



Principals' Strategies for Improving Students' Motivation to Learn

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Abstract: This study is in the field of educational management and focuses on the role of school leadership in improving students' motivation to learn. The purpose of this research is to describe the strategies implemented by the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Moutong in enhancing students' motivation to learn, as well as to identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of these strategies. The selection of this topic is based on the importance of school leadership in creating an effective learning environment that can stimulate students' enthusiasm and academic achievement. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students. This study hypothesizes that effective principal leadership strategies significantly increase students' motivation to learn. The findings reveal that the principal applies several strategies, including providing direct motivation, supervising teaching and learning activities, encouraging innovative teaching methods, giving rewards to high-achieving students, and developing extracurricular activities in collaboration with parents. Supporting factors include teacher collaboration, parental involvement, and adequate school facilities, while inhibiting factors include low student awareness of the importance of education and uncontrolled social media use. The results of this study contribute to the development of educational leadership theory, particularly in strengthening the role of principals in motivating students. In conclusion, principal leadership strategies play a crucial role in enhancing students' learning motivation and improving the overall quality of education in schools.

Keyword: educational leadership; principal strategy; learning motivation; school management.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini berada dalam bidang manajemen pendidikan yang berfokus pada peran kepemimpinan kepala sekolah dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar peserta didik. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan strategi kepala sekolah SMA Negeri 1 Moutong dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar peserta didik serta mengidentifikasi faktor pendukung dan penghambat dalam pelaksanaannya. Pemilihan topik ini didasarkan pada pentingnya peran kepala sekolah dalam menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif sehingga dapat meningkatkan semangat dan hasil belajar peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap kepala sekolah, guru, dan peserta didik. Hipotesis penelitian ini menyatakan bahwa strategi kepemimpinan kepala sekolah yang efektif berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan motivasi belajar peserta didik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menerapkan beberapa strategi, yaitu memberikan

motivasi langsung, melakukan supervisi pembelajaran, mendorong inovasi pembelajaran guru, memberikan penghargaan kepada peserta didik berprestasi, serta mengembangkan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler dan kerja sama dengan orang tua. Faktor pendukung meliputi kerja sama guru, keterlibatan orang tua, dan ketersediaan sarana prasarana, sedangkan faktor penghambat yaitu rendahnya kesadaran peserta didik dan pengaruh penggunaan media sosial. Kesimpulannya, strategi kepemimpinan kepala sekolah memiliki peran penting dalam meningkatkan motivasi belajar peserta didik dan meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan di sekolah.

Kata kunci: kepemimpinan pendidikan; strategi kepala sekolah; motivasi belajar; manajemen sekolah.

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Introduction

Education is one of the key means of improving the quality of human resources and shaping a generation with knowledge, skills, and good character (Azizah et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2025; Hasan & Aziz, 2023). The success of education is not only determined by the curriculum, teaching staff, or available facilities and infrastructure, but is also influenced by students' learning motivation (Saiyan, K. A., Rede, A., & Hengky, 2018). Learning motivation is a crucial factor because it serves as a driving force that motivates students to engage in the learning process actively, diligently, and consistently. Students with high learning motivation tend to show great interest in learning activities, possess the drive to achieve academic success, and are better able to tackle various academic challenges. Conversely, low learning motivation can lead students to be less active in learning, less disciplined in completing assignments, and experience a decline in academic performance (Awaludin, A., & Fatmawati, 2025). These conditions indicate that learning motivation is one aspect that requires attention in the delivery of education at schools. Various studies in the field of educational management also explain that improving students' learning motivation is inseparable from the role of the principal as an educational leader responsible for the success of the learning process at school (Khusni, K., Rahman, N. A., Murtadoilah, H., & Nurfirdaus, 2025).

The principal holds a strategic position in managing and directing all school resources to achieve educational goals. The principal's role is not limited to administrative functions but also extends to that of a learning leader who plays a key role in creating a conducive school environment, enhancing teacher professionalism, and fostering a positive learning culture for students. Effective leadership by the principal fosters a school atmosphere that supports the optimal development of students' potential (Andriadi, D., & Sulistiyo, 2024). Through various implemented strategies, the principal can influence the improvement of students' motivation to learn, both directly and indirectly. Providing guidance and motivation, conducting instructional supervision, developing innovative teaching methods, recognizing high-achieving students, and strengthening collaboration between the school and parents are some of the strategies that can be implemented to enhance students' motivation to learn (Ririyanti, N., Sitanggang, N., & Daryanto, 2024). Therefore, a school's

success in enhancing students' learning motivation is greatly influenced by the principal's ability to carry out their leadership functions effectively and sustainably.

