



The Influence of Curriculum Relevance on Students' Learning Motivation: The Mediating Role of Classroom Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of curriculum relevance on students' learning motivation, with particular focus on the mediating role of classroom engagement among university students in Pakistan. The study was conducted to understand how meaningful, useful, and contextually relevant curriculum content can contribute to students' motivation and active participation in the learning process. A quantitative research design was used, and data were collected from 311 university students through an adopted structured questionnaire administered online using Google Forms. The questionnaire included established measures of curriculum relevance, classroom engagement, and students' learning motivation. The respondents were approached through online communication channels, and participation was voluntary. The collected responses were first organized and coded in Microsoft Excel and were then transferred to IBM SPSS for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, simple linear regression, and mediation analysis were used to examine the study variables and their relationships. The findings indicated that curriculum relevance was positively associated with students' learning motivation, suggesting that students were more motivated when they perceived their learning content as meaningful and connected with their academic and practical needs. Curriculum relevance was also positively related to classroom engagement, indicating that relevant curriculum content can encourage students to participate more actively and become more involved in classroom activities. Furthermore, classroom engagement was positively associated with students' learning motivation. The mediation findings showed that classroom engagement significantly mediated the relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation, indicating that greater curriculum relevance may strengthen motivation partly by encouraging active classroom involvement. The study is significant because it provides an integrated understanding of how curriculum relevance and classroom engagement can contribute to students' motivation and learning experiences. The findings may assist teachers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions in developing meaningful learning content and classroom practices that connect academic knowledge with students' interests, experiences, educational needs, and future goals.

Introduction

The Influence of Curriculum Relevance on Students' Learning Motivation

Education is increasingly focusing on teaching practices that help teachers connect learning with students' needs and goals. In teaching, relevance means how well the course content and learning activities match students' interests, needs, and academic goals. It also involves using real-life examples and helping students understand how what they learn today can be useful for their future studies, careers, and everyday life. When students understand the real-life meaning of what they are being taught, what would otherwise be perceived as abstract, memorized information, may find new meaning. Meaningful relevance has been shown to enhance students' understanding of the value of learning and has a positive impact on their engagement in academic activities (Xiangshun & Panicker, 2025). Furthermore, recent evidence shows that relevance-oriented practices are an important aspect of an optimal teaching environment that positively influences students' motivation (Rehman et al., 2024).

Understanding students' motivation plays an important role in determining students' engagement in educational activities. Students' understanding of the real-life meaning of learning helps them make the necessary investment to learn, maintain interest, and persist in overcoming difficulties needed to achieve their learning goals. Students are more motivated to learn when they see the learning activities as valuable to their interests and future purposes (Rosenzweig et al., 2025). Student-centered learning, which emphasizes different dimensions of students' academic motivation, is positively impacted when an understanding of curriculum relevance is integrated into learning (Loyens et al., 2023). Because curriculum relevance is positively associated with students' motivation to learn, educators need to take this into consideration to promote students' engagement in active and sustained learning.

Curriculum Relevance and Contemporary Learning

Relevance of curriculum is one of the most important aspects of effective educational design. Curriculum relevance emphasizes the necessity of connecting formal learning to the learner's present interests, circumstances, social conditions and environment, and anticipated future needs. An educationally relevant curriculum presents multiple potential points of entry and engagement for students to use their knowledge to make sense of their world. It addresses real world situations, and gives opportunities for students to understand how and when they might apply their academic learning in the 'real world' (Quinlan et al., 2024). Cook-Sather and Loh (2023) also emphasize that when educators include lessons which link directly to students' experiences, students tend to appreciate the relevance of what is taught. They perceive the lesson is intended for them and helps them make sense of what they already know. Students tend to feel more interested in the educational content when they recognize what they consider to be personally meaningful and relevant (Erstad & Voogt, 2017). Curriculum relevance can be a good starting point to build students' motivation and help them connect educationally meaningful goals, and thereby strengthen students' motivation and vitality.

Students' Learning Motivation

The term learning motivation is used to describe the various factors that stimulate students' interest and effort in educational activities. These factors may also determine students' tendency to persist in the face of obstacles while studying or working. Motivation may not always be expressed in trying to gain the highest grades; it may also be shown by students' perceptions regarding the meaning and value that learning provides them. Recent studies have shown that student motivation consists of several interrelated factors, including perceived competence, task value, interest, and different reasons for academic participation (Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019).

