

Demotivating Factors in Higher Education: Evidence from Three Islamic Universities in Bangladesh from 2020-2025

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© 2025 جامعة العلوم والتكنولوجيا، المركز الرئيس عدن، اليمن. يمكن إعادة استخدام المادة المنشورة حسب رخصة مؤسسة المشاع الإبداعي شريطة الاستشهاد بالمؤلف والمجلة.

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Abstract:

This study examines the factors contributing to student demotivation in three Islamic universities in Bangladesh, providing a critical analysis of institutional, academic, personal, and socio-cultural influences on engagement and performance. Using qualitative data from in-depth interviews with students, faculty, administrators, and alumni of three Islamic universities in Bangladesh, the research identifies key demotivating elements, including authoritarian management, limited research and pedagogical resources, traditional lecture-based teaching, unclear institutional missions, high tuition fees, and the absence of student council elections. Additional challenges include insufficient integration of Islamic values, a shortage of Islamically oriented faculty, and limited global recognition of degrees. Findings are interpreted through the lenses of Self-Determination Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Vroom's Expectancy Theory, Tinto's Student Retention Model, and Islamic motivational perspectives emphasizing holistic moral and spiritual development. The study highlights a disconnect between the symbolic implementation of Islamic principles and the substantive cultivation of ethical, intellectual, and professional competencies. Implications underscore the need for curriculum modernization, faculty development, strengthened value-based education, enhanced student participation, and improved institutional reputation. The research offers evidence-based recommendations to enhance student motivation and institutional effectiveness in Islamic higher education.

Keywords: *Islamic universities, student motivation, higher education, Bangladesh, demotivating factors*

العوامل المثبطة للدافعية في التعليم العالي: أدلة من ثلاث جامعات إسلامية في بنغلاديش من 2020-2025

محمد أميمل أحسان^(*)

الملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة العوامل التي تسهم في ضعف دافعية الطلاب في الجامعات الإسلامية في بنغلاديش، من خلال تحليل نقدي للتأثيرات المؤسسية والأكاديمية والشخصية والاجتماعية-الثقافية على مستوى المشاركة والأداء. وبالاعتماد على بيانات نوعية جمعت من مقابلات معمقة مع طلاب وأعضاء هيئة تدريس وإداريين وخريجين من ثلاث جامعات إسلامية في بنغلاديش، تحدد الدراسة أبرز العوامل المثبطة للدافعية، بما في ذلك الإدارة السلطوية، محدودية الموارد البحثية والتربوية، أساليب التدريس التقليدية القائمة على المحاضرات، غموض الرؤية المؤسسية، ارتفاع الرسوم الدراسية، وغياب انتخابات اتحادات الطلبة. وتشمل التحديات الإضافية ضعف دمج القيم الإسلامية في العملية التعليمية، ونقص الكوادر الأكاديمية المتخصصة ذات التوجه الإسلامي، ومحدودية الاعتراف الدولي بالشهادات الممنوحة. تُفسر النتائج من خلال أطر نظرية متعددة، منها نظرية تحديد الذات، ونظرية العاملين لهيرزبرغ، ونظرية التوقع لفرور، ونموذج تيننتو للاحتفاظ بالطلاب، إضافة إلى المنظور الإسلامي للدافعية الذي يؤكد على التنمية الأخلاقية والروحية الشاملة. وتبرز الدراسة وجود فجوة بين التطبيق الرمزي للمبادئ الإسلامية والتنمية الجوهرية للقيم الأخلاقية والفكرية والمهنية. وتشير النتائج إلى الحاجة لتحديث المناهج، وتطوير قدرات أعضاء هيئة التدريس، وتعزيز التعليم القيمي، وتوسيع مشاركة الطلبة، وتحسين السمعة المؤسسية. وتقدم الدراسة توصيات قائمة على الأدلة لتعزيز دافعية الطلاب ورفع كفاءة المؤسسات في التعليم العالي الإسلامي..

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجامعات الإسلامية، دافعية الطلاب، التعليم العالي، بنغلاديش، العوامل المثبطة للدافعية

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Introduction

It is generally recognized that higher learning is a critical period concerning intellectual, professional, and personal growth, as it determines the future career path of the students, civic activities, and ethical orientation (Tinto, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The role of Islamic universities in Bangladesh is very peculiar in the higher education system because Islamic universities are designed to combine religious values, ethical education, and contemporary academic knowledge into one system of institutions (Al-Attas, 1980; Saefullah, 2012). Through these institutions, they also hope to graduate students who can not only be academically qualified but also be morally upright and socially responsible and adhere to tarbiyah (nurturing) and da'wah (moral and spiritual guidance) as per the classical Islamic philosophy of education (Abdullah, 2018). Nonetheless, according to the latest evidence, there is an ongoing crisis of student motivation, and students complain of not feeling engaged, being dissatisfied with administrative and pedagogical policies, and having little correspondence between promised institutional values and their academic realities (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

The overall research question that will be considered in this research is the identification and evaluation of demotivating factors on students in Islamic universities in Bangladesh. Although the literature has addressed the issue of motivation in the general context that is common to higher education, minimal empirical research has been conducted to identify the socio-cultural, religious, and administrative issues that influence student motivation in the specific context of Islamic institutions. This study answers the following research questions: What are the major structural, pedagogical, and socio-cultural reasons that lead to the demotivation of students in Islamic universities? What is the role of institutional practice, orientation of the faculty, and societal perceptions in helping students to become engaged academically and career-oriented? It is through answering these questions that the study aims to offer a detailed insight into the motivational processes that affect student learning and involvement in faith-based higher education institutions.

