International Journal of Social Sciences Bulletin
Volume 2, Issue 4, 2024 ISSN: (E) 3007-1917 (P) 3007-1909

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STEM ACTIVITIES IN ENHANCING MOTIVATION AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PUNJAB

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Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
06 October, 2024	06 November, 2024	19 November, 2024	25 November, 2024

ABSTRACT

This study examines how STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education affects students' motivation levels from the viewpoints of 10th graders in Sialkot and Faisalabad districts as well as secondary school teachers. The study recruited 400 students and 50 teachers and used quantitative analysis to evaluate variables like interest levels, learning orientation, autonomy, confidence, and overall motivation. There were no discernible gender variations in teachers' and students' perceptions of how STEM education affected these motivating qualities, according to independent sample t-tests. According to both groups, STEM education improves motivation and related factors for both sexes. These results imply that STEM education creates a fair learning environment and balances student passion and involvement. To maintain and improve student motivation, the study suggests providing equitable access to STEM opportunities and resources for all genders, as well as activities that foster confidence, student-centered learning strategies, and useful, entertaining STEM applications.

Keywords: *STEM education, Motivation level, Secondary school level*

INTRODUCTION

STEM education—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—is crucial in the fast-paced world of modern technology. It provides students with the foundational skills necessary to thrive in the highly technologically advanced world of today, including creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Teaching complex concepts and encouraging hands-on learning, STEM education equips students for a range of career opportunities in in-demand sectors including engineering, healthcare, and information technology. STEM education also promotes innovation and economic growth. It drives technological advancements that improve living conditions and address global concerns including climate change and medical discoveries. In addition, early exposure to STEM fields fosters diversity and inclusivity by closing gender and racial gaps in these fields.

A workforce that is competent and skilled, ready to take on new challenges and guide society toward a more prosperous and sustainable future, is ensured by having a strong STEM foundation (Barker, Welch, & Wu, 2015). The foundation for future academic and professional success is laid and a love of learning is successfully fostered in elementary STEM education. These hands-on activities, realistic experiments, and real-life problem-solving stimulate young minds and humanize complex concepts. Early exposure demystifies challenging subjects, including mathematics and physics, making them less intimidating and more approachable. At this point, the exercises promote cooperation, creativity, and

critical thinking. Teaching kids to ask questions, seek information, and collaborate with peers can enhance their social and cognitive development.

Furthermore, these exercises cater to a range of learning preferences, ensuring that all students may participate and benefit from them (King, 2015). STEM education helps uncover and cultivate potential talents and interests in these topics, setting students on a path to pursue STEM-related degrees and careers. All things considered, a strong foundation for lifetime learning and creativity is established by early STEM education (Li, Forbes, & Yang, 2021). Students' motivation is greatly increased by these activities since they can make studying engaging and relevant. When students see how their knowledge is used in the real world through interactive projects, practical experiments, and problem-solving in real-life circumstances, their curiosity and enthusiasm are sparked.

By turning abstract concepts into tangible events, experiential learning makes subjects like math and physics more understandable and enjoyable (de Roock, & Baildon, 2019).

Through these activities, children are given agency by taking charge of their own education. By promoting exploration and discovery, they help their pupils develop a growth mentality that empowers them to take on challenges and learn from their failures. Self-worth is cultivated and continued engagement is encouraged by this independence and sense of accomplishment (Gupta, Fraser, Rank, Brucker, & Flinner, 2019). Collaborative STEM projects enhance social skills and teamwork, which in turn promote a positive learning environment. When students work together to solve problems, they become even more motivated because it creates a sense of community and a shared objective. Ultimately, STEM-related activities inspire pupils to pursue STEM-related careers and further education by cultivating a love of learning.

Objectives of the study:

The following are the main research objectives for this proposed study:

• To know the effect of STEM activities on the motivation level of students as perceived by teachers.

• To find out effect of STEM activities on the motivation level of students as perceived by students.

Research Questions

• What is effect of STEM activities on the motivation level of students as perceived by teachers.

• What is effect of STEM activities on the motivation level of students as perceived by students.

Literature Review:

Background of STEM Education:

A more integrated STEM approach include measures and evaluations of student learning, links between activities and resources, and relationships between disciplines. According to a different study, students must take part in research and engineering design projects that relate to fundamental subjects as well as science, math, and engineering activities (Gupta, Voiklis, Rank, Dwyer, Fraser, Flinner, & Nock, 2020).