Based on the results of preliminary observations conducted by the researcher at Moutong State High School 1, it was found that students' motivation to learn still varies. Some students have a strong desire to learn and actively participate in learning activities, but there are still students who lack enthusiasm for the learning process, lack discipline in completing and submitting assignments, and lack focus during teaching and learning activities. Preliminary interviews with several teachers revealed that some students' low awareness of the importance of education is one factor affecting their learning motivation. Additionally, uncontrolled use of social media poses a challenge for the school, as it can reduce students' concentration and discipline during learning. On the other hand, the school has made various efforts to address these issues by motivating students, providing guidance and supervision to teachers, rewarding high-achieving students, and developing extracurricular activities as a means to foster students' interests and talents. These conditions indicate that the principal's strategies play a crucial role in enhancing students' motivation to learn; therefore, a more in-depth study is needed to identify the specific strategies implemented and the factors influencing their success

Numerous studies on school principal leadership have been conducted by previous researchers. A study by (Utami, A. P., Mulyadi, Agustinawati, T., Yansyah, B. A., & Ikrom, 2025) shows that school principal leadership plays a crucial role in fostering a high-quality school culture through teacher development, school environment management, and the improvement of educational quality. A study by (Wahidin, & Hidayat, 2025) explains that school principals serve as educators, managers, administrators, supervisors, leaders, innovators, and motivators in improving the quality of education at schools. Meanwhile, a study by (Ikhwan, K., Rianti, M., Nawiyah, E., Bahri, S., & Hanafi, 2026) found that school principal leadership has a positive influence on improving teacher performance, which ultimately impacts the quality of learning. The common thread among these studies lies in their discussion of the importance of school principal leadership in supporting the success of educational programs. However, these studies have primarily focused on general aspects of school principal leadership, improving the quality of education, and enhancing teacher performance. Studies that specifically examine principals' strategies for enhancing students' learning motivation accompanied by an analysis of the factors that support and hinder their implementation remain relatively limited, particularly in the context of Moutong State Senior High School 1. This situation indicates a research gap that needs to be further explored to gain a more comprehensive understanding of school principals' strategies for enhancing students' motivation to learn.

Based on this description, this study was conducted to address this research gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the strategies used by the principal to enhance students' learning motivation at Moutong State High School 1. The novelty of this study lies in its focus, which does not merely describe the role of the principal in general, but specifically examines the various strategies implemented by the principal to enhance students' learning motivation, including providing direct motivation and guidance to students, conducting instructional supervision, developing creative and innovative teaching methods, rewarding

high-achieving students, and developing extracurricular activities and collaboration with parents. This study also identifies the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the successful implementation of these strategies. The research findings are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of educational management studies, particularly those related to school principal leadership and student learning motivation, as well as to offer practical insights for school principals and school administrators in designing more effective strategies to enhance student learning motivation. Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyze the strategies employed by the principal to enhance student learning motivation at Moutong State Senior High School 1 and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence their implementation.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design (Yin, 2014). This approach was chosen because the study aims to provide an in-depth description of the principal's strategies for enhancing student learning motivation at Moutong State High School No. 1 based on conditions observed in the field. The research subjects consisted of 6 informants, including 1 principal, 2 teachers, and 3 students at Moutong State High School 1. The informants were selected through purposive sampling because they were considered to be knowledgeable about and directly involved in the implementation of the principal's strategies to enhance student learning motivation, thereby able to provide information relevant to the research focus. The research was conducted over one month, from May 4 to June 4, 2026. This timeframe was deemed sufficient to obtain the necessary data through observation, interviews, and documentation. In addition, the one-month timeframe allowed the researcher to collect data repeatedly, ensuring that the information obtained was more comprehensive and reflective of actual conditions.