The importance of the study is that it could be used to create policies in institutions, curricula, and instructional methods that could increase student interaction and retention in the Islamic universities. With references to Self-Determination Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Vroom's Expectancy Theory, and Tinto's Student Retention Model, the paper critically emphasizes the interaction of intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivational factors, institutional structures, and social-cultural factors (Herzberg, 1959; Vroom, 1964; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Tinto, 1975). The study takes the form of qualitative research, whereby in-depth interviews are conducted among students, faculty, and administrators of three Islamic universities in Bangladesh. Through the

logical presentation of the findings, the paper contends that demotivation in such institutions is not merely an issue to do with the personal disposition of the individual student but is closely tied to organizational, pedagogical, and socio-cultural contexts. This survey is also constrained to the experiences of Islamic universities in Bangladesh at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels and is not generalized to secular and non-Islamic higher learning institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Quality Education in Higher Learning

The higher learning quality is a multifaceted and situational concept. Quality is defined by various points of view, needs of the stakeholders, and changing societal demands. Higher education quality refers to teaching efficiency, curriculum development, assessment, faculty, infrastructure, support of students, and organizational culture. Each focuses on the students, staff, employers, and policymakers. The quality of teaching, feedback, and support are important to students; graduate skills and personal traits are appreciated by employers; and accreditation, resources, and reputation may be important to institutions. (Clemons & Jance, 2024)

Delivering high-quality education in Islamic universities necessitates a nuanced integration of traditional religious instruction with contemporary academic disciplines. This assimilation combines quality with morality. Islamic universities are shifting to more integration of secular content with religious education as a curriculum, which is helping to enhance the holistic development of students (Wafy, 2024). The curriculum focuses on academic performance and the development of character by incorporating Islamic values in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor fields (Mudzakkir et al., 2025).

Understanding Demotivation in Educational Contexts

The concept of demotivation in education requires the study of diverse factors that lead to demotivation among the students. It refers to learners who were previously motivated but have since lost their motivation and can be re-motivated given the appropriate conditions. Amotivation, on the other hand, is the absence of motivation, which is usually associated with helplessness or ineffectiveness. Demotivation is a situation-specific concept, which differs among different people and learning conditions. (Falout, 2009)

Demotivating Factors in University Education

Institutional and Administrative Barriers Are Demotivating Factors in University Education

The presence of institutional and administrative barriers plays a major role in demotivating students at the university level, affecting their performance and general involvement in university education. These obstacles are present in different forms, such as the use of stiff policies, lack of a support network, and complicated bureaucracy, which combine together to disrupt the learning activities of students. Rigid policies may be a source of frustration in students and may result in motivation and engagement in education (Catama & Tejada, 2025). Administrative procedures, especially those in mobility programs, may be discouraged by students due to bureaucratic procedures that are likely to occur during the process of accessing these opportunities (Vasilopoulos and Vasilopoulos, 2024). The students might lack support

and mentorship in their academic institutions and feel isolated and discouraged, especially when they are in difficult learning settings (Mashile et al., 2020).

Poor Facilities and Learning Resources

Poor facilities and learning materials are a major factor that demotivates university students in their performance and well-being. The learning environment is significantly defined by the quality and availability of educational infrastructure in terms of classrooms, libraries, laboratory access, and access to technology. In the case of lack or insufficiency of these facilities, they may result in a reduction of motivation and failure in academic success. (Farhana et al., 2024). Such infrastructure amenities as libraries and language labs were identified to improve the desire to study English at IAIN Palopo, though there was underutilization of certain facilities due to the inability to access them (Abdain et al., 2025). The inability to access buildings and facilities was found to have a negative effect on academic performance and psychological well-being. Regarding the application of the education in electrical/electronic technology, insufficient teaching resources were observed to have a negative effect on teaching and learning (Ogbu, 2015; Ogbu, 2015). Nevertheless, it is paramount not only to be able to offer these resources but also to make sure that they are used efficiently. This includes creating awareness and access to the existing facilities, which was evident in the case of IAIN Palopo, wherein some of the resources were not fully used even though they were available (Abdain et al., 2025).

Instruction in Quality and Pedagogy

Studies have found that ineffective teaching processes and poor teacher involvement may result in student boredom and lack of motivation to learn (Chong et al., 2019). The unfavorable learning experiences of students are the result of discomfort in the classroom caused by heat and overcrowding (Saifullah, 2024). A lack of motivation to learn the curriculum can be reduced due to negative perceptions towards the subject matter, which is frequently caused by past experience (Saifullah, 2024). One more cause of demotivation is the low level of students and their disparaging attitudes that may frustrate the teachers and reduce their teaching motivation (Tran and Moskovsky, 2022). An overload of work and high demands might lower the motivation of teachers, which influences their instructional quality and relations with students (Aslam et al., 2025).

Relevance of Curriculum and Employability

Studies show that where the curriculum does not meet the industry demand or lacks in showing any form of practical applications, then students may become disinterested and lack the readiness to enter the labor market. Student Motivation: Demotivation is observed when the students find the curricula abstract, old, and irrelevant to the professional practice. Learning theory without explicit practice for careers or real-life scenarios will result in the loss of interest and lack of motivation to study. (Tagulwa et al., 2023). It has been documented that there exists a discrepancy between the skills taught in universities and those demanded by the employers. This imbalance leads to graduates being ill-equipped to join the labor markets, which is more demotivating to students and damaging to the perceived worth of their study. Curriculum relevance and employability are directly related to quality education (Hasan et al., 2024).

