrates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators ensures a fulfilling educational experience, particularly in faith-based institutions where religious values contribute to students' academic and personal development.

## Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative research design to explore academic motivational factors among students in faith-based higher education institutions.

## Participants

Using convenience sampling, the study consisted of 311 undergraduate students from various faculties and different years of study across multiple Adventist universities. The study did not exclusively focus on Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) or Christian students; any student studying at an Adventist university, regardless of their religious background, was invited to participate. This inclusivity ensured that the survey captured a wide range of perspectives without bias or judgment. Faith-based academic motivation was measured using Academic Motivation Scale, college version, including seven factors such as (academic motivation intrinsic motivation to know, academic motivation toward accomplishment, academic intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, academic extrinsic motivation identified regulation, academic extrinsic motivation introjected regulation, and academic extrinsic motivation external regulation). Academic motivation from a psychological perspective that has already been validated through prior use in research which is the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS-C 28) College

version. On the other hand, the Revised intrinsic/extrinsic religious orientation has also been measured. The variable of orientations toward religion includes three factors such as (intrinsic, extrinsic personal, and extrinsic social) from a psychological perspective that has already been validated through prior use in research, which is the Revised Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale ([Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989](#)). In addition, one of these scales is the Revised Religious Orientation or Revised Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religious Orientation Scale by Gorsuch and MacPherson ([Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989](#)), which contains strong psychometric properties and is considered to be the best current measurement tool of religious orientation.

Data was collected using a faith-based academic motivation scale, with clear instructions provided to ensure proper completion of the survey. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Convenience sampling was used in this study because it involves collecting data from individuals who are readily available and willing to participate, which is often the most practical approach in educational research. This method frequently includes student samples, individuals the researcher has access to, or those willing to complete surveys ([Landers & Behrend, 2015](#)).

## Data Collection

Data was collected using a faith-based academic motivation scale, with clear instructions provided to ensure proper completion of the survey. These representatives facilitated the dissemination of the survey link through university communication channels and faculty networks. Participants provided informed consent before completing the survey, and ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board.

## Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and EFA. Descriptive statistics provided insights into participants' demographic characteristics and overall motivational trends. EFA was employed to examine the underlying factor structure of the Faith-Based Academic Motivation Scale, ensuring construct validity.

The reliability of the Faith-Based Academic Motivation Scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency. The validity of the scale was supported through expert review and factor analysis.

## Results

Table 1 reveals key variations in academic motivation among students in faith-based education. The highest motivation items highlight students' engagement with learning and intellectual fulfillment. One of the strongest motivational drivers was students' experience of "intense feelings when communicating [their] own ideas to others" in faith-based education, which reflects the encouragement of deep discussions and personal expression in such environments. Another highly rated factor was the "pleasure in broadening [one's] knowledge about

subjects which appeal to [them]," demonstrating that faith-based education fosters intellectual curiosity and academic enrichment.

Conversely, items reflecting lower academic motivation tended to relate to extrinsic rewards. For instance, students showed relatively lower motivation for statements such as "faith-based education can help me to obtain a prestigious job later" and "when I succeed in faith-based education, it helps me to get a better salary in the future." While these aspects were still relevant, they were not as strong motivators as intrinsic or social factors. This suggests that while students recognize the career benefits of faith-based education, their motivation is more deeply tied to personal growth, intellectual curiosity, and social belonging rather than purely financial or professional outcomes.

**Table 1 Descriptive statistics of Faith-Based Academic Motivation Scale**

Statement	M	SD
In faith-based education, I experience intense feelings when I am communication my own ideas to others.	4.95	1.19
Faith-based education introduces me to new friends every now and then.	4.86	1.04
I am able to prove to myself that I can complete my college degree from faith-based education.	4.80	1.15
I think that a faith-based education will help me better prepare for the career I have chosen.	4.76	1.16
I experience new things that I have never experienced before while learning in faith-based education.	4.75	1.06
I feel satisfaction while learning in faith-based education.	4.73	1.18
Faith-based education helps me to get a good life later on.	4.72	1.16
I find happiness while surpassing myself in my learning in faith-based education.	4.69	1.08
Faith-based education also helps me to find joy while surpassing myself in one of my personal accomplishments.	4.69	0.97
I try my best to live all my life that I learned from the faith-based education	4.66	1.12
In faith-based education, I experience pleasure in broadening my knowledge about subjects which appeal to me.	4.65	1.16
I find pleasure in my life while studying in faith-based education.	4.63	1.14
My studies in faith-based education allow me to continue to learn about many things that interest me.	4.63	1.15
While learning in faith-based education, it helps me to become an intelligent person.	4.60	1.14
Learning in faith-based education will also improve my competence as a worker in the future	4.60	1.19
I feel personal satisfaction in my quest for excellence in my studies while in faith-based education.	4.60	1.09
Once I succeed in faith-based education I feel important.	4.58	1.14
I have a strong sense of belongingness in a faith-based education university.	4.57	1.20
It is important for me to spend some private time for me to think while studying in faith-based education.	4.54	1.22
I mainly join in faith-based education because I feel safe.	4.53	1.21