Research data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly observe activities related to the principal's strategies for enhancing students' motivation to learn (Sugiyono, 2017). Interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and students to obtain in-depth information regarding the strategies implemented. Documentation was used to supplement the research data, including photographs of activities, school profiles, and other supporting documents. The primary instrument in this study was the researcher, supported by observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and concluding (Emzir, 2014). Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were selected and grouped according to the research focus, then presented in the form of narrative descriptions to facilitate the researcher's ability to conclude the principal's strategies for enhancing student learning motivation at SMA Negeri 1 Moutong. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the school principal, teachers, and students, while methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation (Miles et al., 2014). Through these techniques, the data obtained are expected to be more accurate and reliable.

Result And Discussion

Result

The Principal's Strategies for Enhancing Students' Learning Motivation

The strategies employed by the principal to enhance student learning motivation at Moutong State High School No. 1 demonstrate that educational leadership plays a central role in shaping, guiding, and sustaining students' enthusiasm for learning. This role is realized not only through formal policies but also through communicative, humanistic, and sustainable approaches. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, the principal implements various strategies covering motivational aspects, learning, character development, and the strengthening of a conducive school environment. This leadership style aligns with the Transformational Leadership perspective, which positions the leader as the primary driver of change in the school's learning culture.

The first strategy that appears to be dominant is providing direct motivation to students through various school activities such as flag ceremonies, morning assemblies, and official student meetings. Based on observations, the principal consistently conveys educational messages that emphasize the importance of discipline, responsibility, and awareness of the future. These messages are not merely instructional but also contain inspirational values aimed at fostering students' intrinsic motivation so they are more enthusiastic about learning and have a clear direction in life. This approach transforms the school into not just a place for formal learning but also a space for character development and self-motivation. This is reinforced by the results of an interview with the principal, who stated in a series of explanations:

"I always emphasize to students that their success depends on their dedication to learning. At every opportunity – whether during assemblies or meetings I tell them that their future is in their own hands. The school merely provides the resources, but the effort must come from the students themselves. I want them to realize that no success comes without serious and consistent effort on their part."

This statement indicates that the principal strives to build strong intrinsic motivation within the students. The teacher also reinforces this through his own experience in the classroom, stating that:

"Every week, the principal always delivers motivational guidance, especially during the flag ceremony and morning assembly. Students usually appear more focused, calmer, and more serious when he delivers messages about the future, discipline, and responsibility. Even after these activities, the change in their attitude in class is quite noticeable – they become more receptive to the lessons."

A similar view was expressed by one of the students who had personally experienced the motivational impact of the principal. In an interview, the student said:

"Every time the principal gives a speech during the assembly, we feel reminded of why we're in school. He often explains that education is crucial for our future and that we must make the most of our learning opportunities. His advice motivates me to study harder, especially when I'm feeling lazy or unmotivated. I've also become more aware that success cannot be achieved without sincere effort."

This finding aligns with research (Syafitri, L. A., Warsah, I., & Warlizasusi, 2024) which confirms that the principal's transformational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing students' learning motivation through exemplary behavior, inspirational communication, and the promotion of a collaborative school culture. This indicates that the stronger the principal's role in providing motivation and educational direction, the higher

the students' learning motivation within the school environment. Both of these findings reinforce the results of this study, which show that students' learning motivation is significantly influenced by the quality of the principal's leadership particularly in terms of motivational communication, setting a good example, and creating a school climate that supports the learning process.

The next strategy is the implementation of periodic classroom teaching supervision. Based on the observation results, the principal does not focus solely on administrative aspects but also conducts direct observations of the learning process in the classroom to ensure that teaching and learning activities are active, interactive, and in line with the lesson plans. This supervision also serves as a form of professional development for teachers to improve the quality of their teaching, thereby indirectly contributing to increased student motivation in the classroom. This is reinforced by an interview with the principal, who stated that:

"The supervision I conduct is not merely to evaluate teachers' performance, but rather to guide and mentor them. I want to ensure that classroom learning is truly active, students are engaged, and the learning atmosphere is not monotonous. That way, teachers are also more motivated to continue improving their teaching methods."

Teachers also provided feedback that reinforced this statement, saying:

"Since the principal began conducting regular supervision, we as teachers feel more valued and motivated to improve the quality of instruction. We've started to be more creative in our teaching, and students also appear more active and enthusiastic about participating in class."

The impact of this supervision was also felt directly by the students. Based on interview results, one student stated that:

"We've noticed a change in the way teachers teach. Teachers now more frequently use methods that encourage us to actively discuss, ask questions, and collaborate with our classmates. Learning has become more engaging than before, making it easier for us to understand the material. The classroom atmosphere is no longer boring, and it motivates us to stay engaged in the lesson until the end."