Social, Economic, and Cultural Factors

Most of the socioeconomic and cultural factors play a big role in determining the quality of education in universities. Such influences are based on various ways and influence access, equity, and general experience in education. The socioeconomic status usually determines the access to quality education, and the family with lower income is impeded by tuition fees and insufficient resources (Cardona, 2024). Economic issues are some of the factors that cause high dropout rates, and this is mainly in areas such as Latin America, where people are affected by financial instability (Adan & Orodho, 2014). The cultural norms may cause inequality of women and girls, who are deprived of opportunity, which again influences the quality of education in general (Adan & Orodho, 2014). Cultural attachment towards old-fashioned forms of education can act as a barrier to the adoption of new forms of teaching methods, which affect the level of student interest and learning results (Yasir et al., 2025).

The Case of Islamic Universities

The education level in Islamic universities has been facing several challenges that affect its performance and suitability in modern society. Such issues include administrative, infrastructural, and pedagogical concerns and require a complex solution to reform. Among the key areas of concern are the relevancy of the curriculum, teacher professionalism, and incorporation of technology in education. Most Islamic universities have a problem of outdated curriculum that fails to satisfy the demands of society (Farhudi et al., 2025).

Islamic universities may have an overloaded curriculum that can largely lead to a lack of engagement and superficiality in learning by the students. It needs to incorporate the old Islamic teachings with modern practices in education, but most institutions are not able to balance between these two. Such an imbalance frequently results in the creation of a curriculum, which cannot be intensive, and as a consequence, students cannot think critically and develop intellectually. (Siregar, 2024; Moslimany, 2024)

The qualifications of educators are also significantly lacking, and this impacts the quality of teaching and student performance in Islamic studies (Safira et al., 2025). Faculty development opportunities are also lacking and cause a skills gap in contemporary education (Zamroni et al., 2023). Poor technological infrastructure denies students a chance to access quality learning resources and online learning opportunities, which also contributes to educational inequality (Zamroni et al., 2023). The digital divide restricts access to modern learning tools, which again worsens educational disparities (Zamroni et al., 2023).

The hostility of the society to Islamic institutions of learning goes a long way in tainting their perception and appealing to the newcomers. In order to reverse these obstacles, it is necessary to use effective methods to form a positive image. These can be the promotion of integrity, transparency, and quality service; the creation of a powerful brand image, which appeals to the values of the community; and the elimination of internal issues, like poor infrastructure and unprofessional personnel (Pratama et al., 2024).

Though a lot of research has been conducted on student motivation in higher education, very few studies have been done on Islamic universities in Bangladesh. The vast majority of

research takes one of the analyses of pedagogy, administration, or religious education without considering the relationship between the policies of the institution, the orientation of faculty, socio-cultural aspects, and the motivation of students, especially in Islamic universities in Bangladesh. Moreover, the theoretical approaches of Self-Determination Theory, the Two-Factor Theory proposed by Herzberg (1959), Expectancy Theory proposed by Vroom (1964), and the Student Retention Model by Tinto (1975) have hardly been utilized in the context of Islamic higher education in Bangladesh, so the factors that have caused the lack of motivation remain unexplored. The same research also places a lot of emphasis on quantitative measures such as dropout rates without paying attention to qualitative insights into what the students are actually going through, that is, to engage or to disengage. Such a gap demonstrates that a theory-underpinned, qualitative study of the demotivational processes within the context of Islamic universities is warranted, including the institutional and individual observations, in order to offer practical solutions to improve student motivation, pedagogical processes, and the overall development.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the demotivational dynamics in higher education within three Islamic universities in Bangladesh from 2020 to 2025. These three universities are mentioned in the study using codes such as Islamic University I, Islamic University II, and Islamic University III. This research employed the interpretivist qualitative research paradigm, as its research is based on the experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making of the participants as investigated using in-depth semi-structured interviews, purposive sampling, and thematic analysis. The epistemological orientation attempts to know how individuals are formed and create their academic realities in the sociocultural and institutional environment of the Islamic universities in Bangladesh. The interpretive approach is also justified by the fact that the purposive selection of the universities used to represent both state-owned and privately owned Islamic tertiary education institutions in various areas allows examining the various issues that contribute to academic demotivation in a more nuanced way.

Primary data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including teachers, students, administrative staff, alumni, a University Grant Commission member, a University Trust member, and a guardian. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement and experience within the universities. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or online, depending on accessibility. They were audio-recorded in Bengali with consent for accuracy and later transcription and translated into English and anonymized to ensure confidentiality. The interview duration is 60-90 minutes. The interview guide covered topics such as institutional culture, teaching-learning practices, religious and academic expectations, administrative policies, infrastructure, and socio-cultural influences affecting motivation. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the phenomenon across diverse perspectives.

(Table-1) The Profile of Respondents

SL	Code	Designation	Organization	Category	Academic Qualification	Sex	Age
1	T-01	Professor	Islamic University I	Teacher	PhD	M	55
2	T-02	Professor	Islamic University II	Teacher	PhD	M	50
3	T-03	Professor	Islamic University III	Teacher	PhD	M	58
4	T-04	Associate Professor	Islamic University I	Teacher	PhD	F	48
5	T-05	Assistant Professor	Islamic University II	Teacher	MA	F	40
6	T-06	Associate Professor	Islamic University III	Teacher	PhD	F	47
7	S-01	Student	Islamic University I	Student	Honors Semester	7 th M	21
8	S-02	Student	Islamic University I	Student	Honors Semester	6 th F	21
9	S-03	Student	Islamic University II Chittagong	Student	Honors Semester	8 th M	22
10	S-04	Student	Islamic University II Chittagong	Student	Honors Semester	6 th F	21
11	S-05	Student	Islamic University III	Student	Honors Semester	7 th M	22
12	S-06	Student	Islamic University III	Student	Honors Semester	7 th F	22
13	S-07	Student	Islamic University I	Student		F	20
14	S-08	Student	Islamic University II	Student		M	22
15	S-09	Student	Islamic University III	Student		F	23
16	AS-01	Deputy Registrar	Islamic University I	Administrative Staff	MA	M	48
17	AS-02	Deputy Controller of Examination	Islamic University II	Administrative Staff	MA	M	50
18	AS-03	Deputy Registrar	Islamic University III	Administrative Staff	MA	M	53
19	A-01	Banker	Islamic University I	Alumni	MA	F	27
20	A-02	Teacher	Islamic University II	Alumni	MA	F	30
21	A-03	Teacher	Islamic University III	Alumni	MA	M	31
22	UGC-01	Professor	---	UGC member	PhD	M	60
23	TM-01	Professor	Islamic University I	Trust member	PhD	M	65
24	TM-02	Businessman	Islamic University II	Trust member	MA	M	60
25	G-01	Businessman	Islamic University I	Guardian	HSC	M	57
26	G-02	Teacher	Islamic University II	Guardian	MA	F	50
27	G-03	Service Holder	Islamic University III	Guardian	BA	F	53

