Empowering Learning: The Mediating Role of Teachers in Enhancing Students' Intrinsic Motivation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study explores the role of teachers as mediators in fostering students' intrinsic motivation—a key driver of independent and sustained learning. Intrinsic motivation encourages engagement in educational activities for personal satisfaction and growth, which is critical for academic and character development. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed to examine teacher-student interactions at a junior high school in Bandung City. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving both teachers and students. The findings revealed that teachers significantly influence intrinsic motivation by acting as mediators and motivators. Strategies such as aligning teaching methods with students' interests, providing emotional and academic support, and creating an engaging learning environment enhance active participation. Furthermore, appropriately challenging tasks, constructive feedback, and meaningful praise bolster students' self-confidence and perseverance. These teacher-mediated practices not only improve academic outcomes but also foster students' self-worth and enthusiasm for learning. The results underscore the importance of a student-centered approach, which values individual needs and preferences, in cultivating a supportive and motivating educational environment. Teachers, by employing adaptive and engaging strategies, play a pivotal role in enhancing intrinsic motivation, thereby shaping a more effective and enjoyable learning experience. Future research should investigate the long-term impacts of these methods across diverse educational settings to refine their application and extend their benefits.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a deliberate and systematic effort aimed at developing human potential across intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions through structured teaching activities (Tanis, 2013). It equips individuals not only with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills relevant to daily life and future demands (Leonard, 2016). This process plays a vital role in shaping character,

fostering critical thinking, nurturing creativity, and building adaptability to navigate a rapidly changing world. Moreover, education serves as a cornerstone for enhancing quality of life, reinforcing moral values, and driving the development of an inclusive and sustainable society (Farid, 2023).

The quality of education can be optimally improved through the enhancement and development of various educational components that support the learning process (Herawan, 2011). These efforts include updating curricula to align with contemporary needs, enhancing the competence and professionalism of educators, upgrading educational facilities and infrastructure, and ensuring equitable access to education for all societal groups (Firdianti, 2018). The design and effective implementation of quality educational programs are crucial in facilitating successful learning processes, ultimately producing competent, creative, and globally prepared individuals (Suryani, 2021).

Quality education is profoundly shaped by the collaborative roles of teachers, students, and various educational components integral to the learning process. For an educational environment to be effective, these elements must function cohesively, fostering a system that holistically improves educational quality (Riowati & Yunanto, 2022). In the era of globalization, education has emerged as a pivotal force in determining the trajectory of Indonesian society's development. To meet the dynamic demands of the global era, quality education must evolve continuously, preparing individuals to navigate and address modern challenges effectively (Oviyanti, 2016). Thus, fostering synergy among all educational stakeholders and embracing adaptability are essential to advancing educational outcomes and empowering future generations.

Education in the globalization era must address the multifaceted challenges brought by global integration. This includes cultivating individuals with not only academic knowledge but also practical skills, critical thinking abilities, and moral and cultural values relevant to contributing on a global stage (Dacholfany, 2015). Such education should prepare students for a dynamic workforce and empower them to become responsible, innovative global citizens. Therefore, education in the global era must extend beyond academic achievement, focusing on developing essential skills and character to enable individuals to compete and contribute positively to an ever-evolving global community (Komala, 2022).

The teacher plays a pivotal role as an educator in designing and implementing pedagogical processes that support effective learning. As learning designers, teachers develop structured teaching plans, incorporating appropriate methods and strategies to create an interactive and inspiring educational environment (Diana, 2023). Beyond instructional roles, teachers are also life value educators, imparting morals, ethics, and social norms to shape students into intellectually capable individuals with integrity and social responsibility. To fulfill these roles effectively, teachers must possess in-depth knowledge, broad perspectives, and the ability to understand the individual and collective needs of their students (Yunanto & Kasanova, 2023).

A major challenge in education today is the lack of student motivation, manifested through disengagement during lessons, limited class participation, and incomplete tasks (Yustika et al., 2019). This issue is not only a personal struggle for students but also reflects broader socio-cultural factors. The irrelevance of learning materials to students' real-life experiences often stems from a curriculum that fails to integrate diverse cultural contexts and evolving societal needs. Unengaging teaching methods may mirror entrenched educational norms that prioritize rote memorization over creative exploration. Furthermore, external pressures, such as societal expectations for academic excellence or economic disparities affecting access to resources, can exacerbate students' disconnection. If left unaddressed, this lack of motivation can lead to systemic inequities, negatively impacting academic performance and stunting students' holistic development, including their social and emotional growth (Nurfallah & Pradipta, 2021).