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of classroom supervision conducted periodically by the principal is one of the key strategies for improving the quality of the learning process in the classroom. This supervision is not solely focused on administrative evaluations but is primarily directed toward the professional development of teachers through direct observation of the teaching and learning process. With this approach, the principal can ensure that learning takes place in an active, interactive manner and aligns with established lesson plans, thereby indirectly boosting students' motivation to learn. This is consistent with research (Jayanti, R., Yuliejantiningih, Y., & Prayito, 2025) found that academic supervision by school principals has a positive impact on improving teachers' pedagogical competencies, particularly in terms of lesson planning, classroom management, and the use of more varied teaching strategies. This improvement in teachers' competencies ultimately leads to a more conducive learning environment and increases student engagement in the classroom. Thus, the principal's supervision serves not only as a control mechanism but also as a means of professional development that directly impacts the quality of learning and students' motivation at school.

Furthermore, the principal also encourages teachers to adopt more innovative and varied teaching methods. Based on the observation results, there has been a shift in teaching

approaches from a previously lecture-dominated style to a more interactive one involving group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, student-centered activities, and the use of more engaging instructional media. This change has resulted in a classroom atmosphere that is more lively and dynamic, thereby increasing student engagement in the learning process. In an interview, the principal explained that:

"I always encourage teachers not to rely solely on lecture-based methods. Learning should be made more engaging; students must be actively involved so they don't get bored quickly and can understand the material more easily. When students enjoy learning, their motivation will grow naturally."

The teacher also added that:

"With guidance from the principal, we began trying a variety of more diverse teaching methods. Students are now more willing to ask questions, more active in discussions, and seem to enjoy the learning process more than before."

These findings indicate that innovation in teaching methods plays a crucial role in creating a more meaningful learning experience for students. When the learning process is designed to be active and participatory, students are not merely recipients of information but are directly involved in the process of constructing knowledge, thereby naturally increasing their motivation to learn. In line with these findings, a study (Dewi, B. S., & Nispiana, 2026) shows that the implementation of active, student-centered learning can significantly increase students' motivation and engagement in the learning process. Thus, the implementation of innovative and varied teaching methods by teachers as encouraged by the principal has proven to be one of the effective strategies for enhancing students' motivation and engagement in the classroom.

Another strategy implemented is the awarding of recognition to high-achieving students. Based on observations, recognition is given in various forms, such as certificates, direct praise from the principal, and public announcements before the school community. Although simple in nature, this recognition has a significant psychological impact because students feel acknowledged for their efforts and achievements. This fosters motivation to maintain and improve upon the achievements already attained. The principal stated in an interview that:

"We always recognize high-achieving students, whether in academic or non-academic areas. This is important for providing motivation – not only for the students receiving the recognition but also for other students, encouraging them to improve their own performance."

The teacher also added that the presentation of these awards has a significant impact on the learning dynamics within the school environment. According to the teacher, when a student receives an award, it is not only a source of pride for the individual but also elicits a positive response from other students. This situation indirectly fosters a healthy competitive atmosphere in the classroom, where other students are motivated to increase their academic efforts so they can have the same opportunity in the future:

"When a student receives an award, their peers are usually motivated as well. They become eager to do even better so they can have the same opportunity. In fact, afterward, other students typically begin to take their studies more seriously, participate more actively in class, and strive to demonstrate their abilities so they, too, can earn the same award the next time around."

These findings indicate that a school-based award system serves not only as a form of appreciation but also as a motivational strategy capable of fostering positive competitive drive among students. Consistently awarded recognition can strengthen students'

motivation to learn, both intrinsically and extrinsically. In line with these findings, a study (Nisa', K., Nisa', I., Aditya, M. S. M., & Umam, 2026) explains that reward-based reinforcement can increase students' motivation to learn, especially when it is administered fairly and combined with psychological support from the school environment.

Finally, the principal also developed extracurricular activities and strengthened cooperation with students' parents. Based on the results of observations, extracurricular activities serve as a platform for students to develop their interests and talents outside of academic activities, while collaboration with parents focuses on strengthening supervision and support for students' learning at home. This synergy creates a broader learning environment one that is not limited to the classroom but also involves the family as a vital component in supporting the educational process. The principal stated:

"We always strive to involve parents in the educational process because student success cannot be the sole responsibility of the school. Support from the family is crucial for fostering discipline and motivation in children's learning."

