

Research on the Influencing Factors of Students' Learning Motivation and Incentive Mechanisms in Local Ethnic Colleges and Universities—Taking the Human Resource Management Major at Sichuan Minzu College as an Example

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Abstract: *A well-designed learning incentive mechanism in colleges and universities is crucial for enhancing college students' learning motivation and stimulating their intrinsic drive to learn. Investigations have revealed that college students in local ethnic universities are not highly motivated to study. Research on the incentive mechanism of college students in these institutions holds significant practical importance for improving student engagement, building a high-quality education system, and delivering education that satisfies the public. This study focuses on students majoring in Human Resource Management at Sichuan Minzu College, conducting comprehensive assessments and surveys among both students and faculty. Based on the survey results, factors influencing students' learning motivation include interest in their major, clear learning objectives, academic atmosphere, positions held in college or class, and praise from teachers and peers. Given these factors, the study proposes improvements to the incentive mechanism to promote the learning motivation of students in local ethnic universities.*

Keywords: *Local Ethnic Universities; Students; Learning Motivation; Incentive Mechanism*

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress emphasizes the need to provide education that satisfies the people, comprehensively improve the quality of self-reliant talent cultivation, and accelerate the construction of a high-quality education system. Local ethnic universities are supposed to actively respond to national development goals, enhance the quality of education, and cultivate outstanding talents needed for societal progress and modernization. A well-designed incentive mechanism is conducive to stimulating students' learning potential, promoting their learning motivation, and improving the educational quality of local ethnic universities. It is crucial for students' acquisition of knowledge and the development of competencies if they have high motivation to achieve self-directed and sustainable learning.^[1] Therefore, it is important to investigate the factors influencing the learning motivation of students in local ethnic universities and to establish reasonable incentive measures based on these factors.

2. Overview of Human Resource Management Students at Sichuan Minzu College

2.1. Program Introduction

The Human Resource Management (HRM) program at Sichuan Minzu College was established in 2004. In 2013, with the approval of the Ministry of Education, the program was officially upgraded to a bachelor's degree program, becoming one of the five undergraduate programs offered by the School of Economics and Management. In the long-term 19-year history of junior and undergraduate education, the program has gradually established a comprehensive talent cultivation model integrating six key elements: curriculum, culture, activities, management, practice, and collaboration. The program has consistently organized and hosted simulated recruitment fairs as a professional training activity for 16 consecutive years. Students in the program demonstrate strong comprehensive qualities and have frequently achieved top honors, including grand prizes and first prizes, in national and regional

competitions such as the National College Student Knowledge and Skills Competition, the Southwest Regional College Student Knowledge and Skills Competition, and the Sichuan Provincial Human Resource Knowledge and Skills Competition. The faculty structure is well-balanced regarding age, academic rank, and qualifications. Currently, the program employs eight senior faculty members, five intermediate-level faculty members, and three junior faculty members, with the majority being young and middle-aged teachers.

2.2. Basic Information of Students in the Program

The program currently has 196 enrolled students, including 55 freshmen, 49 sophomores, 52 juniors, and 40 seniors. Detailed information is presented in Table 1. The largest number of students come from Luzhou (n=23), followed by Liangshan Prefecture (n=22), Yibin (n=18), Chengdu (n=17), and Nanchong (n=16). Collectively, students from these five regions account for 49% of the total student population. Although it is a local ethnic college, the majority of students are of the Han ethnic group, with 173 Han students and 23 ethnic minority students representing 11.7% of the total. Among the students, 105 are from rural areas as current-year graduates, and 45 are from rural areas as previous-year graduates, totaling 76% of the student body, indicating that the majority of students come from rural backgrounds. The student population is evenly split between arts and sciences disciplines. There are 59 male students, accounting for 30.1% of the total, and 137 female students, making up 69.9%.

