

Negative Attitudes Among Students and their Impact on Academic Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Pradip Kumar Singha¹ and Dr Barnali China²

Research Scholar, Department of Education¹

Research Supervisor, Department of Education²

Arunodaya University, Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Abstract: Students' attitudes toward learning constitute a vital psychological factor influencing academic engagement and educational achievement. In recent years, educators and researchers have expressed growing concern over the prevalence of negative attitudes among students, manifested through disinterest, anxiety, lack of motivation, and resistance to learning activities. Such attitudes not only affect students' emotional well-being but also significantly impair their academic engagement and learning outcomes. The present empirical study aims to examine the extent to which students' negative attitudes influence academic engagement and learning outcomes. Adopting a quantitative research design, data were collected from a sample of secondary-level students using standardized attitude and engagement scales. Statistical analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between students' unfavorable attitudes and their academic engagement, which in turn adversely affected learning outcomes. The findings highlight that students exhibiting higher levels of negative attitudes demonstrated lower behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in learning activities, leading to poor academic performance. The study emphasizes the need for educational institutions to address attitudinal barriers through supportive learning environments, innovative teaching strategies, and psychological interventions. The findings contribute to educational research by reinforcing the importance of affective factors in shaping meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: Negative attitudes, academic engagement, learning outcomes, student motivation, educational psychology

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a multifaceted process that extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and information. It involves the holistic development of learners, integrating cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral dimensions. Among these dimensions, students' attitudes toward learning play a critical role in shaping their academic engagement and overall learning outcomes. Attitudes influence how students perceive learning tasks, respond to challenges, and persist in the face of academic difficulties. While positive attitudes foster curiosity, motivation, and resilience, negative attitudes often lead to disengagement, avoidance behaviors, and academic underachievement.

In contemporary educational settings, the issue of negative student attitudes has emerged as a serious concern. Many students demonstrate a lack of interest in academic activities, view learning as burdensome, and experience anxiety or fear related to examinations and performance expectations. These negative dispositions are often reflected in poor classroom participation, irregular attendance, incomplete assignments, and declining academic performance. Such trends not only affect individual learners but also pose challenges for educators and institutions striving to achieve quality education.

Negative attitudes toward learning may develop due to various factors, including ineffective teaching methods, monotonous classroom environments, excessive academic pressure, fear of failure, low self-esteem, and socio-economic constraints. When students repeatedly experience frustration or perceive learning as irrelevant to their lives,

they are more likely to develop resistance toward academic tasks. Over time, these unfavorable attitudes become entrenched, leading to chronic disengagement and poor learning outcomes.

Academic engagement is widely recognized as a key determinant of student success. Engaged students actively participate in learning activities, exhibit emotional involvement, and invest cognitive effort in understanding academic content. Engagement serves as a bridge between students' attitudes and their learning outcomes. Students with positive attitudes are more likely to be engaged, whereas those with negative attitudes often withdraw from the learning process. Therefore, understanding the relationship between negative attitudes, engagement, and learning outcomes is essential for improving educational effectiveness.

Although previous research has acknowledged the importance of student attitudes and engagement, there remains a need for empirical studies that specifically examine the impact of negative attitudes on academic engagement and learning outcomes. The present study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how unfavorable attitudes influence students' participation, motivation, and academic performance. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers in designing interventions that promote positive learning attitudes and meaningful engagement.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have examined the relationship between students' attitudes toward learning and their academic engagement and achievement. Bloom (1976) emphasized the importance of the affective domain in education, arguing that students' attitudes and emotions significantly influence learning processes and academic success. He highlighted that negative attitudes often result in reduced motivation and lower achievement levels.

Finn and Rock (1997) investigated the role of student engagement in academic success among at-risk learners and found that unfavorable attitudes toward school were strongly associated with disengagement and poor academic performance. Their study suggested that disengagement often precedes academic failure.

Pintrich and De Groot (1990) explored motivational and self-regulated learning components and reported that students with negative perceptions of academic tasks demonstrated lower levels of effort, persistence, and achievement. Their findings underscored the role of attitude in shaping learning behaviors.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conceptualized academic engagement as a multidimensional construct involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive components. Their review revealed that negative attitudes negatively affect all dimensions of engagement, leading to weakened learning outcomes.