Teachers also emphasized that, based on their experience in daily teaching and their interactions with students at school, parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and study habits:

"Students whose parents actively communicate with the school are generally more disciplined and more responsible in their studies compared to those who receive less attention at home. They tend to be more organized when completing assignments, more consistent in attending classes, and have a greater awareness of the importance of education due to the support and supervision they receive from their families."

This view is also supported by the results of an interview with a student who actively participates in extracurricular activities.:

"Through extracurricular activities, I can develop skills I enjoy while also learning to collaborate with my friends. These activities have made me more confident and more enthusiastic about coming to school. Additionally, my parents often ask about my academic progress and activities at school. Their interest makes me feel that I need to study more diligently and strive to achieve good results."

These findings indicate that strengthening extracurricular activities and parental involvement are key strategies in creating a holistic educational ecosystem. Extracurricular activities serve not only as a means of talent development but also as a medium for enhancing students' self-confidence, sense of responsibility, and motivation to learn. Meanwhile, parental involvement reinforces the social control and emotional support that students need in the learning process. In line with these findings, research (Huda, M., Hariani, M., & Masnawati, 2024) found that parental involvement in education contributes positively to students' learning motivation and academic achievement, especially when accompanied by close communication between the school and families. Thus, developing extracurricular activities and strengthening cooperation with students' parents at Moutong State High School 1 are important strategies for expanding students' learning opportunities and sustainably enhancing their learning motivation

Based on the results of field research, it was found that the principal at SMA Negeri 1 Moutong employs various strategies to boost students' learning motivation. These strategies not only focus on providing direct encouragement to students but also include teacher training, the development of teaching methods, the provision of rewards, and the

strengthening of cooperation with parents. All of these strategies are interrelated and implemented continuously to create a conducive learning environment capable of boosting students' enthusiasm for learning. More systematically, these strategies can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Principal Strategies in Improving Students' Learning Motivation at SMA Negeri 1 Moutong

No	Principal's Strategic Actions	Processes Occurring in the School	Impact on Students' Learning Motivation
1	Providing direct motivation and guidance to students	The principal gives directions, advice, and motivation during routine activities such as flag ceremonies, morning assemblies, and official school meetings	Increases students' enthusiasm, awareness, and internal drive to study more diligently
2	Conducting supervision of the teaching and learning process	The principal conducts classroom visits, learning observations, and evaluations of teaching and learning activities	Improves the quality of instruction so students can better understand the material and become more motivated
3	Encouraging teachers to apply creative and innovative teaching methods	The principal directs teachers to use varied instructional methods such as discussions, Q&A sessions, and activity-based learning	Makes learning more engaging so students do not get bored easily and become more active in class
4	Providing rewards for high-achieving students	The school gives appreciation in the form of certificates, awards, or public recognition for students who achieve academic and non-academic excellence	Increases self-confidence, pride, and motivation to maintain and improve achievements
5	Developing extracurricular activities and collaboration with parents	The school provides various extracurricular activities and maintains communication with parents regarding students' academic progress	Supports the development of students' interests and talents and creates stronger learning support at home and at school

Based on the table, it is clear that the principal's strategy for enhancing students' motivation to learn at Moutong State High School No. 1 is implemented in a focused, structured, and sustained manner. The principal serves not only as the school's administrator but also as a motivator who provides regular guidance and mentoring to students. Furthermore, supervision of teachers indicates that improvements in learning motivation are also significantly influenced by the quality of the classroom learning process. Teachers' use of creative and innovative teaching methods makes the learning process more engaging and less monotonous, encouraging students to participate more actively in their education. Rewarding high-achieving students also serves as a form of positive reinforcement that can boost their self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Furthermore, extracurricular activities and collaboration with parents demonstrate that

learning motivation is not only fostered at school but is also supported by the family environment. Overall, the strategies implemented by the principal foster good cooperation among the principal, teachers, students, and parents in enhancing students' motivation to learn.

Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Principal's Strategies to Enhance Students' Motivation to Learn

Supporting Factors

The research findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation at Moutong State High School 1 indicate that several supporting factors play a crucial role in the success of the principal's strategy to enhance students' motivation to learn. These factors are interrelated and form a support system that creates a conducive and active learning environment, thereby fostering a sustained increase in students' motivation to learn.