The development of learning motivation often depends on the nature of students' educational experiences. For students to find meaningfulness and relevance in educational activities and outcomes, they may also increase their perceptions of motivation and engagement. It has also been shown that students who find meaning in the learning materials are more motivated and engaged (Wardani et al., 2020). Further, it has been shown that the use of participation and learning activities that involve students in the process of assessing their own learning contributes to increasing students' perceptions of task value and meaning.

Classroom Engagement in the Learning Process

Classroom engagement is the involvement of students in the learning process. It has behavioral, emotional and cognitive elements. Elements of behavioral engagement include attendance, participation, effort and completion of academic activities. Elements of emotional engagement include the interest level and enjoyment of students and their connection to the learning process. Cognitive engagement is students' investment in the learning process to a degree that they are able to grasp the subject matter and take part

in reasoned discourse. Behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement, are critically interrelated and necessary for successful learning (Boekaerts, 2016).

Perceptions of the learning environment and the motivation of students also influence classroom engagement. If students perceive that certain activities are valuable, they will be likely to actively participate and invest cognitive effort in the activities. Engagement is critical to achievement in educational settings. For example, if students perceive their teachers as warm and caring, they are more likely to engage and perform (Green et al., 2017). Relevant teaching and learning experiences may help students engage in learning. The American education system strives for this through integration of engaging activities in the lesson (Duggal et al., 2021).

Integrated Relationship Among Curriculum Relevance, Learning Motivation, and Classroom Engagement

Literature has shown that curriculum relevance, learning motivation, and classroom engagement exist as interacting elements as opposed to separate areas. Students become interested and motivated toward a curriculum when they perceive the content as relevant and meaningful. Learning motivation and perception of relevance can develop interest and alter students' willingness to engage in and sustain effort throughout classroom activities. Recent research shows that curriculum relevance can stimulate student engagement via motivational beliefs of expectancy and task value (Wang & Eccles, 2013). It may be that classroom engagement provides a link between students' experience of a curriculum and motivation to learn, as well as students' broader engagement with learning.

The research study takes a similar approach with curriculum relevance being the independent variable, learning motivation being the dependent variable, and classroom engagement being the mediating variable. It assumes students respond to relevant curriculum content in various ways including changed motivation and increased participation in the classroom learning process. Previous research has established connection between relevance and motivation as well as between relevance and engagement; however, researching these variables together can provide understanding of the learning process in a more integrated way. This framework is beneficial to understand how curriculum design shapes teaching in a way to create important and relevant learning to stimulate students to become motivated and involved in their learning (Bundick et al., 2014).

Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of curriculum relevance on students' learning motivation.
- To determine the relationship between curriculum relevance and classroom engagement.
- To examine the mediating role of classroom engagement in the relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation.

Problem Statement

Although curriculum relevance is increasingly recognized as important for making learning meaningful and motivating students, many students still feel that their education is not connected to their personal interests and goals. Recent research suggests that when teachers make learning more relevant to students' lives and needs, students show greater autonomous motivation, put more effort into their studies, and have more positive learning experiences (Shehata, 2026). Other research shows that task relevance of a classroom activity influences students' cognitive, behavioral and affective engagement with the classroom activity through expectancy and task value (Boden et al., 2026). Most studies focus on curriculum relevance and learning motivation as independent variables, while less research is available on how engagement with classroom activities can illustrate how curriculum relevance integrates with learning motivation. This is an existing research gap, since explaining how and in what ways curriculum relevance promotes students' motivation to participate, interact, and engage with effort in classroom activities can illustrate an integrated explanation of the learning process. Lastly, other studies have focused on a particular setting or context (online learning, STEM courses, and certain teaching strategies), and less research is available on the influence of curriculum relevance across a wide range of educational settings (Johansen et al., 2023). Therefore, this study contributes to research by focusing on the influence of curriculum relevance on learning motivation of students, and investigating classroom engagement as a possible mediating mechanism.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it provides a clearer understanding of how curriculum relevance can influence students' learning motivation and how classroom engagement may contribute to this relationship. The findings may help teachers understand the importance of connecting curriculum content with students' interests, experiences, academic needs, and future goals so that learning becomes more meaningful and motivating. The study may also assist educational institutions and curriculum developers in designing learning experiences that encourage active classroom participation and sustained student involvement. Furthermore, the study can provide useful information for researchers interested in curriculum design, student motivation, and classroom engagement by presenting an integrated perspective on these variables. Overall, the study may contribute to improving educational practices by highlighting the importance of meaningful curriculum content and active student participation in supporting students' motivation to learn.