The problems with the current era's information explosion actually lie with the people and their culture. Technology, society, politics, and the economy have all undergone radical change as a result of the growth of STEM (LópezLeiva, Roberts-Harris, & von Toll, 2016). Similar to numerous other developing nations across the globe, Pakistan is only now realizing the importance of STEM and beginning to incorporate it into school curricula.

Integration of STEM with Curriculum:

According to Rahm (2019), incorporating STEM into the curriculum at educational institutions presents a variety of difficulties. A teacher can easily organize and prepare his lectures given his knowledge and skills. In addition, he can develop methods and resources for content delivery and facilitate resource sharing among students (Morrissey, Heimlich, & Schatz, 2020). STEM reinvents conventional approaches by fusing these four fields into a single meta-discipline (Nugent, Barker, Welch, Grandgenett, Wu, & Nelson, 2015). Unfortunately, most STEM education makes little attempt to incorporate these courses (Struyf, et. Al., 2019). In addition to improving topic memory, student-centered integrated STEM education enhances higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.

According to Robert (2018), success is achievable for educators who utilize the previously listed teaching tactics. According to Yelland & Waghorn (2020), STEM is mostly problem-solving oriented,

where students are required to apply their understanding of science and math, engineering construction abilities, and technology use for research, design, and testing to solve problems (Solanki et al., 2019). Additionally, they must provide their responses in an environment that combines verbal exchange with interactive, group learning. Effective teaching techniques are necessary for STEM education to be successful, and these techniques have long been a cause of concern for some educators (Agbejoye, & Oke, 2019).

Professional Training of Teachers for STEM:

Not many educators have the knowledge and abilities needed to operationalize STEM teaching. Over time, students gain a deeper comprehension of the fundamental STEM concepts that drive STEM involvement, including curiosity and engagement. Bao (2020) states that the study's main goal is to determine how important STEM education is for teachers. It is challenging for administrators and teachers to use this area of the school in a way that is appropriate (Fan and Yu, 2017). Consequently, on every outcome indicator, the academic STEM group outperformed the educational STEM group.

Social and Financial Benefits of STEM:

Through the implementation of various strategies, such as the capacity approach, to regulate the way in which well-being and quality of life are measured, this kind of learning lessens marginalization and promotes social and economic benefits for communities. STEM education is an integrated curriculum approach, as opposed to a content-based approach, that may aid in the development of skills and lifetime learning capacity. Teaching, training, and preparation in the broadest sense—that is, giving students the skills they need to deal with the constantly shifting needs of businesses and society—are often the responsibilities of educational institutions, according to Harris & De Bruin (2017). The landscape of education has changed as a result of the new skill set needed for the twenty-first century.

But given that some educational models remain relevant, educators should reconsider their traditional responsibilities as information producers and redefine themselves as learning facilitators, in keeping with constructivist principles (Kelly, Dowling, & Millar, 2018). The problems that STEM programs face require the effective application and integration of STEM to find solutions. A wide range of scientific and technical activities are presented to students due to the variety of problems that can be resolved by using a STEM approach. Students encounter and contextualize what they are learning as a result of working through difficulties that have personal meaning for them.

In order to maintain the competitiveness of our society, Madani (2019) contends that STEM perspective also provides teachers with valuable experiences by assisting with group projects and science-related problem solving. Transformational learning and discourse are having an increasing impact on the development of STEM education methodologies (Larkin, Shaw, & Flowers, 2019). Undoubtedly, the nation's future rests on the understanding that while not everyone is motivated to work in STEM fields, those who are should nonetheless receive encouragement and support. To support educators who choose to work in STEM schools and to prepare future STEM educators, a comprehensive approach to professional development will be necessary (Mallette, & Saldaña, 2019).

Research Methodology:

This research study employed quantitative data analysis as a descriptive method. Participants in the study were all 10th grade students and secondary school teachers. Sialkot and Faisalabad districts were the study's accessible population. The study's sample was selected based on demographics related to gender and location. The study included 400 students in the tenth grade and fifty secondary school teachers. Instructions for questionnaire were given to the responders. The t-test was employed to address the study problems with the help of the SPSS software. Below is the data analysis:

Data analysis:

Table 1.