Intrinsic motivation, defined as an internal drive to engage in activities for personal interest or satisfaction rather than external rewards, is pivotal in education. It not only enhances individual engagement but also reflects socio-cultural dynamics that value autonomy and self-expression. Intrinsically motivated students often experience higher levels of diligence, persistence, and active participation, which contribute to greater academic success and personal growth in cognitive, social, and

emotional realms (Ena & Djami, 2021; Umar et al., 2023). Culturally inclusive educational practices that acknowledge and celebrate students' backgrounds play a crucial role in fostering this motivation. When students see their cultures and identities reflected in the curriculum, they feel a sense of belonging, which strengthens their intrinsic interest in learning.

Teachers play a central role in cultivating intrinsic motivation, not just through their teaching methods but also as cultural mediators. They inspire students by connecting subject matter to meaningful real-world applications and diverse cultural contexts (Nurishlah et al., 2023). This requires strong pedagogical competence, encompassing the ability to design lessons that are both engaging and culturally responsive to address the varying needs of students (Setiyowati & Winaryati, 2017). Additionally, teacher professionalism—marked by deep subject knowledge and adaptive approaches to diverse learning styles—has a profound impact on enhancing intrinsic motivation (Kastawi et al., 2021). By acknowledging the socio-cultural dimensions of motivation, teachers can create inclusive and dynamic learning environments that empower students to excel academically while fostering their identity and agency within a multicultural society.

The teacher's ability to build positive relationships with students significantly influences their intrinsic motivation. When students feel valued, heard, and supported by their teachers, they are more likely to feel comfortable in the learning environment and motivated to explore their potential (Maulia, 2023). These positive relationships foster a safe and supportive atmosphere where students are encouraged to embrace new ideas, learn from mistakes, and take pride in their achievements. Consequently, the teacher's role extends beyond transferring knowledge to creating conditions that nurture intrinsic motivation for independent and enthusiastic learning (Trinova, 2012).

This research aims to explore the teacher's role as a mediator in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation during the learning process. It seeks to understand how teachers can facilitate and inspire students to learn independently and passionately through approaches tailored to individual needs. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for teachers on effective strategies to foster intrinsic motivation. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to the development of more engaging and relevant teaching methods, ultimately enhancing students' academic performance and personal growth.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach to deeply understand the teacher's role as a mediator in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. According to Bogdan and Taylor, as cited in Moleong (2014), qualitative methodology emphasizes collecting descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observable behaviors, providing a nuanced understanding of the phenomena being studied. This method seeks to capture a holistic perspective of teacher-student interactions within the learning environment and explore how teachers facilitate the development of intrinsic motivation, considering the broader socio-cultural and institutional contexts.

2.1 Participant Selection

The research was conducted at PGRI Junior High School in Cikaum, Subang Regency. To ensure diverse and representative participation, a purposive sampling technique was employed, targeting teachers and students who demonstrated varying levels of engagement and experience in the learning process. Participants were selected based on criteria such as teaching tenure, subject specialization, and students' academic and motivational profiles. This selection process aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences to enhance the reliability and applicability of the findings. Detailed records of participant demographics were maintained to evaluate how diversity—such as age, gender, and socio-cultural background—influenced the research outcomes.

2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Three primary techniques were utilized for data collection: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted in natural classroom settings to examine real-time teacher-student interactions and the contextual dynamics influencing intrinsic motivation. In-depth interviews provided an opportunity to gather rich, personal insights from both teachers and students, exploring their perceptions, strategies, and challenges. Documentation, including lesson plans, instructional materials, and assessment records, offered supplementary data to triangulate the findings and validate the observational and interview data.

2.3 Triangulation for Data Validity

To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, a triangulation process was systematically implemented. This included methodological triangulation (using multiple data collection methods), source triangulation (comparing data from different participants such as teachers, students, and school administrators), and theoretical triangulation (analyzing findings using multiple conceptual frameworks related to motivation and pedagogy). Regular peer debriefings with fellow researchers were conducted to critically review the interpretation of the data and reduce bias. Additionally, member checking was employed, where participants reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the interview summaries and thematic interpretations.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (Gunawan, 2013), encompassing three key stages:
1. Data Reduction: Identifying and organizing relevant information by coding transcripts, field notes, and documentation based on emerging themes related to intrinsic motivation.
2. Data Presentation: Structuring the processed data into matrices, narratives, and visual formats to facilitate comprehensive analysis and interpretation.
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Synthesizing the data to develop evidence-based conclusions and continuously revisiting the data to confirm their consistency and relevance.