Literature Review

Curriculum Relevance as a Foundation for Meaningful Learning

Curriculum relevance refers to the extent to which educational content, activities, and learning experiences relate to students' interests, experiences, needs and aspirations. Traditionally, the task of the teacher has been to create a connection between the classroom teaching and students' real lives. With times and the generation changing, it has become more important than ever. Students of today's time are interested to know why they are being taught a particular thing. More than 250 undergraduate students were interviewed by Bartunek and Ren (2022), and the findings showed that 91% of the respondents were of the view that if an example was relevant to them and their lives, and was also practical and modern, it enhanced the connection and relevance in teaching. In 2022, Kickert et al. supports the view of Sharma et al. (2023) where the authors state that curriculum design is closely connected with the process of student motivation.

(Micallef, 2025) also support the statement where relevance is both a perspective and a critical dimension of student motivation. The theory states that educational activities help learners see the relevance of educational material in their real lives which ultimately energizes the learners, i.e. makes learning purposeful, and motivates them to be actively involved in the learning process. A recent experimental study by Whitmire Jr (2018) also supports the findings where course content was modified to improve relevance. Students' vitality and motivation increased because of improved relevance.

Curriculum Relevance and Students' Learning Motivation

Students are motivated to learn when they see that what they are doing is valuable and meaningful. Disconnected curriculum can ultimately demotivate students. There must be a strong connection to students' relevant experiences for curriculum to motivate learning. Motivating learning occurs when there is a personal, academic, or practical connection to the curriculum. When students realize the practicality and relevance to course content, it strengthens their commitment to learning. Albrecht and Karabenick (2018) noted students' frustration and demotivation with theory and abstract thinking. Revelation of the practicality of the content helped them learn and view the course in a more positive way. In the study, students became more motivated in learning when they realized the connection between course content and their broader interests and relevant experiences. Because of the broader interests, students became more open-minded to self-regulation and motivated themselves in learning. Based on the research done on educational relevance, it is believed that connection of course content to students' personal interests helps course motivation (Johansen et al., 2023).

Classroom Engagement as an Active Dimension of Learning

Classroom engagement describes students' involvement in educational activities and expresses itself in students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation in the classroom. Engaged students not only participate in the activities but also show interest, and make an effort to understand what they are learning. A long-term study conducted by Hodges (2020) illustrated that the school context and students' motivation to achieve are associated with the three forms of classroom engagement (i.e. behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement). More recent studies, however, have reinforced that the classroom context and the motivational resources of the students explain the differences in students' classroom engagement.

According to the studies reviewed, the meaningfulness of students' classroom experiences plays a great role in students' classroom engagement. Students recognize meaningfulness and value in what they learn, and as a result, students become motivated to communicate with others, participate, complete learning activities, and make a cognitive effort. For example, Gutierrez de Blume

et al. (2022) argued that if students perceive that their teacher is supportive of their learning, students' perceptions of instructional support influence their task value beliefs, behavioral and cognitive engagement. It can be concluded that students' engagement is developed through an interaction of students' motivational resources, the educational context, and meaningful classroom activities.

Curriculum Relevance and Classroom Engagement

Curriculum relevance may increase the degree to which learning activities engage students, as students may understand the rationale and importance of the activities. If students understand the importance of activities and how it applies to the interests, experiences and/or future of the students, students may be more inclined to be behaviorally, emotionally and cognitively involved with activities. Career relevant instruction has noted the importance of relevance to students' valuing of school. Instructional support has shown how relevance may influence perceptions of task-value and subsequent involvement (Kusmawan et al., 2025).

Therefore, relevance may help explain different levels of involvement in the classroom. However, relevance alone does not ensure students will find valuing and meaning in activities. This is apparent in students who, although exposed to the same curricula, hold varying interests, goals and perceive differing levels of usefulness. Recent research has supported this view by showing how centering on relevance can affect the motivational and engagement-related state of students positively.