I go to a faith-based education university because I enjoy seeing people I know there.	4.40	1.26
My whole life approach to life is based on my studies in faith-based education.	4.40	1.25
I find pleasure in reading about interesting authors that I can access in faith-based education.	4.39	1.23
Faith-based education also helps me to enter the job market in a field that I like.	4.38	1.21
It does not matter what I believe in order to study in faith-based education.	4.35	1.31
Faith-based education can help me to obtain a prestigious job later.	4.35	1.25
Although I study faith-based education, I do not let it affect my daily life.	4.14	1.29
When I succeed in faith-based education, it helps me to get a better salary in the future.	4.04	1.36

In Table 2, the KMO value is 0.962, which is well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.6. This high value suggests that the sample is adequate, and the data is likely to yield reliable factors. A KMO value close to 1 indicates that the patterns of correlations are relatively compact, which means factor analysis should produce distinct and reliable factors.

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tests the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that variables are unrelated and unsuitable for structure detection. The test result shows an approximate chi-square value of 6175.340 with 378 degrees of freedom, and a significance level (Sig.) of less than 0.001. This significant result ( $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the correlations between items are sufficiently large for factor analysis. The null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that there are relationships between the variables that can be summarized by a smaller number of factors.

In summary, both the KMO measure and Bartlett's test suggest that the data is appropriate for exploratory factor analysis, with the high KMO value indicating sampling adequacy and the significant Bartlett's test confirming the presence of significant correlations among the variables.

In Table 3, there are four main factors: (factor 1: Personal driven motivation, factor 2: Self-Value Motivation, factor 3: Social Motivation, and factor 4: Achievement Motivation). In the 'personal driven motivation' factor, 16 variables are related to each other. According to the survey, students find 'personal driven motivation' while studying

in faith-based higher education. The key word personal driven motivation means the sense of satisfaction and contentment derived from achieving personal accomplishments, socializing, developing competence, feeling important, and leading a good life. In the 'self-value motivation' factor, there are three variables, and the keyword self-value motivation signifies the ability to withstand adversity and a sense of safety and security as well as living one's life without letting external circumstances. The result shows that students studying in faith-based higher education tend to be able to withstand adversity. The other factor in the keyword is 'social motivation,' which means exploring new experiences, forming new connections and friendships along the way, and having a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment. In this social motivation, four variables show that students find adventure and social connection while learning in faith-based higher education. The last factor is 'achievement motivation,' which considers better preparation for the future career and communicating one's ideas to others. There are five variables in achievement motivation that students find achievement while learning at faith-based higher education.

**Table 2 Sampling Adequacy**

Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.962
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-square	6175.340
	df	378
	Sig.	<.001