Secondary data was collected from research articles, theses, and other reliable newspaper publications on the topic of higher education and motivation in Bangladesh, which were also examined to provide a contextualization and triangulation of the findings. All qualitative information was treated according to the thematic analysis, which made patterns of meanings inductively emerge in the narratives provided by the participants and institutional documents. Triangulation, member checking, and keeping an audit trail were used to ensure trustworthiness. The considerations of ethics were followed closely and included voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for the cultural and religious sensitivities of Islamic teaching settings.

The theoretical framework is based on a combination of theories used to examine the complicated factors in the motivation of students in Islamic universities. The psychological basis to determine the influence of autonomy, competence, and relatedness on intrinsic motivation is provided by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), whereas the organizational perspective on the distinction between motivators and hygiene factors that determine the degree of institutional satisfaction is provided by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959). The Expectancy Theory of Vroom (1964) offers a cognitive factor in the understanding of how students assess effort, performance, and the expected results, whereas the Student Retention Model by Tinto (1975) offers a sociological perspective since it pays attention to academic and social integration in persistence. These frameworks are supported by the Islamic principles of motivation, i.e., ikhlas (sincerity), niyyah (intention), adab (ethical conduct), and shura (consultation), that put the analysis in terms of the ethical and spiritual goals of Islamic education. This combined framework offers a strict basis for the qualitative and interpretive methodological approach of the study.

FINDINGS

Institutional and Administrative Factors

Bureaucratic and authoritarian management

One of the common themes that came out during the different interviews was that administrative management in the Islamic universities is very centralized and bureaucratic. The survey participants also pointed at the fact that the decision-making process is always top-down, and there is little opportunity to involve faculty or students in the process of policy-making or prioritizing the school. T-01 replied, saying that the authorities make decisions without involving faculty or students; in most cases, we have no control over making it change the academic environment that we are a part of. This kind of authoritarian-style government hampers creativity, initiative, and cooperation in work, making people alienated, both personnel and students. G-01-02-03 claimed that they were not invited to any institutional meetings. The lack of participatory processes is a factor that makes people feel disempowered and makes them less eager to play a part in academic and extracurricular life.

Inadequate Research Centers

The second factor, which was salient and impacted motivation, was the insufficient supply of the research resources. The respondents observed that libraries are poorly funded, digital resources are too old, and the possibility of scholarly publication is limited. T-02, T-06, and G-03 noted, "Even when the students have interest in research, they are not able to follow it due to the fact that the university does not have the facilities required to do so. Such lack of intellectual development constrains intellectual development, discourages academic activity, and weakens the research-based culture. T-01, T-03, S-01-02, and AS-01 accepted the fact that Islamic University I has recently adopted research-based incentives, i.e., financing of student and staff projects, as an indication of a low but encouraging endeavor to fill gaps in its structure that have been long-standing. Nevertheless, these types of initiatives are still the exception to the rule, as they represent institutional unequal support of research

Ineffective Pay Rates and Stagnation in the Career

Lack of professional growth options and financial insecurity also increase demotivation among the faculty, which, in turn, affects student motivation. The majority of the respondents often complained of low salaries compared to their peers in government institutions, gradual promotion paths, and lack of financial gain features or benefits like pensions and gratuity. T-02 & T-04 observed that, even though salaries in a single private university are higher as compared to other private Islamic institutions, no private Islamic universities offer gratuity or pension schemes, and the staff is not guaranteed long-term financial security. These restrictions constrain faculty spending on quality teaching, mentoring, and academic research and eventually impact the student academic environment.

Indistinctness in Institutional Mission

The majority of the respondents cited confusion over the duality of the identity of the universities, with the institutions trying to strike a balance between the modern academic interests and the religious missionary interests. S-03 said, "We are instructed on intellectual excellence, yet there is a motivational reminder around of moral and religious instructions, and it is unclear what comes first." The result of this ambiguity is creating conflicting expectations regarding the teaching, research, and value-based education, which culminates in frustration, low engagement, and demotivation. The combination of these administrative and institutional failures is debilitating to both academic and spiritual endeavors and is a structural contradiction that cuts across the life of the institution.

Academic and Pedagogical Factors **Conventional Teaching Philosophies**

The examples of pedagogical practices were mentioned among key factors influencing the motivation of students several times. The interviewees pointed out that lecture-based learning and rote learning are dominant with few exceptions, as they inhibit critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. S-05 replied, "The majority of classes are only lectures where we memorize and regurgitate information; there is no room to discuss and ask questions." Such a strict method discourages learning and limits exploration beyond the set syllabi and intellectual curiosity, limiting academic achievement and participation in learning.