This structured and robust methodological approach ensures a thorough examination of the role teachers play in fostering students' intrinsic motivation, highlighting effective strategies and their impact on learning outcomes. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights into designing teaching practices that support student motivation and achievement while accounting for the diversity and complexity of educational contexts.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Role of Teachers as Mediators in Improving Motivation Intrinsic Study Student

As educators, teachers play a crucial role as effective mediators in the learning process. In this role, teachers are not merely transmitters of information but also facilitators who provide relevant media and tools to support students' learning activities (Lumuan et al., 2023). The selection of learning media should captivate students' interest and align with their needs, fostering active engagement and enhancing intrinsic motivation. To achieve this, teachers must possess the skills to select, utilize, and develop innovative learning media—ranging from modern technology to conventional methods—aimed at creating an enjoyable and challenging learning environment (Susilo & Sofiarini, 2020).

Furthermore, teachers should integrate diverse methods, materials, and effective evaluation techniques to ensure learning objectives are optimally achieved. A variety of teaching methods can cater to different learning styles, helping students grasp material more effectively. Additionally, incorporating materials relevant to students' lives makes learning more meaningful, while constructive evaluations provide valuable feedback that encourages students to continue learning and growing

(Efendi & Sholeh, 2023). Thus, the teacher's role as a mediator extends beyond providing learning media to creating a supportive, inspiring, and motivational learning environment that maximizes student outcomes.

Intrinsic motivation refers to the natural drive originating from within an individual to engage in an activity for personal satisfaction or to fulfill a curiosity, rather than external rewards or pressures. It emphasizes the process over the outcome, making activities feel more meaningful (Calicchio, 2023). In education, intrinsic motivation is vital because it inspires students to learn enthusiastically, not solely due to external demands like grades. For example, intrinsically motivated students may explore a subject out of genuine curiosity and a desire to master the material, rather than simply striving for high marks (Makki & Aflahah, 2019).

Several factors influence intrinsic motivation, including the sense of achievement, satisfaction after completing a task, internal pressure to grow, or challenges that test an individual's abilities. Moreover, emotional state, deadlines, and the relevance of activities to personal interests significantly affect motivation levels. In supportive environments, intrinsic motivation flourishes, such as when individuals feel valued for their efforts and the learning process. Conversely, activities perceived as overly burdensome or irrelevant can diminish intrinsic motivation. Therefore, fostering a supportive and engaging environment is essential to nurturing intrinsic motivation, both in educational settings and daily life.

The findings reveal that teachers play a multifaceted role as motivators in enhancing student motivation by offering both emotional and academic support. Emotional support involves building positive relationships where students feel valued and understood. As one teacher noted,

> *"Listening to students and appreciating their efforts, no matter how small, helps them feel confident and more engaged in the learning process."*

This sense of belonging motivates students to explore their potential. On the academic side, teachers provide clear guidance and create achievable challenges tailored to students' abilities, fostering an environment conducive to active learning and personal growth.

Adapting teaching methods and learning materials to suit students' learning styles and interests emerged as another critical factor. For instance, visual learners benefit from interactive media, while kinesthetic learners thrive on practical simulations. A teacher shared,

> *"Relating lessons to students' daily lives makes learning meaningful for them—they see the connection between what they study and the real world.* This personalized approach deepens engagement and boosts intrinsic motivation.

Teachers also motivate students by setting challenging yet realistic goals. These objectives are broken into manageable steps, allowing students to experience success at every stage.

> *"Students feel accomplished when they achieve even small goals, which builds their confidence to tackle more complex challenges,"* a participant explained. This approach instills persistence and a growth mindset.

Building students' self-confidence is closely tied to recognizing their efforts rather than just their outcomes. Teachers create a supportive environment where students can express themselves without fear of judgment. Constructive feedback helps students understand that mistakes are part of the learning process, as one teacher highlighted:

> *"When students see failure as a learning opportunity, they are more willing to take risks and keep improving."*

The teacher's role as a positive role model was another key finding. Teachers inspire students by demonstrating enthusiasm, resilience, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Sharing personal

experiences of overcoming challenges helps students adopt a proactive and optimistic approach to their own studies. *"When students see us persevere, it motivates them to do the same,"* one teacher shared.