Support from teachers and educational staff is a key factor that significantly determines the success of the principal's strategy. Observation results show teachers' active involvement in implementing innovative, student-centered learning in accordance with the principal's guidance. The learning process is not dominated solely by lectures but is also enriched through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and interactive learning activities, thereby increasing student engagement in the learning process. During an interview, the principal stated that teachers at the school are quite responsive to guidance and strive to create more active learning experiences. Teachers also noted that the shift in teaching methods has made students more enthusiastic, active, and less prone to boredom in class. These findings are consistent with research (*Rahmiati, R., & Azis, 2023*) which indicates that teachers' engagement and professionalism in active learning significantly contribute to increasing students' motivation to learn through a more interactive and meaningful learning process.

Support from students' parents is another key factor in increasing students' motivation to learn. Observation results show that there is communication between the school and parents in monitoring students' academic progress, both in terms of discipline and academic achievement. Parents play a role in providing supervision and academic support at home so that students take greater responsibility for their schoolwork. In an interview, the principal emphasized that student success cannot be attributed solely to the school but requires family support. Teachers noted that students whose parents actively communicate with the school tend to be more disciplined and take greater responsibility for their studies compared to students who receive less attention at home. These findings are supported by research (*Idrus, N. A., Munandar, A., Hikma, N., Yaya, Y., 2024*) which explains that parental involvement in education has a significant impact on improving students' motivation, discipline, and academic achievement through collaboration between schools and families.

The availability of facilities and infrastructure, as well as a conducive school environment, are other supporting factors in the process of enhancing students' motivation to learn. Observation results show that an orderly school environment, comfortable classrooms, and adequate learning facilities create a more effective and enjoyable learning

atmosphere. These conditions help students stay more focused and comfortable during the learning process. The principal stated that the school continues to strive to create a safe, orderly, and comfortable environment so that students can learn optimally. Teachers also noted that adequate facilities and a conducive school atmosphere greatly facilitate the learning process in the classroom. These findings are consistent with research (*Wafiqni, N., Amalia, S., Sarifah, I., 2023*) which indicates that the quality of the learning environment and educational facilities has a significant impact on students' engagement and motivation to learn.

These three factors indicate that the success of the principal's strategies in enhancing students' motivation to learn is inseparable from the synergy among teachers, parents, and the school environment. This synergy forms a mutually reinforcing educational ecosystem that drives the continuous improvement of students' motivation to learn.

Inhibiting Factors

Research findings obtained through observations and interviews at Moutong State Senior High School No. 1 indicate the presence of several factors that hinder the implementation of the principal's strategies to enhance students' learning motivation. These factors are primarily related to students' internal conditions as well as the influence of external environmental factors that lead to a decline in students' focus and concentration during school.

A lack of awareness among some students regarding the importance of education is one of the main factors hindering the improvement of learning motivation. Observation results show that there are still students who lack intrinsic motivation in the learning process, such as a lack of seriousness during learning activities, low initiative in completing assignments, and dependence on encouragement from teachers. These conditions result in low learning motivation that originates from within the students themselves. In an interview, the principal noted that there are still some students who do not yet realize the importance of education for their future, so ongoing guidance is needed to foster this awareness. Teachers also added that differences in students' levels of awareness significantly affect their participation and enthusiasm for learning in the classroom. This aligns with research (*Zheng, J., Xing, W., Zhu, G., Chen, G., Zhao, H., Xie, C., & Jin, 2021*) explaining that low levels of self-regulated learning among students can lead to decreased learning motivation and student engagement in the learning process.

The negative effects of social media use are also a significant obstacle to the learning process. Observations show that some students are still unable to use social media wisely, so their study time is often disrupted by activities on digital platforms. This situation leads to a decline in students' focus, discipline, and concentration during classroom instruction. In an interview, the school principal noted that uncontrolled social media use poses a unique challenge in fostering students' academic discipline. Teachers also emphasized that students who are frequently distracted by social media tend to be less active in class and experience a decline in academic performance. These findings are supported by research (*Lee, Z. W. Y., Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, 2022*) which indicates that excessive and uncontrolled social

media use can negatively impact students' concentration, time management, and academic motivation.