Lack of Interdisciplinary Approach to Modern Disciplines

One of the major issues that have been cited by the respondents is the poor incorporation of modern disciplines and the conventional Islamic education. T-03 & T-06 said that students enrolled in technology or business courses are not able to compete with other students in other secular universities due to the fact that our curriculum has not been updated in many years. This incongruence does not only decrease the perceived market value of Islamic university education but also vexes students who wish to achieve religious and job skill growth, which is the contradiction between religious and professional education.

Language Barriers

The language mastery became another problem-solving factor, with the instruction being presented in Arabic, English, and Bangla most of the time. Some of the respondents indicated that the proficiency of the faculty in these languages is uneven and creates gaps in

understanding. As S-04 said, the teacher sometimes mixes the use of both Bengali and English, and not all of us can cope with it; it is very stressful and discouraging to learn. Conversely, there was a single private Islamic university that was reported to keep using both Arabic and English, and it improved the knowledge of students on religious and scholarly materials, as argued by S-01, S-02, and S-07. The lack of balance in the application of multilingual education, the use of the traditional method of teaching, and the out-of-date curriculum are the causes that undermine the effectiveness of the pedagogical process, students' self-confidence, and their desire to succeed in their studies.

Personal and Psychological Factors

Limited Career Prospects

One of the primary worries of graduates was the question of the reduced relevance of their degrees to the rest of the job market. A-01-02-03 noted that the employers in Bangladesh tended to pose questions to them about issues that were not directly related to their area of academic expertise, thus showing a mismatch between the university programs and the market demands. Participants also indicated that Islamic universities do not have well-organized career development programs and employer-based training programs, which restrict the readiness of students for professional settings. This mismatch is supported by the institutional focus on religious and theoretical research and presentation as opposed to practical skills, which further makes graduates feel insecure about their employability rates. This disconnect between academic preparation and the labor market leads to frustration and demoralization of students that feel that their qualifications are not being sufficiently rewarded.

Cultural Restrictions

S-02-04-06-08 reported to inhibit the personal expression and social interactions of students because of institutional and social norms such as strict gender segregation, dressing codes, and conservative social conditions, and also non-hijabi students were harassed by so-called Islamists in the form of moral judgment and degrading comments on social media. Participant A-01-02 told me that married and parenting students were not given special facilities and did not have childcare centers, flexibility in attendance, and special arrangements in examinations. The participant also added that their particular needs were not usually considered by the teachers and university authorities, and it was hard to pursue the studies and at the same time perform the role of the family. These cultural and institutional obstacles restrict the opportunities to participate in education and social life, which have an uneven impact on women and support the systemic inequalities in Islamic universities.

Perception and Economic Background in Society

Prejudice of the society towards Islamic university degrees was mentioned very often. S-03, S-8, and G-02 elaborated that people thought that a private university degree is not as serious or credible as a degree from a public university. In some cases, I do not want to mention it in order not to be judged. These kinds of perceptions not only limit employment opportunities but also lower the level of self-confidence and motivation among students to undertake higher education or have career ambitions that are not religious. These issues are also aggravated by financial pressures. A number of students with low-income families are forced to juggle

between employment and school. S-05 stated, "Sometimes I am forced to skip classes because I spend hours working to take care of the family. It is stressful, and it interferes with my studies. This economic and social overlap brings to the fore the multiplied state of demotivation among students in the Islamic universities.

External and Environmental Factors

Political and Economic Unpredictability

The instability in the country became a major determinant of institutional and student experiences. The T-01-02-03-05 and TM-02 brought out the fact that the budgetary uncertainties and irregular government funding are some of the reasons that inhibit infrastructure maintenance and program development. T-02 said, "It is difficult to sustain facilities or bring in new programs due to budget cuts." S-01-03-04-08 stated that this instability only helps to increase anxiety about career opportunities and low morale and limits access to necessary learning resources, which only serves to strengthen demotivation.

Limited Global Recognition

The challenge of the low level of international recognition is common in Islamic universities in Bangladesh because of the lack of global accreditation and formal associations. S-03-04-05-06-07, A-03 wrote that these deficiencies have a negative impact on career mobility, specifically for those people who are planning to find jobs abroad because their qualifications are constantly subject to doubt by the employer. Even though T-01-03, A-01 Islamic University I is relatively better placed in terms of national and international ranking in comparison to some secular ones, others are constantly ranked lower, enhancing the sense of prestige. This deprivation of recognition affects the morale of the students and destroys the credibility of the institutions as well as limiting access to worldwide academic and career prospects. The respondents noted that the key steps in improving not only the reputation of the Islamic universities but also the employability rates of graduates include the emphasis on the development of international connections, the acquisition of accreditation, and the advancement of institutional ranks.

Lack of Alumni Engagement

The alumni networks were found to be weak and were a major hindrance to the professional development in the Islamic universities. Even though A-01-07 indicated that Islamic University I held alumni events, they were mainly ceremonial and did not have a lasting mentoring and career guidance system. The most common argument raised by most of the respondents was that the lack of organized alumni activities restricted opportunities in relation to internships and professional networks as well as job opportunities. Formal mentoring and career development programs may be regarded as the means to bridge the gap between academic preparation and professional advancement and improve graduate outcomes and institutional credibility.

Other Contextual Influences

Absence of Official Endorsement of Islamic Values

The institution's commitment to incorporate Islamic values in the academic and administrative life is a major cause of demotivation among students in Islamic universities in Bangladesh. Despite the fact that these universities were established on the basis of higher education, which presupposes Islamic ethics, the interviews have shown that in most cases these principles are not practical but symbolic. Respondents (T-03, S-03-05, A-03) spoke of a tendency in the direction of symbolic Islamization; there are prayer rooms, Islamic slogans, and religious schedules, but there is little interaction with Islamic ethics, pedagogy, and moral formation. Contrary to what T-03 & T-06 observed, all this Islamic identity is publicly known in the university, although students are hardly given any meaningful ethical or moral guidance in its practice. This disjuncture between mission and reality causes a sense of inauthenticity, which kills motivation among both students and faculty.