Table 1. Class Size Statistics

	Class Name	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	HRM Class 1945	40	20.4	20.4	20.4
	HRM Class 2045	52	26.5	26.5	46.9
	HRM Class 2145	49	25.0	25.0	71.9
	HRM Class 2245	55	28.1	28.1	100.0
	Total	196	100.0	100.0	

2.3. The Current Situation of Student Learning

The authors conducted a random sampling survey of 196 students in the college, with a sample size of 149. Based on the statistical analysis of the sample, 2.7% of the students considered themselves "very diligent" in their studies, while 22.8% regarded themselves as "relatively diligent." The survey reveals that the majority of students have not achieved a satisfactory level of diligence, and the learning motivation of most students needs to be stimulated. Regarding interest in their major, as shown in Table 2, 4.7% of the students reported being "very interested," while 30.9% indicated being "somewhat interested," which indicates that most students have a lack of significant interest in their field of study. Additionally, the statistics reveal that 26.2% of the students do not have clear learning objectives, and 52.3% lack a well-defined study plan, which implies that some students lack learning goals, and the vast majority do not have structured learning plans. Only 37.6% of the students showed interest in various trainings, lectures, and academic conferences. In summary, students in the Human Resource Management program at this college are not sufficiently diligent in their studies, exhibit low learning motivation, lack clear objectives and plans, and show limited interest in their major. Therefore, it is crucial to develop appropriate learning incentive mechanisms and measures to enhance teaching quality and cultivate qualified talent.

Table 2. Are You Interested in Your Major?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	A. Very Interested	7	4.7	4.7	4.7
	B. Somewhat Interested	46	30.9	30.9	35.6
	C. Neutral	82	55.0	55.0	90.6
	D. Somewhat Uninterested	7	4.7	4.7	95.3
	E. Very Uninterested	7	4.7	4.7	100.0
	Total	149	100.0	100.0	

3. Analysis of the questionnaire on factors affecting students' learning

3.1. Lack of Interest in the Major Significantly Affects Learning

According to the statistical data, a chi-square test was conducted with two hypotheses as follows.

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant correlation between interest in the major and diligence in learning.

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant correlation between interest in the major and diligence in learning.

Response categories were merged to avoid expected counts of less than 5 in order to ensure the validity of the chi-square test. Specifically, "Very Interested" and "Somewhat Interested" were combined into "Interested," while "Somewhat Uninterested" and "Very Uninterested" were combined into "Uninterested." Similarly, "Very Diligent" and "Somewhat Diligent" were combined into "Diligent," and "Not Diligent" and "Very Not Diligent" were combined into "Not Diligent." The results of the chi-square test, as shown in Table 3, indicate a chi-square value of 12.298 and a p-value of 0.015, which is below the significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, indicating that there is a significant correlation between interest in the major and study diligence; that is, lack of interest in the major will significantly affect learning.

Table 3. Chi-Square Test Results for Learning and Interest in Major

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.298 ^a	4	.015
Likelihood Ratio	12.464	4	.014
N of Valid Cases	149		

Note: a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected counts less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.23.

3.2. Clear Learning Objectives Have a Significant Impact on Diligence in Learning

In the questionnaire, student responses were categorized as follows: options A ("pursuing further education") and B ("acquiring solid professional knowledge and skills") were classified as having clear learning objectives; option C ("obtaining a diploma") was defined as having unclear learning objectives; and options D ("not disappointing parents"), E ("having fun"), and F ("others") were classified as having no learning objectives. The null hypothesis (H_0) claims that there is no correlation between having clear learning objectives and diligence in learning, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) states that such a correlation exists. A chi-square test was conducted through SPSS on the questionnaire data, and the results are presented in Table 4. As shown in the table, the chi-square value is 10.398, with a p-value of 0.034, which is below the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a dependency between having clear learning objectives and diligence in learning. This leads to the conclusion that clear learning objectives have a significant impact on whether students are diligent in their studies.

Table 4. Chi-Square Test Results for Learning Objectives and Diligence in Learning

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (two-sided)
Pearson chi-square	10.398 ^a	4	.034
Likelihood ratio	10.479	4	.033
N in valid cases	149		

Note: a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected counts less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.33.

3.3. The Significant Impact of Learning Atmosphere on Learning

It is widely recognized that the learning atmosphere has a significant impact on learning. This is why many parents strive to enroll their children in schools and classes with a positive learning environment. Schools and classes, in turn, make efforts to establish and maintain such an atmosphere. A common phenomenon is observed where outstanding students often come from the same class, all members of a dormitory receive scholarships, or all dormitory members are admitted to graduate programs. These phenomena are quite likely related to the learning atmosphere of the class or dormitory.