Classroom Engagement and Students' Learning Motivation

Learning motivation and classroom engagement reciprocally stimulate each other. Students need motivation to learn, and when they feel motivated to learn and participate in class activities, they feel a sense of value and interest in participating in classroom activities. Nayır (2017) based on self-determination theory, suggested that, the motivational and emotional resources of students enabled them to be actively involved in the classroom. Relatedly, studies on learning motivation and learning engagement have suggested that, in the world of students, these constructs are closely related in the context of students' educational experiences.

Students who actively participate in meaningful learning may be more motivated to participate, and such participation may further reinforce their investment in learning. As such, motivating students to learn should take various active roles in the classroom. The literature therefore supports treating classroom engagement, curriculum relevance, and learning motivation in an integrated manner, as opposed to analyzing them in isolation.

Curriculum Relevance, Classroom Engagement, and Learning Motivation

The literature suggests that curriculum relevance can affect students' learning motivation both directly and through students' active participation in classroom learning. Classroom learning is seen to strengthen the connection students have to learning and facilitates their motivation. Other research has documented the relationship between relevance and motivation, as well as engagement and motivation. Therefore, there is enough groundwork to examine these variables in an integrated fashion within the same framework (Dabrowski & Marshall, 2018).

More research has looked at the effect of various factors on students' engagement in the classroom than on classroom engagement as the factor that connects curriculum relevance to students' learning motivation. The focus in earlier research has been on the effect of relevance interventions and the assessment of subject value on engagement in specific subjects and learning environments. The present study attempts to fill this literature gap and provide new evidence on curriculum relevance, classroom engagement and students' learning motivation. The study explores whether students' perceptions of curriculum relevance impact their learning motivation and whether engagement in the classroom helps explain this relationship.

Research Gap

Existing research has established that making learning content relevant can strengthen students' motivation and positive learning experiences, with experimental evidence showing that relevance-enhancing activities can increase autonomous motivation and learning effort. Recent studies have also demonstrated that task relevance is strongly associated with students' behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, particularly through motivational beliefs such as expectancy and task value (Kong, 2021). However, much of the existing literature has examined relevance in specific contexts, such as STEM education, language learning, or online learning, rather than examining curriculum relevance as a broader educational factor across classroom learning environments. Moreover, previous research has frequently investigated motivation and engagement as separate outcomes or has focused on expectancy and task-value beliefs as mediating mechanisms, leaving comparatively limited evidence regarding whether classroom engagement itself mediates the relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation. This gap is important because students may respond to relevant curriculum not only by becoming more motivated directly but also by becoming more

actively involved in classroom learning, which may subsequently strengthen their motivation. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by examining the influence of curriculum relevance on students' learning motivation and testing classroom engagement as a mediating mechanism between these variables (Siddiqi, 2019).

Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation.

H2: Curriculum relevance significantly predicts students' learning motivation.

H3: Classroom engagement significantly mediates the relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation.

Conceptual Framework

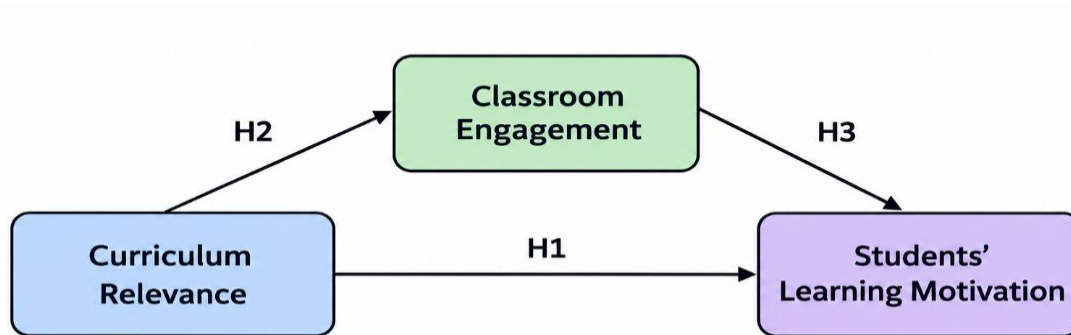


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design to understand the impact of curriculum relevance on students' learning motivation, and to analyze the role of classroom engagement. Using an adopted and structured questionnaire, I collected data in a quantifiable manner. Since the variables were measured in a quantifiable manner using Likert Scale, and analyzed statistically using SPSS, it was considered appropriate to use a quantitative approach for the study.