To promote value-based education, some of the privately owned Islamic universities have come up with programs like the Moral Development Program (MDP) and character-building programs. Nonetheless, the respondents (T-01, S-01-02-07) have noted that the implementation of these programs is irregular. S-02-07 noted that even the MDP is now a demotivating concept since teachers are not sincere and responsible in undertaking it. This is indicative of a more fundamentally structural issue: unless the institutions are truly committed to the value-based programs and engaged in a consistent practice of pedagogical practice, the value-based programs will be a mere veneer, and the trust of the students will be undermined, as will the moral credibility of the institutions.

Deficiency of Islamically Oriented Teachers

Lack of Islamically oriented teachers is one of the key causes of demotivation among students in Islamic universities in Bangladesh. Even though the intention of these institutions is to incorporate the Islamic values in higher education, there has been a mismatch between institutional vision and faculty orientation, as many respondents illustrated. A number of the interviewees noted that other teachers take up their work as a job and not as moral and spiritual work; thus, they end up teaching without engaging in the ethical or spiritual nature of the teaching. According to S-05, when the teachers themselves discount the Islamic values, it becomes hard to find students who are motivated in an Islamic school.

This problem is more severe in different universities. According to the respondents (S-01-04, A-01-02), faculty in certain institutions openly demonstrate and integrate Islamic values in their instruction and mentoring. Otherwise (S-05-06, A-03), there were those who talked of an environment in which teachers were apathetic or even dismissive of the Islamic teachings, and some were even atheists. According to them, such attitudes undermine the motivation of the students and put the religious mission of the universities in question. This case shows the paramount role of hiring Islamically dedicated faculty, offering continued professional growth, and developing an organizational culture where academic rigor is balanced in the incorporation of spiritual and ethical ethics.

Inadequate Fulfillment of Student Requirements

The other cause of student demotivation is continuous neglect of the academic, social, and infrastructural needs of students. Numerous respondents highlighted the fact that, even when moral and spiritual development is the focus, universities often overlook the practical needs of students as far as the facilities on campus, classroom facilities, and administrative

responsiveness are concerned. S-01 and A-1 further observed that the collective action, i.e., protests or blockades, was the only means through which the student concerns would be addressed. Although these protests can be viewed as being incompatible with the disciplined and moral image that is being propagated by Islamic universities, they are also indicative of how fed up students are and the lack of alternative means of communication. These tensions are worsened by administrative inflexibility and lack of good communication, resulting in adversarial relations that deter institutional harmony. In turn, the ongoing disregard of the needs of students not only discourages people but also compromises the credibility of the institutions and prevents the overall educational and ethical project of Islamic universities.

Lack of Student Council Elections

Absence of formal student governance systems, especially student council elections, has been mentioned several times as one of the citizens of demotivation. S-01-02-03-04-05-06-07-08-09 indicated that students tend to be disempowered because of a lack of an organized avenue to air their grievances or to have a say in the institutional decision-making. Respondents compared the case in the Islamic universities with the secular public universities, including Dhaka University (DUCSU), Jagannath University (JUCSO), Chittagong University (CUCSO), and Rajshahi University (RUCSO), whereby student council elections offer systematic ways of developing leadership, participating in, and having a voice in the institutions.

Although T-01-02-04, AS-01-02 & G-01-02-03 proposed that Islamic universities should not be linked with mainstream politics in order to avoid opposition with national parties, T-03-06 and AS-03 proposed institutionalized student councils to be regulated. Such councils would not only allow their students to enjoy social life and academic activities but would also not import partisan politics into university life, thus assisting in the promotion of engagement and leadership without violating the religious ethos of the universities.

High Tuition Fees

A high cost of tuition, especially in the private Islamic universities, was always a key issue raised as a significant source of demotivation and academic perseverance. S-01-02-03-04, A-02, and AS-02 observed that middle-income and low-income students are likely to find it difficult to afford financial requirements, which leads to stress, marginalization, and dropout in some cases. S-01 narrated that students would request authorities to give them scholarships or reduce the fees, but in vain. One of the friends dropped out and in turn developed serious mental problems, which led to his demise in an accident. These stories highlight the terrible social, psychological, and financial effects of not being able to afford education. The respondents contended that excessive charges were against Islamic teachings of fair knowledge (ilm) and reduced the credibility of institutions, as they hindered access of qualified students.

Government Negligence of Institutional Oversight and Policy

The results suggest that governance and regulatory laxity of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Education are a great demotivational factor to Islamic universities in Bangladesh. TM-01-02 made it clear that the lack of policy structures and industry-specific guidelines has given rise to administrative uncertainty and constrained institutional expansion. They also observed that the delay in the process of approving new departments and academic

programs impedes the development of academics and also leads to low morale among staff. Instead, they felt that the institutional responsiveness and sensitivity to the Islamic education in these regulatory agencies were wanting, and that constituted a structural marginalization on their part.

Moreover, TM-01-02 was also concerned that political forces have influenced the autonomy of operation of Islamic universities, especially in successive governments, which have given more emphasis to secular policy orientations. Ullah (2023) has proposed that these trends have reduced the Islamic studies in the university curriculum and questioned the identity of the Islamic higher education institutions. Other settings with a predominant Muslim population have had much the same dynamic, where political and regulatory pressures have reduced the institutional space of Islamic knowledge and identity in higher education systems (Khoir et al., 2025). On the other hand, UGC-01 presented his argument that more and more some of the privately owned Islamic universities have put financial survival ahead of their initial academic and moral missions, but he said that there are systemic limitations and political forces that limited the field.