**Table 3 Factor Analysis**

		<b>Factors</b>			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Faith-based academic motivation</b>					
<b>Factor 1: Personal Driven Motivation</b>					
7	Faith-based education can help me to obtain a prestigious job later.	.74			
9	Faith-based education also helps me to enter the job market in a field that I like.	.79			
10	I find pleasure in reading about interesting authors that I can access in faith-based education.	.71			
11	Faith-based education also helps me to find joy while surpassing myself in one of my personal accomplishments.	.70			
12	Once I succeed in faith-based education I feel important.	.78			
13	Faith-based education helps me to get a good life later on.	.72			
14	In faith-based education, I experience pleasure in broadening my knowledge about subjects which appeal to me.	.70			
15	My studies in faith-based education allow me to continue to learn about many things that interest me.	0.74			
16	While learning in faith-based education, it helps me to become an intelligent person.	.75			
17	When I succeed in faith-based education, it helps me to get a better salary in the future.	.82			
18	Learning in faith-based education will also improve my competence as a worker in the future.	0.72			
19	I feel personal satisfaction in my quest for excellence in my studies while in faith-based education.	0.69			
20	I go to a faith-based education university because I enjoy seeing people I know there.	0.69			
21	My whole life approach to life is based on my studies in faith-based education.	0.81			
25	I try my best to live all my life that I learned from the faith-based education.	0.63			
23	It is important for me to spend some private time for me to think while studying in faith-based education.	0.61			
<b>Factor 2: Self-value motivation</b>					
22	Although I study faith-based education, I do not let it affect my daily life.		0.89		
26	I mainly join in faith-based education because I feel safe.		0.66		
24	It does not matter what I believe in order to study in faith-based education.		0.61		
<b>Factor 3: Social motivation</b>					
6	I am able to prove to myself that I can complete my college degree from faith-based education.			0.72	
8	I experience new things that I have never experienced before while learning in faith-based education.			0.75	
27	I have a strong sense of belongingness in a faith-based education university.			0.74	
28	Faith-based education introduces me to new friends every now and then.			0.79	
<b>Factor 4: Achievement motivation</b>					
1	I feel satisfaction while learning in faith-based education.				0.74
2	I find pleasure in my life while studying in faith-based education.				0.82
3	I think that a faith-based education will help me better prepare for the career I have chosen.				0.77
4	In faith-based education, I experience intense feelings when I am communicating my own ideas to others.				0.63
5	I find happiness while surpassing myself in my learning in faith-based education.				0.69



## Discussion

The results indicate that students generally have high motivation levels within faith-based education. The highest mean score was for experiencing intense feelings when communicating their ideas, indicating strong engagement in academic discussions. Additionally, items related to career preparation and personal growth, such as obtaining a prestigious job and securing a better salary, suggest that extrinsic motivators influence students' motivation. Social motivation emerged as a significant factor, as students reported strong feelings of belongingness and forming new friendships. These findings reinforce previous research highlighting the importance of faith-based institutions in fostering a strong sense of community and social support ([Cappellen et al., 2017](#)). Furthermore, self-value motivation was evident in students' responses, as they emphasized the importance of personal reflection and aligning their studies with their life philosophy.

The study's findings in faith-based academic motivation and its four key components are personal-driven motivation, self-value motivation, social motivation, and achievement motivation. These findings align with the intrinsic/extrinsic (I/E) theoretical framework and Cokley's academic motivation framework, highlighting the role of both internal and external motivational influences in faith-based education. This study also confirmed that faith-based education plays a crucial role in fostering academic motivation, not only in academic performance but also in moral and spiritual development. In addition, religious practices such as church attendance, prayer, and scripture reading have been linked to greater academic motivation and satisfaction ([Underwood & Teresi, 2002](#)). While the researcher emphasized the significance of spirituality in shaping educational experiences and life outcomes. The findings align with and expand upon existing literature regarding academic motivation in faith-based higher education contexts. Four identified factors—personal driven motivation, self-value motivation, social motivation, and achievement motivation that consider the complex interchange between faith, education, and career aspirations.

The first factor, Personal Driven Motivation, is an intrinsic force that arises from within the individual.

In faith-based education, this motivation is closely tied to spiritual growth and the internalization of religious values. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which impact students' persistence and engagement.

The second, Self-Value Motivation, refers to the drive to enhance one's sense of self-worth and identity. Within faith-based education, students evolve a religious identity that fosters personal value and purpose. Previous studies suggested that students attending faith-based institutions often integrate their educational experiences with their personal beliefs, reinforcing their commitment to ethical and moral values ([Fatima et al., 2017](#)). According to SDT, actions aligned with deeply held values lead to sustained intrinsic motivation. Adventist education tends to provide a supportive community that nurtures students' sense of belonging and competence, reinforcing their self-value motivation. However, the findings also suggest that some students maintain a level of separation between their faith and academic pursuits, supporting the argument by [Beauchamp and Rios \(2019\)](#) that excessive integration of faith and academics may lead some students to sectionalize their religious and educational identities.

The third factor, Social Motivation, indicates that faith-based universities play a significant role in fostering students' academic engagement and a sense of belonging. Prior research confirms that students in religiously affiliated institutions often benefit from stronger social support networks ([Cappellen et al., 2017](#)). SDT emphasizes the need for relatedness, which aligns with the communal nature of religious education. [Park \(2012\)](#) focuses on that these social dynamics are particularly favorable for students from minority religious backgrounds, as they supply a supportive environment that enhances academic engagement and motivation. In Adventist institutions, students build meaningful relationships with peers, faculty, and mentors who share similar values. This social network enhances motivation by providing encouragement, accountability, and a sense of belonging.