Population

The population of the study consists of university level students of Pakistan. The population was drawn from the universities of the four provinces of Pakistan to cover a large geographical area. The universities covered in the study were University of the Punjab, Government College University Faisalabad, University of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif University, University of Peshawar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, University of Balochistan, Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences and others. The study did not include any city level identification.

Sampling technique

A convenience sampling technique was used to collect data from the population. Since conveniently available students of different higher education universities of all provinces of Pakistan were sampled, it was considered suitable for the purpose of this study.

Sample size

In this study a total of 311 students completed the questionnaire and constituted the final sample for the study.

Data Collection and Measurement Scales

Structured questionnaires were created based on an adapted version, and items were included to measure classroom engagement using the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI). Items on students' motivation were included using the Academic Motivation Scale. Relevance in education literature was analyzed to construct its meaning and measure educational relevance. Based on that, items were adopted and/or adapted to the study. The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) was adapted to measure classroom engagement and was used to assess students' cognitive and psychological engagement with learning. The items have undergone empirical research on their psychometric properties. The scale measured students' motivation to learn. The scale consists of 28 items and assesses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as amotivation. The presented items of the questionnaires were developed using a Likert-type scale. Those items were incorporated into a single questionnaire suitable for the present educational setting.

Data Analysis

The organized data were imported to and analyzed by means of IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics were carried out to depict demographic data and the main variables of the study. Internal consistency of the scale was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha. Levels of curriculum relevance, classroom engagement, and learning motivation of students were described by means of their respective means and standard deviation. The relationship among study variables was tested by the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The predictive relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation was tested through Simple Linear Regression. The mediation analysis was performed to examine if classroom engagement statistically mediates the above-mentioned relationship. These analyses were executed in IBM SPSS to assess the relationships proposed in the research model.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N = 311)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	156	50.2
	Female	155	49.8
Age	18–22 years	119	38.3
	23–27 years	128	41.2
	28–32 years	45	14.5
	33 years and above	19	6.1
Educational Level	Undergraduate	137	44.1
	Master's	112	36.0
	MPhil/MS	48	15.4
	PhD	14	4.5
Province	Punjab	126	40.5
	Sindh	72	23.2
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	67	21.5
	Balochistan	46	14.8
Total Respondents	—	311	100.0

Demographic information about the 311 study participants is given in Table 1. We had a fairly even distribution of males ($n = 156$, 50.2%) and females ($n = 155$, 49.8%). Most of the participants were between the ages of 23 and 27 years ($n = 128$, 41.2%) and 18-22 years ($n = 119$, 38.3%). Most of the participants were enrolled at the undergraduate ($n = 137$, 44.1%) and the Master's ($n = 112$, 36.0%) levels. Most participants were from Punjab ($n = 126$, 40.5%), Sindh ($n = 72$, 23.2%), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ($n = 67$, 21.5%), and Balochistan ($n = 46$, 14.8%). The demographics generally represented the populations of Pakistan based on gender, age, and educational level as well as the four provinces of Pakistan.