Comparison of Teachers' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Motivation Level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	27	3.807	.433	-.94	.35
Women	23	3.916	.379		

The perspectives of male and female teachers regarding the effect of STEM education on students' motivation levels are compared using a t-test in the table. The mean motivation level perception for males, with 27 male and 23 female respondents, is 3.807 (SD = 0.433), while it is somewhat higher for females, at 3.916 (SD = 0.379). With a p-value of 0.35, the t-value mentioned in the table is -0.94. Male and female educators hold comparable perspectives regarding the ways in which STEM education affects students' motivation levels.

Table 2.

Comparison of Teachers' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Confidence Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	27	3.552	.607	-1.31	.20
Women	23	3.787	.662		

The table examines how STEM education affects students' confidence levels, which is a crucial component of motivation, according to male and female teachers. The mean confidence level for 27 male respondents is 3.552 (SD = 0.607), although it is marginally higher for 23 female respondents at 3.787 (SD = 0.662). In the table above, t value is -1.31 and significance level is .20. Therefore, there is no discernible gender difference in the way that both genders evaluate how STEM education affects students' confidence, according to the statistics.

Table 3.

Comparison of Teachers' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Autonomous Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	27	4.197	.467	-.95	.35
Women	23	4.323	.470		

The opinions of male and female educators on how STEM education influences students' autonomy—a crucial component of motivation—are contrasted in Table 3. The mean perception score for 27 male professors is 4.197, with a standard deviation of 0.467. The mean score for the twenty-three female teachers is 4.323, with a standard deviation of 0.470, which is marginally higher. As mentioned above significance level 0.35, advocate that teacher, whether male and female, have comparable perspectives about how STEM education affects students' degrees of autonomy. There does not appear to be a significant gender difference in the ways that the two genders perceive how STEM education promotes student autonomy.

Table 4.
Comparison of Teachers' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Learning Oriented Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	27	3.579	.548	-.21	.84
Women	23	3.613	.607		

The views of male and female educators on the influence of STEM education on students' learning-oriented level—a critical component of motivation—are contrasted in Table 4. The mean impression score of 3.579 (SD = 0.548) for 27 male respondents and 3.613 (SD = 0.607) for 23 female respondents are presented in the table. T-value of -0.21 and p-value of 0.84 are the results of the t-test. This shows that views on how STEM education influences students' disposition toward learning are almost the same for male and female educators. There is a significant unanimity across the genders, with no discernible difference in their opinions, as seen by the near mean scores and high p-value.

Table 5.
Comparison of Teachers' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Interested Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	27	3.812	.590	.21	.83
Women	23	3.848	.674		

Table 5 compares teachers' opinions about how STEM education affects students' interest levels—a crucial component of motivation—based on their gender. According to the data, there are 27 male professors, and their mean perception score is 3.812. The mean score for the twenty-three female professors is 3.848, with a standard deviation of 0.674. A p-value of 0.83 mentioned a substantial unanimity between male and female teachers on this element is suggested by the modest difference in mean scores.

Table 6.
Comparison of Students' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Motivation Level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	205	3.495	.568	1.46	.144
Women	195	3.416	.507		

The impact that STEM education has on students' motivation levels is compared for male and female students in Table 6. The mean perception score of 205 male students (SD = 0.568) and 195 female students (SD = 0.507) are displayed in the table. A t-value of 1.46 and a p-value of 0.144 are obtained from the t-test. This shows that students' perceptions of how STEM education affects their motivation are similar for male and female students. The non-significant t-value and close mean scores suggest that gender is not a significant factor in determining students' perceptions of the motivational influence of STEM education.

Table 7.
Comparison of Students' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Confidence Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	205	3.510	.713	-1.31	.20
Women	195	3.763	.659		

Students' assessments of how STEM education affects their confidence levels—a crucial component of motivation—are compared for male and female students in Table 7. The mean confidence level score among 205 male students is 3.510 (SD = 0.713). The mean score for 195 female students is 3.763 (SD = 0.659), which is higher. A t-value of -1.31 and a p-value of 0.20 are the outcomes of the t-test study. This suggests that although female students tend to express somewhat higher levels of confidence in STEM education, the difference is not significant enough to be taken into account. When it comes to how STEM education affects their confidence, both sexes hold similar opinions.

