Empowering Learning: Harnessing Self-Determination Theory for Student Motivation and Engagement

Voll, CA: Department of Health and Kinesiology, Purdue University

Context:
The transition to remote teaching in spring 2020 presented significant challenges for student motivation, exacerbated by a lack of consistent schedules and engagement opportunities. Even with the return to face-to-face instruction in fall 2020, students continued to report diminished connections and motivation. Understanding and addressing these motivational challenges is crucial for fostering effective learning environments in both current and future educational contexts.

Objective:
This presentation aims to explore how self-determination theory (SDT) can be applied to enhance student motivation and engagement. By utilizing SDT's framework, educators can develop strategies to create learning environments that better support students' psychological needs, thereby fostering more internalized and autonomous motivation.

Background:
Self-determination theory offers a framework for understanding human motivation by distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Traditional views of extrinsic motivation as purely external are expanded by SDT, which conceptualizes it as a continuum ranging from external regulation to integrated regulation. This nuanced perspective offers valuable insights into educational practices, particularly in terms of how motivation can be internalized.

Description:
The poster will delve into the core components of SDT, including the spectrum of extrinsic motivation and the essential psychological needs that underpin it: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Examples will illustrate how educators can support these needs through course design, such as offering choices in assignments (autonomy), providing formative feedback (competence), and fostering peer interactions (relatedness). These strategies aim to move students along the motivation continuum towards a more autonomous motivation.

Clinical Advantage:
By integrating SDT principles into educational practices, instructors can improve student engagement and motivation, leading to enhanced learning outcomes. Understanding how to meet students' psychological needs will enable educators to design more effective and supportive learning environments, promoting a more motivated and resilient student body, ultimately helping students to internalize their motivation, and become more self-driven learners.

Keywords:
Self-determination theory, student motivation, educational practices, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, psychological needs, autonomy, competence, relatedness.

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