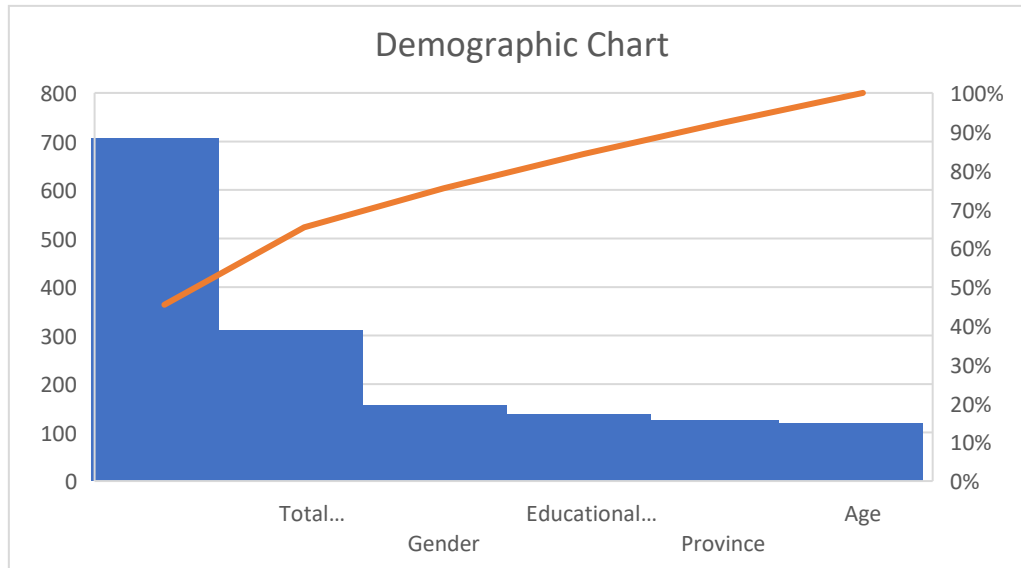


Fig 2: Demographic characteristics of Respondents (N=311)

Table 2: Reliability Analysis, Means, and Standard Deviations of Study Variables (N = 311)

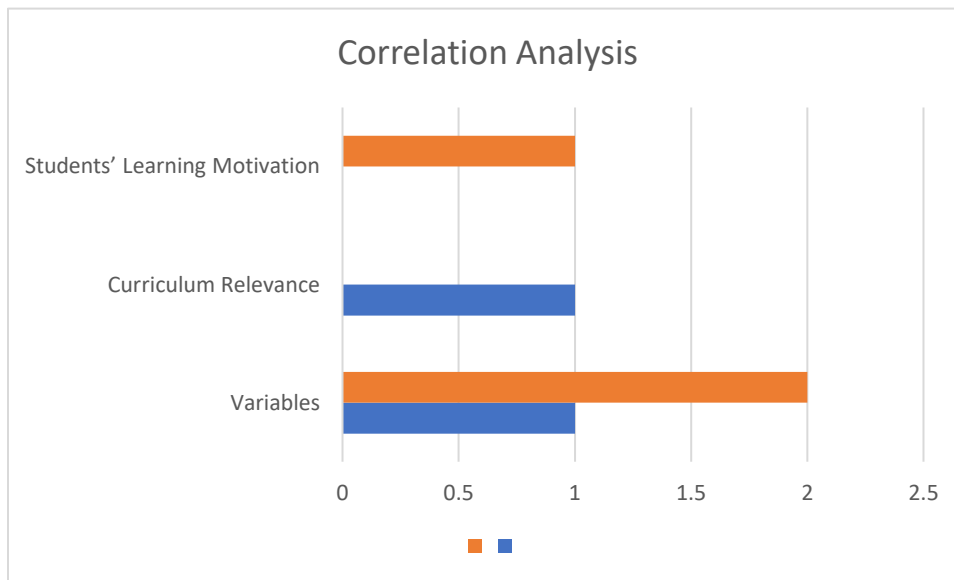
Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Curriculum Relevance	8	0.884	3.76	0.68
Classroom Engagement	9	0.901	3.71	0.64
Students' Learning Motivation	10	0.918	3.83	0.66

Table 2 shows the major study variables reliability analysis, as well as their mean scores and standard deviations based on 311 respondents. For the analysis of the internal consistency of the study questionnaire items on relevance of curriculum, classroom engagement, and students' learning motivation, the Cronbach's alpha was found to range between 0.884 and 0.918. Curriculum relevance scored a mean of 3.76 (0.68), classroom engagement scored a mean of 3.71 (0.64), and students' learning motivation scored a mean of 3.83 (0.66). The analysis on the measurement scale reliability showed that the scales possessed an adequate level of internal consistency for the subsequent analysis.

Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Between Curriculum Relevance and Students' Learning Motivation (N = 311)

Variables	1	2
Curriculum Relevance	1.000	0.624**
Students' Learning Motivation	0.624**	1.000

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation between the relevance of the school curriculum and learning motivation of 311 students is shown in Table 3. The data show that the relevance of the school curriculum and the level of learning motivation of students are positively correlated ($r = 0.624$, $p < .01$). It means that students who perceived their curriculum as more relevant also perceived their learning motivation as higher. From the magnitude of the correlation, it can be concluded that both variables are meaningfully related.