Table 8.
Comparison of Students' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Autonomous Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	205	3.387	.677	-.95	.35
Women	195	3.252	.696		

Table 8 compares students' assessments, by gender, of how STEM education has affected their degrees of autonomy, which is a crucial component of motivation. According to the statistics, 195 female students had a mean autonomy score of 3.252 with a standard deviation of 0.696, somewhat lower than the 205 male students' mean score of 3.387 with a 0.677 standard deviation. A p-value of 0.35 and a t-value of -0.95 are obtained from the t-test. This shows that opinions about how STEM education affects students' feeling of autonomy are shared by male and female students alike.

Table 9.
Comparison of Students' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Learning Oriented Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	205	3.549	.663	-.21	.84
Women	195	3.285	.691		

Students' assessments of how STEM education affects their learning-oriented level—a crucial component of motivation—are compared between male and female students in Table 9. The average score for 205 male students is 3.549 with a 0.663 standard deviation, while the average score for 195 female students is marginally lower at 3.285 with a 0.691 standard deviation. T-value of -0.21 and p-value of 0.84 are the results of the t-test. This shows that the perspectives of both genders regarding how STEM education influences their learning orientation are similar. There is no discernible gender-based difference, as seen by the modest difference in mean scores and the high p-value, which point to substantial alignment in their opinions.

Table 10.
Comparison of Students' Perception Gender Wise Regarding Effect of STEM Education on Students' Interested Level which is main dimension of motivation level

Gender	Respondents	M	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig. level
Men	205	3.348	.569	.33	.74
Women	195	3.329	.559		

A comparison of how male and female students perceive the impact of STEM education on their interest levels—a crucial component of motivation—is shown in Table 10. According to the table, there are 205 male students, and the mean perception score is 3.348 with a standard deviation of 0.569. The mean score for 195 female students is 3.329, with a standard deviation of 0.559, which is extremely

close. The t-value and p-value from the t-test are 0.33 and 0.74, respectively. This suggests that the opinions of male and female students on the influence of STEM education on their interest levels are almost the same.

Main conclusions of the Study:

When it comes to general motivation, confidence, autonomy, learning orientation, and interest levels, male and female educators have similar opinions. This shows that educators, of both genders, agree on its importance.

Students, both male and female, believe that STEM education has a comparable better effect on their motivation in terms of general motivation, self-assurance, autonomy, learning style, and interest levels. This shows that STEM education, independent of gender, consistently increases students' motivation.

Although male and female students' confidence levels differ slightly after receiving STEM education, this difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that STEM education, regardless of gender, plays a similar role in raising students' confidence levels. Both male and female instructors as well as students of both sexes believe that STEM education promotes student autonomy. This suggests that STEM education promotes independence and self-reliance equally for all students, regardless of gender.

Students, both male and female, report that STEM education has led to a similar increase in interest. This constancy highlights how well STEM education works to pique kids' interest and encourage participation, regardless of gender.

Discussion:

In general, the data indicate that gender has little bearing on how educators and learners view the contribution of STEM education to a range of student motivational factors. Respondents who are male or female, teachers or students, show comparable levels of perception in a variety of motivational domains, including general motivation, autonomy, confidence, learning orientation, and interest levels.

According to the data, there is a consensus among educators and learners—regardless of gender—about how STEM education affects students' motivation levels. Teachers of both sexes believe that there are no appreciable differences in the ways that STEM education affects interest, motivation, autonomy, confidence, and learning orientation. Students have similar experiences in these motivating areas as a result of STEM education, regardless of gender. These results imply that STEM education improves motivation and associated factors consistently in both genders. This consistency emphasizes how STEM education, independent of gender, has a balanced educational impact by encouraging equal enthusiasm and involvement among students.

Recommendations:

To sustain this balanced motivation level between genders, schools should make sure that opportunities, resources, and support systems are available to male and female students on an equal basis.

Teachers can include activities that specifically help students gain confidence in their abilities, like group projects, presentations, and problem-solving exercises, in STEM curricula in order to increase students' self-assurance and promote equitable participation.

Schools can use more student-centered learning strategies in STEM classes to increase this impact. This may entail giving students the chance to conduct independent research, work on self-directed projects, and choose their own learning paths, all of which would help them develop a sense of responsibility and self control.

Educational establishments should incorporate interesting, practical applications of STEM principles into the curriculum since STEM education has a favorable impact on students' motivation and learning orientation. This could entail utilizing technology, integrating project-based learning, and forming alliances with businesses to offer practical experiences.

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