From the cross-tabulation of diligence in learning and satisfaction with the learning atmosphere shown in Table 5, it is found that among the 66 students who reported being "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the learning atmosphere, 39 were "very diligent" or "somewhat diligent" in their studies, while only 9 were "not diligent" or "very not diligent," accounting for less than 14%. Conversely, among the 23 students who reported being "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the learning atmosphere, 17 were "not diligent" or "very not diligent," while only 3 were "very diligent" or "somewhat diligent," also accounting for less than 14%. These statistical results indicate a strong correlation between the learning atmosphere and diligence in learning.

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of Diligence in Learning and Satisfaction with Learning Atmosphere

		Are You Satisfied with the Learning Atmosphere?					Total
		A. Very Satisfied	B. Somewhat Satisfied	C. Neutral	D. Somewhat Dissatisfied	E. Very Dissatisfied	
	A. Very Diligent	2	5	1	1	0	9
	B. Somewhat Diligent	7	25	17	2	0	51
	C. Neutral	3	15	30	2	1	51
	D. Not Diligent	0	8	9	14	1	32
	E. Very Not Diligent	0	1	3	1	1	6
Total		12	54	60	20	3	149

3.4. Holding Positions in the College or Class Has a Positive Impact on Learning

An increasing number of research indicates that holding positions in college or class has a positive impact on students' learning and personal development. Serving in such roles not only enhances students' motivation and problem-solving abilities but also strengthens their teamwork and leadership skills. Through survey analysis, this study obtained the results presented in Table 6. Among the respondents, 45 students (30.2%) held positions in the college or class, with a mean core course score of 79.49 and a standard deviation of 4.645. In contrast, 104 students (69.8%) did not hold any positions, with a mean core course score of 74.2 and a standard deviation of 6.146.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Core Course Score (Students with Positions)	45	79.49	4.645	.692
Core Course Score (Students without Positions)	104	74.20	6.146	.603

Comparing the mean core course scores of the two groups of students, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_0 (Null Hypothesis): $\mu_1 \leq \mu_2$ (The mean core course score of students with positions is not higher than that of students without positions).

H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): $\mu_1 > \mu_2$ (The mean core course score of students with positions is significantly higher than that of students without positions).

Since the core course scores of the two groups of students have unknown and unequal variances, a two-sample t-test with unequal variances (also known as Welch's t-test) was conducted. The test results, as shown in Table 7, reveal a p-value of 3.9384E-08, which is significantly less than 0.05. At the 0.05 significance level, the authors reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1), concluding that the mean core course score of students with positions is significantly higher than that of students without positions. Therefore, it is ultimately determined that holding positions in the college or class has a positive impact on learning.

Table 7. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval for the Difference	
									Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Core Course Score	Equal variances assumed	3.950	.049	-2.164	147	.000	-5.287	1.024	-7.310	-3.264
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.760	109.160	.000	-5.287	.918	-7.106	-3.468

3.5. Praise from Teachers and Peers Has a Positive Impact on Student Learning

Praise is a powerful motivational tool, whether from teachers or peers, that can significantly influence students' learning motivation and performance. Praise enhances students' learning motivation. Students are more willing to engage in their studies when they receive recognition and encouragement from teachers or peers. This positive feedback makes students feel that their efforts are acknowledged, thereby stimulating their enthusiasm for learning.^[2] Additionally, praise helps students build self-confidence,

enabling them to face academic challenges more courageously.

This study obtained the results presented in Table 8 through a questionnaire survey. The analysis reveals that 109 students (73.2%) who received praise had a mean core course score of 77.97, with a standard deviation of 5.167. In contrast, 40 students (26.8%) who did not receive praise had a mean core course score of 69.88, with a standard deviation of 4.847.

Table 8. Group Statistics

	Received Praise from Teachers or Peers	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of Mean
Core Course Score	Yes	109	77.97	5.167	.495
	No	40	69.88	4.847	.766

Comparing the mean core course scores of the two groups of students, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_0 ' (Null Hypothesis): $\mu_1 \leq \mu_2$ (The mean core course score of students who received praise is not higher than that of students who did not receive praise).

H_1 ' (Alternative Hypothesis): $\mu_1 > \mu_2$ (The mean core course score of students who received praise is significantly higher than that of students who did not receive praise).