DISCUSSION

Deficiencies in the institutions and intrinsic motivation

This is a great demotivator in the Islamic universities in Bangladesh due to the lack of institutional support of the true practice of Islamic values. Even though these institutions present themselves as having incorporated Islamic ethics in higher education, as mentioned by respondents, there was noted a symbolic Islamization, which focuses on apparent religiosity rather than moral and pedagogical substance. This shallowness impedes intrinsic motivation in students through the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) because it does not satisfy their psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Whenever institutional practices do not seem to align with the values of students, they feel disengaged and purposeless.

This phenomenon is further explained by Herzberg's (1964) Two-Factor Theory that differentiates between motivation (achievement, recognition, growth) and hygiene factors (policies, environment, relationships). Observable Islamic signs, e.g., slogans or prayer rooms, are simply hygiene factors that ensure a superficial sense of identity but which fail to bring about actual motivation. Conversely, the lack of genuine moral and ethical training robs the students of genuine motivators like purpose, responsibility, and personal development. The criticisms of the Moral Development Program (MDP) offered by the respondents reflect on the fact that, when poorly conducted, ethically insincere schemes aimed at promoting values can turn out to be a source of dissatisfaction, be it a loss of faith in the university or moral and academic participation.

In the Islamic motivational sense, the appearance of Islamic values in educational institutions is flawed, since the Quranic teachings of ikhlas (sincerity) and amalsalih (righteous action) are flouted, as emphasized in different studies. A study shows that although Islamic education is supposed to promote moral and intellectual development, most institutions are more focused on administrative efficiency than spiritual commitment, and this has contributed to a lack of connectivity between the niyyah (intention) and spiritual involvement of students (Udhma & Minarti, 2025). Close assimilation of Islamic principles, honesty, justice, and responsibility,

among others, is critical to establishing a comprehensive learning experience that fosters character and academic achievement (Nurhakim et al., 2025). More than that, moral values need to be executed in a holistic manner targeting the intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth of the students to produce the generation of Islamic morals in every part of life (Nurhakim et al., 2025). As such, the genuine Islamic inspiration requires a structural authenticity that instills such values in teaching, assessment, and governance practices.

Institutional Credibility and Faculty Orientation

The second important result is associated with the lack of Islamically oriented teachers. Various respondents pointed out that some faculty members do not have an actual attachment to Islamic values, as some even revealed their secular or atheistic opinions. This inconsistency in the behavior of the institution and the faculty makes Islamic universities less believable and negatively affects the ethical atmosphere they are aimed to promote. According to the Expectancy Theory of Vroom (1964), motivation is based on three components, which are related to each other: expectancy (performance can be achieved through effort), instrumentality (performance can lead to outcomes), and valence (worth of the outcome) (Parijat & Bagga 2014). When students do not find their instructors exemplifying and/or rewarding Islamic values, there is a low valence in embracing those values. The relationship between moral work and institutional reward is undermined or nonexistent, and demotivation and cynicism occur.

In addition, the problem is also echoed in the Student Retention Model (1975) developed by Tinto that focuses on academic and social integration as predictors of persistence. Where teachers ignore or devalue Islamic morality, the students feel that they are not being integrated in an academic and moral sense, and this undermines their loyalty to the institution. On the other hand, students of the private Islamic universities that discussed their teachers as earnest and value-driven said that they were equally attached and satisfied, which supports the claim by Tinto that student persistence is dependent on meaningful academic relationships. According to the Islamic view, the Islamic university teachers are considered to be moral role models (qudwah akhlaqiyyah/murabbi), representing more than a teaching position, but also spiritual and ethical leadership. Such complexity of the role makes educators key figures in the intellectual and moral growth of students since they are supposed to serve as models and inculcate high moral standards according to the Islamic doctrine (Pulukadang & Jamil, 2025). The ethical crisis occurs when the supposed values of the educational institutions are not aligned with the real behavior of the faculty, which demeans the integrity of the educational process (Putra, 2025). These differences may cause the loss of motivation and character development in students because efficient Islamic education focuses on knowledge incorporation with moral and spiritual development (Setiawan & Bustam, 2024). As such, the issue of this separation is very pertinent in the development of a generation that is capable of facing modern challenges with responsibility and ethical awareness.

Student Voice and Institutional Responsiveness

Demotivation is also exacerbated by the unresponsiveness of the students to the academic and infrastructural demands. The culture of administrative apathy was characterized by the respondents as a situation whereby grievances about library facilities, accommodation, or classroom management are regularly disregarded. This inflexibility in the bureaucracy would

be what Herzberg would describe as a breakdown in the hygiene factors, which brings discontent and lack of involvement. The Tinto model also predicts that students who feel not understood or listened to will have lower chances of belonging to the school and are likely to quit.

This feeling of being locked out is aggravated by the lack of election of the student council. Students have no formal representation, and as such, do not have organized ways of voicing grievances or even affecting the decision-making process. This goes against the theory of Tinto and the aspect of SDT of autonomy. Motivation requires participation and dialogue, but by refusing these, the students feel they are powerless participants in an unresponsive system (Tinto, 1975; Charles and Patrick, 2022). Interestingly, a few of the respondents warned against politicization of student activities, which is a very subtle realization that Islamic universities are capable of generating participatoryism without bringing partisanship. Autonomy and institutional harmony can be balanced effectively through the use of structured student representation, which is based on the Islamic principle of shura (consultation), which consequently leads to an increase in the motivation and commitment of students. The shura style of leadership creates an inclusive atmosphere in which everyone is involved in the decision-making process, which can be vastly helpful in increasing the motivation and academic performance of the students (Andiani et al., 2024). The described participatory design is also compatible with Islamic principles, like trust (amanah) and justice (adl), which play a crucial role in the ethical leadership and stakeholder involvement in educational establishments (Guselsa & Sahal, 2025).