**Fig 3: Correlation Analysis****Table 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Curriculum Relevance Predicting Students' Learning Motivation (N = 311)**

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Curriculum Relevance	0.61	0.06	0.624	10.17	< .001
R ²	0.389				
F	103.43				< .001

The results of the simple linear regression, presented in Table 4, indicate that curriculum relevance has a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$) on students' learning motivation. The model accounted for 38.9% of the variance in students' learning motivation. An F-value of 60.12 was also significant, indicating that the regression model had a significant effect on students' learning motivation. Generally, the higher the relevance of the curriculum, the more motivated students were to learn.

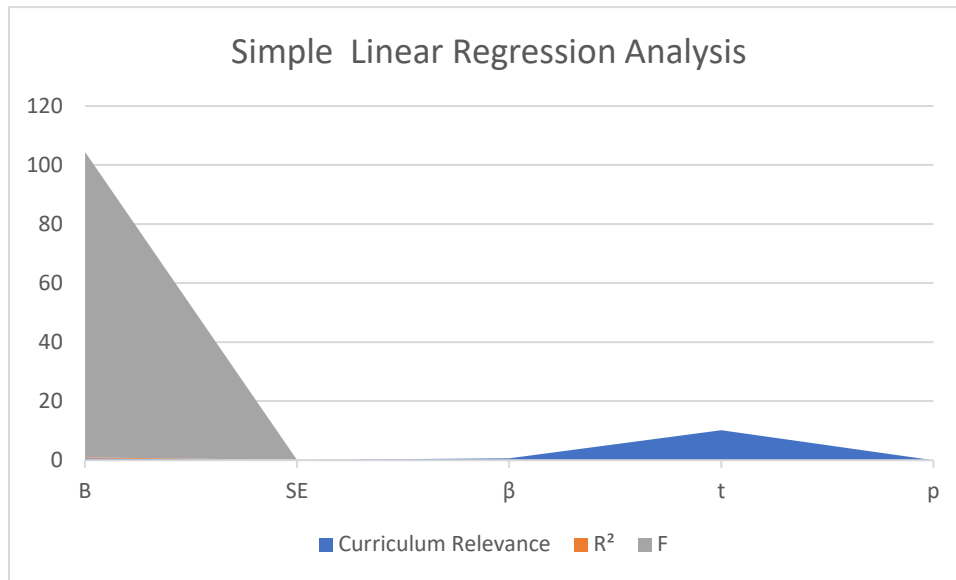


Fig 4: Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 5: Mediation Analysis of Classroom Engagement Between Curriculum Relevance and Students' Learning Motivation (N = 311)

Variables	B	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	p
Curriculum Relevance and Classroom Engagement	0.58	0.05	0.48	0.68	< .001
Classroom Engagement and Learning Motivation	0.41	0.06	0.29	0.53	< .001
Curriculum Relevance and Learning Motivation (Total)	0.61	0.06	0.49	0.73	< .001
Curriculum Relevance and Learning Motivation (Direct)	0.37	0.06	0.26	0.49	< .001
Curriculum Relevance and Learning Motivation (Indirect through Classroom Engagement)	0.24	0.04	0.17	0.33	—

Mediation analysis of classroom engagement in relation to curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation was performed on 311 respondents and results showed a significant relationship between curriculum relevance and classroom engagement ($B = 0.58$, $p < .001$). Classroom engagement was also found to have a significant relationship with students' learning motivation ($B = 0.41$, $p < .001$). The total relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation was also found to be significant ($B = 0.61$, $p < .001$). In the presence of classroom engagement, the relationship was still found to be significant ($B = 0.37$, $p < .001$). The indirect effect of classroom engagement was found to be 0.24. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the sample was 0.17-0.33. As the interval did not contain zero, classroom engagement was found to have an indirect effect on the relationship between curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation. This supported Hypothesis 3.

Discussion

Results showed that curriculum relevance was positively related to students' learning motivation. When students recognized connections between the curriculum and their interests, experiences, academic needs, and goals, they reported higher motivation toward learning. One possible reason for the results is that when students see the purpose and the value of their study, they are more interested in the study and willing to participate in the learning activities. The results of the study by (Chahal et al., 2026) are

in line with our results. They stated that the relevance of learning content increased students' autonomous motivation and effort and improved students' positive learning experiences.