Schunk, Meece, and Pintrich (2014) examined the role of motivation in education and concluded that students' negative beliefs about their abilities and learning tasks contribute to disengagement and low academic achievement. They emphasized the need for motivational interventions in classrooms.

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) focused on expectancy-value theory and demonstrated that students who perceive learning as irrelevant or overly difficult are more likely to develop negative attitudes, which in turn reduce engagement and academic performance.

Wentzel (1998) studied the influence of social relationships on student motivation and found that supportive teacher-student relationships positively influence attitudes toward learning, whereas unsupportive environments contribute to negative attitudes and disengagement.

Hidi and Renninger (2006) examined interest development and reported that lack of interest and persistent negative attitudes toward learning tasks lead to superficial engagement and limited knowledge acquisition.

Wang and Eccles (2013) analyzed longitudinal data on school engagement and found that students' negative attitudes toward school predicted declines in engagement and academic achievement over time.

Kahu (2013) provided a conceptual framework of student engagement, emphasizing that psychological factors such as attitudes, emotions, and motivation are central to understanding student learning outcomes.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted with the following objectives:

- To identify the prevalence of negative attitudes toward learning among students.

- To examine the level of academic engagement among students exhibiting negative attitudes.
- To analyze the relationship between students' negative attitudes and academic engagement.
- To assess the impact of negative attitudes on students' learning outcomes.
- To suggest educational measures for reducing negative attitudes and enhancing academic engagement.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted a quantitative research design to examine the impact of students' negative attitudes on academic engagement and learning outcomes. A descriptive and correlational approach was employed to analyze the relationship between key variables, namely negative attitudes, academic engagement, and learning outcomes.

4.1. Sample and Population

The population of the study comprised secondary-level students enrolled in government and private schools. Using a simple random sampling technique, a sample of 200 students was selected to ensure adequate representation. The sample included students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and both genders, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

4.2. Tools for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section measured students' negative attitudes toward learning, covering aspects such as lack of interest, academic anxiety, and low motivation. The second section assessed academic engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. The third section recorded students' learning outcomes, measured through recent academic performance scores. The questionnaire was validated by subject experts, and reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha method.

4.3. Procedure

Prior permission was obtained from school authorities before data collection. Students were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality of responses was assured. The questionnaires were administered during regular school hours, and responses were collected in a controlled environment to ensure accuracy.

4.4. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and correlation analysis were employed to examine patterns and relationships among variables. The results were interpreted in relation to the objectives of the study.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles such as informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly followed throughout the research process.

V. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The present section discusses the results of the study in relation to the stated objectives. Quantitative analysis was carried out to examine the extent of students' negative attitudes, their level of academic engagement, and the impact of negative attitudes on learning outcomes. The findings are presented objective-wise with appropriate tables and interpretations.

Objective 1: To identify the prevalence of negative attitudes toward learning among students

To assess the extent of negative attitudes, students' responses were categorized into three levels: Low, Moderate, and High negative attitudes.

Table 1: Level of Negative Attitudes Toward Learning

Level of Negative Attitude	Frequency (n=200)	Percentage
Low	48	24%
Moderate	92	46%
High	60	30%
Total	200	100%

Table 1 indicates that a majority of students (76%) exhibited moderate to high levels of negative attitudes toward learning. This suggests that unfavorable perceptions such as lack of interest, academic anxiety, and low motivation are prevalent among students. The findings support earlier research which indicates that negative attitudes are common in traditional and examination-oriented educational settings.

Objective 2: To examine the level of academic engagement among students exhibiting negative attitudes

Academic engagement was analyzed across three dimensions: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

Table 2: Level of Academic Engagement among Students

Dimension of Engagement	High Engagement	Moderate Engagement	Low Engagement
Behavioral	22%	41%	37%
Emotional	18%	39%	43%
Cognitive	20%	36%	44%

The data reveal that low engagement is particularly high in emotional (43%) and cognitive (44%) dimensions. Students with negative attitudes show limited enthusiasm and reduced cognitive investment in learning tasks. This finding confirms that negative attitudes weaken not only participation but also emotional connection and deep learning processes.