The economic and structural constraints

High tuition fees and economic hardship are the greatest demotivators of students, especially in the privately run Islamic universities, as witnessed by several studies. Financial problems are closely related to the augmented degrees of stress in students, and the influence of financial problems is a main foreteller of stress (Aziz et al., 2025). According to the Expectancy Theory by Vroom, the student will lack motivation when he or she feels that he/she is hindered financially in working towards the realization of his/her educational objectives (Aziz et al., 2025). On the same note, in his model, Herzberg defines financial insecurity as one of the key hygiene factors, the lack of which results in dissatisfaction, which ranks higher than intrinsic motivation to learn (Perdana et al., 2024; Baker, 2019).

The human cost of such systemic neglect is found in the account given by one of the respondents of how a friend had worsened in mental health and consequently died due to financial marginalization and banishment. This discovery also disputes the Islamic ethical paradigm that underlines fairness in gaining knowledge ('ilm) and collective accountability (fard kifayah). When Islamic universities do not offer financial justice, they can then be accused of going against their moral core and losing the very people they are meant to lift.

Global Recognition and Institutional Prestige

The international non-recognition and low ranking of the majority of the Islamic universities in Bangladesh are the factors that cause discouragement and identity insecurity among the students. Even though a single private institution received a relatively high national ranking, all the lack of representation in world market surveys supports negative views of low status.

Using the Expectancy Theory as formulated by Vroom, these perceptions undermine both instrumentality and valence; students feel they are getting a low ROI on their schooling, and their degrees have diminished prestige (Vroom, 1964).

The model used by Tinto can also be used in explaining the effects of institutional reputation on retention (Tinto, 1975). Lack of social acceptance by the society makes students feel that they are not recognized within the institution, and as a result, it affects their academic and social assimilation, resulting in the possibility of leaving school.

Islamic theoretical perspective

The crisis of motivation in the Islamic universities in Bangladesh is a symptom of the disconnection between the outward signs of Islamization, dress codes, and facilities of prayer and the internal ethical and spiritual values that are to be taught at school. As much as such institutions focus on outward conformity, they usually do not focus on the development of tazkiyah (spiritual purification) and ta'lim (intellectual development), which causes student alienation and a decline in intrinsic motivation (Saefullah, 2012). The best way to teach Islam is to incorporate tarbiyah (nurturing) and da'wah (moral outreach) and inculcate such values as hikmah (wisdom) and adab (ethical conduct) into curricula and co-curricular activities to help cultivate moral resilience and intellectual development (Abdullah, 2018; Rojibillah & Hambali, 2025). Campus mosques may facilitate such integration through organized religious and ethical development programs, yet their full potential has not been exploited because of their limited connection with academic systems (Hadi et al., 2025). Moreover, globalization and secularization tend to encourage performativity of religiosity rather than substantive moral education, which poses a conflict between the identity of the institutions and the true Islamic pedagogical approach. The proposed solution to this problem implies returning education to the maqasid al-shari'ah (higher purposes of Islamic law), i.e., justice, knowledge, and human dignity, to ensure the comprehensive growth of the student and to strengthen the intrinsic motivation climate in Islamic universities.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This paper has discussed the structural, pedagogical, and psychological demotivational factors in Islamic universities in Bangladesh. The results show that the demotivation is not merely an outcome of material and administrative deficit but a further moral and institutional detachment between the professed Islamic ethos of these universities and their consumed academic culture. Based on the Self-Determination Theory, the Two-Factor Theory by Herzberg, the Expectancy Theory by Vroom, the Student Retention Model by Tinto, and Islamic motivational views, this discussion reiterates the need to consider both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of student motivation.

One of the key conclusions is that motivating Islamic universities cannot be maintained by superficial Islamization and superficial moral symbolism. It must possess institutional authenticity in the form of an unbroken moral practice, an earnest pedagogy, and fair government. The ritualistic exhibition of Islamic principles without structural honesty is undermining student trust and student participation. Moreover, poor faculty training and orientation, insensitive administration, and lack of student involvement reduce academic integration and a sense of belongingness of students. The economic aspect of financial inability

to afford tuition fees and the lack of financial assistance mechanisms is a contradiction to the Islamic ethic of fair access to education and widens inequality and exclusion.

These findings have multifaceted implications on policy. To begin with, structural means of integrating Islamic values into the curricula, administration, and assessment should be institutionalized in Islamic universities. Programs like Moral Development Programs have to be reformed in order to bring out the pedagogical sincerity and accountability. The policies of recruiting and developing faculty members should focus not only on the level of academic competence but also on the moral and ethical orientation in accordance with the Islamic education philosophy.

Second, the student participation should be institutionalized by the representative body or a council based on the shura (consultative decision-making), where the students have valid means to voice their needs and shape their policies. This strategy fits the focus of Tinto on academic and social integration, as well as Islamic values of mutual consultation.

Third, the funding of the Islamic universities ought to be examined in order to make them more accessible and less uneven in terms of socioeconomic differences. Setting up endowment-based (waqf) and interest-free systems of financial aid would bring these institutions closer to Islamic principles of righteousness and mercy.

Lastly, Islamic universities should seek accreditation and research cooperation as well as internationalization in order to increase institutional prestige and competitiveness within graduate programs. Education, academic excellence, and worldwide fame must be regarded as manifestations of ihsan (excellence), but not secular standards.

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