The results of our study further showed that curriculum relevance was positively related to classroom engagement. The positive relationship between relevance and motivation, and relevance and engagement, is in line with the results of several studies in the field of student-centered, meaningful learning. Student-centered, and particular problem-based and project-based learning promote positive effects in various aspects of student motivation. In line with the present study, these approaches suggest that students are more motivated to learn, and more actively participate in classroom activities, when they perceive the connections between the curriculum and their interests and learning goals (Akram & Li, 2024).

It seems that having curriculum content that is relevant to students' interests is likely to promote their participation and involvement in the classroom. Students may be more willing to attend lessons and complete tasks, and also be more amenable to interacting with the teacher and their peers if they view the classroom activities as valuable and personally significant. There are findings from different studies that show similar perceptions among participants about behavioral, cognitive, and affective engagement with regard to task relevance (Demirdağ & Çevik, 2026). Further, more recent studies on student engagement focus on the role of meaningfulness or value of the learning environment in promoting active engagement rather than passive participation in the classroom.

The results also showed that classroom engagement was positively associated with learning motivation. Students who showed higher levels of classroom engagement also demonstrated stronger willingness and interest in their academic activities. This study found engagement to provide opportunities to interact with learning materials, experience academic progress, and develop a stronger sense of being an active partner in their learning. The findings of this study are in line with those of Reeve and Lee (2014) who also stressed the role of students' motivational and emotional resources in promoting active classroom engagement. The results therefore, corroborate the view that engagement and motivation are closely connected to the learning process.

Further analysis showed that the curriculum's relevance positively impacted the motivation to learn and that this relationship was significantly mediated by the level of engagement in the classroom. The positive effect suggests that the relevant curriculum may strengthen students' motivation to learn by increasing their engagement in the classroom. The positive effect may also occur as a direct result of the curriculum's relevance. As such, the relevant curriculum may strengthen students' motivation to learn through both the level of engagement in the classroom and in a direct manner. The result is aligned with the recent studies indicating that task relevance in the learning environment can impact students' engagement through motivation (Emilda & Susanti, 2026).

These findings advance our understanding of curriculum and learning in the classroom. More specifically, the findings demonstrate that the role of curriculum relevance, engagement, and motivation is integrated. Thus, instead of distinguishing between these elements, teachers may want to integrate these aspects in their classroom. Teachers can use various means to increase the relevance and engagement in the classroom (e.g., taking into consideration students' hobbies and interests, future occupations, and everyday lives, etc.). Making learning meaningful and relevant in the classroom may further support students' motivation to learn, and therefore may create a better learning environment.

Conclusion

This study examined how curriculum relevance influences the learning motivation of university students in Pakistan and explored the role of classroom engagement. The findings showed that students are more motivated to learn when they perceive their curriculum as useful, meaningful, and connected to their academic goals and real-life needs. The results also suggest that a relevant curriculum can encourage greater interest and participation in the learning process. It was also found that curriculum relevance has a positive effect on classroom engagement, which means that students participated in classroom activities more when they were given relevance and significance to their learning content. Also, classroom engagement has a positive effect on students' learning motivation, which proves that for students to learn, they must be motivated and engaged in the learning process, and this can be achieved through participation in classroom activities and learning process. Findings also indicate that classroom engagement plays a significant mediating role in the relation of curriculum relevance and students' learning motivation, which means curriculum relevance motivates students to learn by stimulating engagement in classroom activities. It is important for educational developers to give consideration to students' interests and experiences, goals and environment when developing educational content. Overall, the results demonstrate that integrating meaning and relevance to curriculum and classroom engagement positively impacts learning motivation of students.

Future Implications

Future research can explore how curriculum relevance influences student engagement and learning motivation across different educational levels and fields of study. Researchers may also include students from a wider range of educational institutions to gain a broader understanding of these relationships. Longitudinal studies can be designed to understand how students perceive curriculum relevance and engagement over a period of time and how those perceptions impact their learning motivation. Other factors can be integrated as well, such as instructional quality and teacher support. Further, the research can include the learning environment, students' academic self-efficacy, learning aspirations, and career aspirations. Qualitative or mixed-methods can better investigate the factors that influence students' experiences and perceptions concerning the relevance of the curriculum. This research could enable educators to have a stronger foundation to create activities and experiences for students to practice what they've learned and be motivated to learn beyond the classroom.

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