Since the core course scores of the two groups have unknown and unequal variances, a two-sample t-test with unequal variances (Welch's t-test) was conducted. The test results, as shown in Table 9, reveal a p-value of 1.47926E-13, which is significantly less than 0.05. At the 0.05 significance level, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0 ') and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_1 '), concluding that the mean core course score of students who received praise is significantly higher than that of students who did not receive praise. Therefore, it is ultimately determined that praise from teachers and peers has a positive impact on student learning.

Table 9. Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Standard Error	95% Confidence Interval for the Difference	
									Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Core Course Score	Equal variances assumed	.072	.789	10.616	147	.000	8.097	.940	6.240	9.955
	Equal variances not assumed			10.876	73.673	.000	8.097	.912	6.280	9.915

4. Research on Incentive Mechanisms and Measures to Improve Student Learning

4.1. Measures to Stimulate Academic Interest

4.1.1. Strengthening Professional Guidance and Stimulating Academic Interest

It is crucial to strengthen professional guidance for students, hold more academic lectures, increase professional introductory courses, etc., in order to guide students to learn professional knowledge systematically and thoroughly. Additionally, think about problems from a broader perspective, which is very beneficial for students' future professional learning and career development. [3] Regularly organizing a series of lectures to introduce the background, development trends, and career prospects of the Human Resource Management major will enhance students' recognition and interest in the major.

4.1.2. Demonstrating Professional Value and Stimulating Academic Interest

Students and alumni are invited to share their successful experiences in this field to present professional achievements. Through case-based teaching, simulated corporate recruitment, training, and performance management projects, students are able to understand the application of theory in real-world work contexts.

4.1.3. Enhancing Course Enjoyment to Stimulate Professional Interest

Teachers should adopt vivid and interesting teaching methods to stimulate students' interest in learning. For example, case studies, field trips, group discussions, etc., guide students to learn and explore

in practice, hence increasing the enjoyment and practicality of learning. Moreover, teachers are suggested to encourage students to form interest groups for self-directed learning and discussion and enhance their interest in professional learning by designing competitions or challenge projects.

4.2. Setting Learning Goals and Conducting SMART Goal Management

It is essential to strengthen ideological education by inviting outstanding alumni to return to campus and deliver lectures, helping university students recognize the direct connection between their academic journey and future career prospects. This approach fosters a sense of responsibility and urgency in their studies.^[4] Teachers could guide students to plan their future development based on their personal interests and market demand, combined with the career planning courses offered by the school. Additionally, teachers are advised to help students conduct SMART goal management for learning, clarify learning goals, set specific and quantifiable goals for each semester, and regularly evaluate progress. SMART goals represent the five elements of effective goal setting and execution: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.^[5]

4.3. Creating a Supportive Learning Atmosphere

Although all classes aim to create a great learning atmosphere, the statistical results show that only 66 students of the Human Resources Management major at Sichuan Minzu College are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the learning atmosphere, accounting for less than 44%. Hence, it is necessary to strengthen the learning atmosphere construction, for the learning atmosphere has not been recognized by most students. Firstly, the college could stimulate students' academic interest and innovation skills by organizing various academic activities such as academic lectures, seminars, academic competitions, etc. Secondly, the college is supposed to encourage students to participate in various clubs and volunteer activities, cultivate students' teamwork spirit and social skills, and contribute to the enhancement of students' sense of belonging and responsibility. Thirdly, the college needs to create a good learning environment by improving places such as libraries, self-study rooms, and study areas and creating the necessary environmental conditions for a great learning atmosphere. Finally, the school ought to encourage students with excellent grades to provide tutoring for their classmates and create a learning atmosphere where students help each other and make progress together so as to improve the overall learning level.

4.4. Optimizing College and Class Positions to Leverage Their Positive Impact on Learning

4.4.1. Establishing Diverse Positions

According to the needs of colleges and classes, the school could provide students with more opportunities for positions by establishing various positions, such as study group leaders, event planners, social practice leaders, etc.

4.4.2. Providing Support and Training

Providing necessary support and training for applicants, including interview skills training, work skills training, etc., leads to students' better applications for positions, better performance of their duties, and improvement of work efficiency and learning motivation.