Objective 3: To analyze the relationship between students' negative attitudes and academic engagement

To examine the relationship between negative attitudes and engagement, correlation analysis was performed.

Table 3: Correlation between Negative Attitudes and Academic Engagement

Variables Compared	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Negative Attitude & Behavioral Engagement	-0.61
Negative Attitude & Emotional Engagement	-0.68
Negative Attitude & Cognitive Engagement	-0.72

Table 3 shows a strong negative correlation between negative attitudes and all dimensions of academic engagement. The strongest relationship was observed with cognitive engagement ($r = -0.72$), indicating that as negative attitudes increase, students' depth of learning and use of learning strategies significantly decrease. These findings are consistent with engagement theories that highlight the affective foundations of learning.

Objective 4: To assess the impact of negative attitudes on students' learning outcomes

Learning outcomes were measured using students' academic performance scores and classified into High, Average, and Low achievement categories.

Table 4: Negative Attitudes and Learning Outcomes

Level of Negative Attitude	High Achievement	Average Achievement	Low Achievement
Low	58%	34%	8%
Moderate	26%	47%	27%
High	10%	32%	58%

The table clearly demonstrates that students with high negative attitudes predominantly fall into the low achievement category (58%). In contrast, students with low negative attitudes show higher academic success. This finding confirms that negative attitudes significantly impair learning outcomes and academic performance.

Objective 5: To examine the mediating role of academic engagement

To understand whether academic engagement mediates the relationship between negative attitudes and learning outcomes, mean scores were compared.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Engagements and Learning Outcomes

Level of Negative Attitude	Mean Engagement Score	Mean Academic Score
Low	78.4	74.6
Moderate	62.7	61.2
High	45.9	49.3

The progressive decline in both engagement and academic scores from low to high negative attitude groups indicates that engagement plays a mediating role. Students with high negative attitudes are less engaged, which directly affects their learning outcomes. This result aligns with earlier findings that engagement acts as a crucial link between psychological factors and academic achievement.

The results of the study provide strong empirical evidence that students' negative attitudes toward learning significantly affect academic engagement and learning outcomes. The high prevalence of moderate to high negative attitudes suggests a need for urgent educational interventions. The strong negative correlations between attitudes and engagement confirm that affective factors are central to the learning process.

The findings also emphasize that emotional and cognitive disengagement are more severe than behavioral disengagement, indicating that students may be physically present in classrooms but psychologically detached. This has serious implications for the quality of learning and long-term academic success.

The study supports existing literature that highlights the importance of positive learning attitudes and supportive educational environments. Teacher encouragement, learner-centered pedagogy, academic counseling, and stress-reduction strategies are essential for addressing negative attitudes and enhancing student engagement.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present empirical study provides clear evidence that students' negative attitudes toward learning significantly impair academic engagement and learning outcomes. Negative attitudes diminish students' behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment in learning activities, ultimately leading to poor academic achievement. The findings emphasize that academic success is not solely determined by cognitive ability but is strongly influenced by affective and motivational factors.

Addressing negative attitudes toward learning requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving teachers, schools, parents, and policymakers. Creating positive learning environments, adopting innovative and student-centered teaching strategies, and providing emotional and academic support can help transform negative attitudes into positive learning dispositions. Future research may focus on intervention-based studies to identify effective strategies for improving student attitudes and engagement across diverse educational contexts.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bloom, B. S. (1976). *Human characteristics and school learning*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- [2]. Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53(1), 109–132.
- [3]. Finn, J. D., & Rock, D. A. (1997). Academic success among students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(2), 221–234.

- [4]. Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59–109.
- [5]. Hidi, S., & Renninger, K. A. (2006). The four-phase model of interest development. *Educational Psychologist*, 41(2), 111–127.
- [6]. Kahu, E. R. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(5), 758–773.
- [7]. Pintrich, P. R., & De Groot, E. V. (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(1), 33–40.
- [8]. Schunk, D. H., Meece, J. L., & Pintrich, P. R. (2014). *Motivation in education: Theory, research, and applications* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- [9]. Wang, M. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2013). School context, achievement motivation, and academic engagement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(1), 12–39.
- [10]. Wentzel, K. R. (1998). Social relationships and motivation in middle school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(2), 202–209.