The last factor, Achievement Motivation, is characterized by the pursuit of excellence and mastery. Faith-based education promotes high

academic standards while integrating faith into learning. Students expressed a strong sense of accomplishment and fulfillment through their faith-based education, particularly in preparing for their careers and intellectual pursuits. These findings align with research conducted by [Kember et al. \(2008\)](#), who emphasize that motivation in higher education is often driven by a combination of intrinsic satisfaction and future career benefits. [Deci and Ryan's \(2000\)](#) Self-Determination Theory suggest that students with a strong sense of purpose and autonomy in their education are more likely to experience higher academic motivation and accomplishment.

The results of this study contribute to the occurring discussion on the role of faith-based education in shaping academic motivation. While previous research has accepted the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, this study further refines these insights by categorizing motivation into personal, self-value, social, and achievement-driven dimensions. These findings underscore the importance of faith-based institutions in providing academic training and fostering holistic personal development and social integration.

One limitation of this study lies in its use of convenience sampling, which may introduce bias due to the lack of a verified representative sample of the larger population. Although the study includes students from various faculties and academic years, it remains unclear whether this distribution accurately reflects the broader demographic diversity of Adventist universities. Additionally, the study acknowledges potential concerns such as institutional bias—given that students from Adventist universities may share similar cultural or educational influences—and self-selection bias, where participants who chose to respond may differ in motivation or interest compared to those who did not. To address these limitations, future research is encouraged to employ more rigorous sampling methods. For instance, stratified sampling could ensure proportional representation across key demographic groups such as religious backgrounds, faculties, or academic years, thereby reducing sampling bias. Similarly, random sampling would enhance the generalizability of findings by giving all students an equal chance of participation.

## Conclusion

This study examined the motivational factors influencing university students within a faith-based higher education context from Adventist colleges and universities. Through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), four distinct dimensions of academic motivation were identified: personal-driven motivation, self-value motivation, social motivation, and achievement motivation. These components were derived from modified and validated measures based on the Academic Motivation Scale–College Version and Orientation Toward Religion. The findings suggest that faith-based education nurtures both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Personal-driven motivation was associated with perseverance and academic engagement, while self-value motivation reflected the alignment of educational goals with personal identity and long-term aspirations. Social motivation emerged from external expectations, and achievement motivation was linked to fulfillment and career preparation.

These insights show the role of faith-based institutions in promoting holistic student development by integrating academic, social, and spiritual dimensions. The interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation highlights the complex nature of student engagement in such settings. Intrinsic motivation appears critical for fostering deep learning and resilience, while well-managed extrinsic motivation can complement this by sustaining engagement and goal orientation. Implications of this study are relevant for educators and administrators seeking to enhance student motivation, retention, and satisfaction in faith-based environments. Further research is encouraged to explore the longitudinal development of these motivational factors and to conduct comparative studies with secular institutions to further reveal their broader impact on academic persistence and student success.

## Implications

This study provides key theoretical awareness into the integration of religious and academic motivation within faith-based higher education contexts. Allport's theory of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation provides a useful framework for understanding how students' religious motivation



impacts their academic behaviors. The study also highlights the importance of adapting motivational theories to different cultural and institutional contexts. By considering how students integrate religious faith in various national settings, this research contributes to a broader understanding of academic motivation. This study focuses on some implications for educators, administrators and policymakers within faith-based higher education institutions. While recognizing four factors firstly, personal-driven motivation by aligning academic programs with students' career aspirations. Integrating internships, career counseling services, professional development within the faith-based framework can enhance students' motivation and post-graduation success. Secondly, self-value motivation by fostering environments that support students' ethical and moral development. Inspiring reflective learning, service-based initiatives, and discussions on values can deepen students' connection between faith and their academic journey, securing that their education remains meaningful beyond the classroom. Thirdly, social motivation plays a vital role in student retention and engagement. Educators and administrators should also foster a strong sense of belonging while promoting student-led organizations, encouraging interaction and community building. These efforts can increase students' overall well-being, long-term affiliation as well academic commitment with their institutions. Finally, achievement motivation highlights the importance of academic severity and personal fulfillment in faith-based education. Institutions should continue to supply intellectually stimulating environments that challenge students while aligning their academic journey with their personal growth and aspirations. By recognizing the connection between academic and religious motivations, educators and administrators can develop more effective strategies to support student success in faith-based educational environments.

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