4.4.3. Open Recruitment and Selection

Students have the opportunity to apply and demonstrate their abilities independently through open recruitment and selection, ensuring that all students have the chance to serve as student cadres, which contributes to the ability of students in positions to match the job requirements.

4.4.4. Encouraging Students to Participate in Decision-making

Students are facilitated to make suggestions and opinions on learning and management work to enhance their sense of responsibility and engagement by encouraging students in positions to participate in the decision-making process.

4.5. Maximizing the Positive Role of Praise in Learning

4.5.1. Helping Students Develop Effective Learning Strategies through Praise

Praise can help students better master learning strategies. Teachers can help students develop effective

learning habits and methods by praising their efforts and progress. For instance, when students demonstrate considerable progress in their learning, teachers can praise their hard work and determination. This praise encourages students to maintain this positive attitude and approach in their future studies. Consequently, schools should foster positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as among peers, promoting mutual praise and encouragement. First, schools should motivate teachers to use positive evaluation methods, providing students with instant affirmation and support, which enhances their self-confidence and motivation. Second, schools should promote mutual praise and encouragement among students to cultivate teamwork and mutual assistance.

4.5.2. Ensuring Targeted and Specific Praise

In order to maximize the positive effects of praise, it is necessary to ensure that praise is targeted and specific. This means that praise should be directed at students' efforts, progress, and achievements rather than their fundamental abilities or talents. In addition, praise should be specific and clear, pointing out students' strengths and advantages.

4.5.3. Transforming Praise from Form to Substance

Teachers also need to pay attention to the way and degree of praise, ensuring that it can truly reflect students' efforts and progress rather than just a form. Teachers also need to be careful not to praise excessively, which may lead to uncomfortable or unreal feelings by students. Therefore, teachers are suggested to give praise moderately while encouraging students to self-evaluate and reflect.

5. Conclusion

This paper uses the Human Resources Management major at Sichuan Minzu College as a case study to conduct an in-depth examination of the factors influencing students' learning enthusiasm in local ethnic colleges. This study identifies the factors that affect students' learning motivation and suggests an incentive mechanism to enhance it by comprehensively evaluating and investigating both students and teachers. The findings indicate factors such as academic interest, well-defined learning objectives, a supportive learning atmosphere, college or class positions, and recognition from teachers and peers significantly impact students' motivation for learning. Hence, schools ought to focus on the following areas to promote students' learning motivation in local ethnic universities. First, enhancing the quality of professional education and fostering students' professional interests. Second, clarifying students' learning goals so they understand the significance and value of their education. Third, cultivating a positive learning environment to spark students' passion for learning. In addition, it strengthens students' sense of responsibility and belonging through their college or class positions. Finally, schools and teachers need to provide timely praise and encouragement to boost students' self-confidence and motivation.

The findings of this study provide significant guidance for local ethnic universities in enhancing students' learning motivation. By establishing and improving the learning incentive mechanism, students' learning interests and motivation can be stimulated, and learning effects can be improved, thereby enhancing the quality of education and meeting people's expectations for education. Simultaneously, this study also provides valuable reference and inspiration for other colleges and universities and has certain reference value for promoting the development of higher education in China.

However, this study still has some limitations. Firstly, this study only takes the Human Resource Management major at Sichuan Minzu College as an example, and the universality of the research results may be limited to a certain extent. Future research could expand the sample range to include more majors and schools to further improve the reliability and universality of the research results. Secondly, this study mainly utilizes questionnaire surveys to collect data, which may evolve certain subjective biases. Future research could combine interviews, observations, and other methods to collect data from multiple perspectives to understand the influencing factors and incentive mechanisms of students' learning motivation more comprehensively. In addition, this study only considers limited influencing factors and future research could further explore other potential factors to understand the formation mechanism of students' learning motivation more thoroughly.

In conclusion, this study reveals the influencing factors and the incentive mechanism of students' learning motivation in local ethnic universities through empirical research and provides certain theoretical support and practical guidance for improving students' motivation and educational quality. Future research could be further deepened and expanded based on this study to continuously improve the education level and talent training quality of local ethnic colleges and universities.

Acknowledgement

Research Project on Higher Education Teaching Reform of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission - "The Curriculum Construction of Public Administration in Universities in Ethnic Minority Areas - A Case Study of Sichuan Minzu College" (Project No.: 21088).

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