Creating a positive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere also significantly enhances motivation. Interactive teaching methods, such as group discussions and educational games, engage students while reducing stress. A teacher explained, *"When the learning environment is fun and welcoming, students participate more actively and feel excited about learning."*

Fair and constructive praise further encourages students by recognizing their efforts and progress. *"Acknowledging the process rather than just the outcome makes students feel valued,"* a teacher noted, emphasizing the importance of sincerity and relevance in praise.

Providing clear feedback and evaluations helps students identify areas for improvement and reinforces their strengths. Specific suggestions and transparent assessments foster better teacher-student relationships and motivate students to strive for excellence. As one participant stated, *"Feedback should guide students forward while celebrating their achievements."*

Clarifying learning goals and their relevance to real-world applications gives students a sense of direction. Teachers ensure that students understand how their efforts align with broader academic and personal objectives. *"Explaining why something is important helps students focus and work towards meaningful outcomes,"* a teacher remarked.

Lastly, sparking student interest by connecting lessons to their hobbies or introducing innovative approaches like project-based learning fosters deeper engagement. *"When students find the material exciting and relevant to their passions, they become eager to learn,"* a teacher explained, highlighting the value of tailoring topics to individual interests.

By implementing these strategies, teachers create a dynamic and supportive learning environment that nurtures intrinsic motivation, driving both academic achievement and personal development.

3.2 Teacher's Efforts in Increase Motivation Intrinsic Student

The research findings underscore the importance of intrinsic motivation in the learning process and highlight how teachers can play a pivotal role in fostering it. Beyond merely transferring knowledge, teachers serve as facilitators and motivators, employing various strategies to inspire students to engage enthusiastically in learning. As one teacher expressed during an interview,

> *"Motivating students is not just about teaching the material but about making them feel valued, supported, and eager to learn."*

One effective approach is sparking students' curiosity. Teachers provoke students' interest by asking engaging questions that encourage exploration and critical thinking. *"When I ask questions that connect with their daily lives or challenges their thinking, I see them lean in and get excited about finding the answers,"* a teacher explained. This strategy not only engages students but also encourages them to independently seek knowledge, strengthening their intrinsic drive to learn.

Creating a pleasant and interactive learning environment is another critical method. Teachers incorporate educational games, group discussions, and interactive activities to make learning enjoyable and reduce boredom. *"When the classroom is lively and fun, students participate more actively,"* said one teacher, adding that these activities help students grasp complex concepts while building enthusiasm for learning.

Acknowledging students' efforts through fair praise and recognition also emerged as a powerful motivator. One teacher shared, *"I always make sure to praise not just their results but their hard work and perseverance. It builds their confidence and motivates them to keep trying."* Such recognition fosters a sense of achievement and encourages students to continue their efforts.

Challenging students with tasks that require creativity and problem-solving is another strategy. Providing tasks slightly above their comfort zone encourages growth while maintaining engagement. *"I give them problems that make them think differently, and when they succeed, their confidence and motivation skyrocket,"* a participant noted.

Visualization techniques, such as using diagrams, videos, or real-life examples, make abstract concepts more accessible and engaging. A teacher highlighted, *"When I use videos or diagrams, students are more attentive and can connect the material to real-world applications."*

Healthy competition was also identified as a motivating factor. Organizing team-based competitions encourages collaboration and active participation. *"Students love competing in teams; it builds teamwork and motivates them to study harder,"* said one teacher, emphasizing the benefits of combining fun with learning.

Valuing students' efforts rather than focusing solely on outcomes is a recurring theme. Teachers emphasized the importance of appreciating students' perseverance, even when their results are imperfect. *"I always acknowledge their effort, which makes them feel proud and keeps them motivated to improve,"* shared a teacher.

By implementing these strategies, teachers create a supportive and engaging learning environment that fosters intrinsic motivation, helping students develop their potential and achieve educational success. The findings emphasize the critical role teachers play in shaping not only students' academic performance but also their confidence, curiosity, and long-term enthusiasm for learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the critical role teachers play as mediators in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation in the learning process. Intrinsic motivation, driven by an internal desire for personal satisfaction or curiosity, is fundamental to fostering active engagement and meaningful learning outcomes (Calicchio, 2023). Teachers, as facilitators, adopt multiple strategies to nurture this motivation, focusing not just on knowledge delivery but also on creating an environment that inspires students to learn enthusiastically.

One of the most significant strategies identified is the dual role of teachers in providing emotional and academic support. Emotional support fosters positive teacher-student relationships, making students feel valued and understood. As one teacher noted, "Motivating students is not just about teaching the material but about making them feel valued, supported, and eager to learn." Academic support, meanwhile, includes clear guidance, achievable challenges, and personalized instruction tailored to students' abilities and interests. These combined efforts create a conducive learning environment that maximizes students' potential (Lumuan et al., 2023; Susilo & Sofiarini, 2020).

Another critical finding is the importance of aligning teaching methods and materials with students' learning styles and interests. By using diverse methods, such as interactive media for visual learners or practical simulations for kinesthetic learners, teachers make learning more engaging and relatable. A teacher shared, "Relating lessons to students' daily lives makes learning meaningful—they see the connection between what they study and the real world." This approach not only deepens engagement but also bolsters intrinsic motivation (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023).

Setting challenging but realistic goals is another strategy that promotes motivation. Breaking objectives into smaller, progressive steps helps students experience success incrementally, which boosts confidence and persistence. As a teacher explained, "Students feel accomplished when they achieve even small goals, which builds their confidence to tackle more complex challenges." This growth mindset aligns with research emphasizing the role of achievable goals in fostering intrinsic motivation (Makki & Aflahah, 2019).

The findings also highlight the role of constructive feedback and recognition in boosting student motivation. Teachers who focus on effort rather than outcomes help build students' self-confidence and resilience. "When students see failure as a learning opportunity, they are more willing to take risks and keep improving," a participant noted. This aligns with studies suggesting that constructive feedback fosters a supportive learning atmosphere, encouraging students to engage more deeply in their studies (Trinova, 2012).

The importance of teachers as role models was also evident. Teachers who demonstrate enthusiasm, dedication, and resilience inspire students to adopt similar attitudes. Sharing personal

experiences of overcoming challenges was particularly impactful. "When students see us persevere, it motivates them to do the same," shared one teacher. Such behavior reinforces the teacher's role as a source of inspiration and motivation (Calicchio, 2023).

Creating a positive and enjoyable learning environment emerged as another essential factor. Teachers employed interactive activities, such as group discussions and educational games, to reduce boredom and increase engagement. "When the classroom is lively and fun, students participate more actively and feel excited about learning," a teacher explained. This approach is supported by research emphasizing the importance of positive classroom environments in fostering intrinsic motivation (Susilo & Sofiarini, 2020).

Lastly, the study highlights the importance of making learning relevant to students' interests and lives. By connecting lessons to real-world applications or personal hobbies, teachers sparked students' curiosity and engagement. "When students find the material exciting and relevant to their passions, they become eager to learn," a teacher shared. This relevance enhances students' intrinsic drive to learn, making the process more meaningful and sustainable (Efendi & Sholeh, 2023).

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that teachers, through their roles as mediators, facilitators, and role models, significantly influence students' intrinsic motivation. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering academic success and personal growth by implementing strategies such as providing emotional support, adapting teaching methods, setting realistic goals, giving constructive feedback, and creating engaging learning environments. These strategies underscore that effective teaching goes beyond mere content delivery, highlighting the need for holistic approaches that address learning's cognitive, emotional, and socio-cultural dimensions.

While these findings provide valuable insights, further research is essential to explore the long-term impact of these strategies on students' motivation and overall development. Longitudinal studies could investigate how these teaching practices influence students' academic and personal growth over extended periods. Additionally, examining the implementation of these strategies in diverse educational contexts, such as rural and urban schools, would offer a more comprehensive understanding of their applicability and effectiveness across varying socio-economic and cultural settings. Such research would not only validate the current findings but also contribute to developing adaptable, context-sensitive approaches for enhancing intrinsic motivation in education globally.

4.   CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers play a pivotal role as mediators in enhancing students' intrinsic motivation, which is fundamental to fostering engagement and meaningful learning outcomes. The findings underscore that intrinsic motivation, driven by an internal desire for satisfaction and curiosity, thrives in supportive and engaging learning environments. Teachers contribute to this motivation by providing both emotional and academic support, which helps students feel valued and confident in their ability to learn. Effective strategies identified include aligning teaching methods with students' learning styles and interests, setting achievable yet challenging goals, and providing constructive feedback that focuses on effort and growth rather than solely on outcomes. Teachers also inspire students by serving as role models, demonstrating resilience, enthusiasm, and a commitment to lifelong learning. Furthermore, creating interactive and enjoyable classroom atmospheres and making learning relevant to real-world applications strengthen students' intrinsic motivation and foster a deeper connection to the material. These findings emphasize the multifaceted role of teachers in shaping not only students' academic success but also their confidence, curiosity, and persistence. Future research should expand on these strategies across diverse educational settings to validate these findings and explore long-term impacts on student development.

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