These two factors indicate that the main obstacles to improving learning motivation stem not only from the school environment but also from students' internal conditions and external influences outside of school. Efforts to boost learning motivation should focus not only on strategies implemented by school principals but also on strengthening students' self-awareness and promoting the wise use of technology.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the principal's strategies for enhancing student motivation at Moutong State High School No. 1 constitute a form of comprehensive educational leadership, as they focus not only on school management but also address the psychological, pedagogical, and social aspects of the students. The principal's efforts to provide direct motivation and guidance through formal school activities reflect their role as an instructional leader who serves as a driving force for students' enthusiasm for learning. In the field of educational motivation, consistent verbal encouragement from school leaders can strengthen students' intrinsic motivation when delivered through a humanistic and sustained approach (Bariyah, A., Jannah, M., & Ruwaida, 2023). This is supported by (Manda, D., & Darmayanti, 2025) who explain that learning motivation increases when students receive clear guidance, emotional support, and reinforcement from a positive school environment. In this study, the principal serves as a source of psychological reinforcement that helps students build confidence in their own abilities.

The implementation of supervision of teachers' teaching processes demonstrates the existence of a control mechanism as well as guidance oriented toward improving the quality of learning. Targeted supervision is not only intended to ensure curriculum implementation but also to encourage teachers to create a more active and meaningful learning environment. (Jannah, 2022) emphasizes that effective school principal leadership is always characterized by the ability to conduct academic supervision that leads to improved learning quality in the classroom. In line with this, research (Luthfianti, A., Saptono, A., & Zahra, 2024) indicates that high-quality learning directly influences students' motivation to learn because the learning process becomes more structured and engaging. Thus, supervision in this context is not merely administrative but also serves as a tool for enhancing students' motivation to learn.

The principal's efforts to encourage teachers to use creative and innovative teaching methods demonstrate an awareness of the dynamics of 21st-century learning, which requires active student engagement. Diverse teaching methods have been shown to reduce boredom and increase student participation in the learning process. (Yuliarti, Y., Riansi, E. S., & Sultoni, 2024) points out that the instructional innovations implemented by teachers play a significant role in enhancing students' emotional and cognitive engagement in the classroom. Furthermore, (Rohmah, A., 2024) argues that the implementation of student-centered learning strategies can boost learning motivation because students feel more

engaged in the learning process. Thus, the principal's guidance to teachers regarding instructional innovation is a key factor in creating a dynamic learning environment.

Recognizing students who excel in both academic and non-academic areas is also a strategy that has a positive psychological impact on their motivation to learn. Recognition serves not only as a form of appreciation but also as a stimulus that encourages other students to increase their efforts in learning. (Wedadjati, R. S., & Helmi, 2022) explains that rewards are one of the key factors in motivation theory that can increase individual satisfaction and performance. In education, (Salsabila, T., Kustati, M., 2025) found that providing recognition in the school environment can boost students' self-confidence and motivation to excel. Therefore, this strategy is an effective approach to fostering a healthy competitive culture in the school environment. Furthermore, the development of extracurricular activities and collaboration with parents demonstrate that enhancing motivation to learn is not solely the school's responsibility but also involves the family and community. Extracurricular activities provide students with opportunities to develop their interests and talents, allowing them to experience a more meaningful learning journey. (Pratiwi, W. N., & Halim, 2021) states that extracurricular activities play a significant role in boosting students' motivation to learn because they allow students to channel their non-academic potential. On the other hand, parental involvement is also a key factor in maintaining consistent motivation to learn at home. (Desyantoro, I., Widyawati, S., & Winta, 2021) emphasizes that parental support plays a major role in fostering students' discipline and sense of responsibility toward their studies outside of school.

Supporting factors in the implementation of the principal's strategy – such as support from teachers and other educational staff, as well as adequate facilities and infrastructure – indicate that the success of efforts to increase learning motivation is largely determined by the collaboration of all elements of the school. Research (Ariani et al., 2025) explains that a conducive school environment plays a role in supporting the effectiveness of the learning process and increasing students' motivation to learn. A comfortable, safe, and well-organized learning environment can create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere, thereby encouraging improved student learning outcomes. This is supported by research (Aziz, M. A., 2024) which indicates that synergy among school principals, teachers, and parents is key to creating a positive learning environment. Thus, these supporting factors strengthen the implementation of strategies designed by school principals. However, this study also found obstacles in the form of low awareness among some students regarding the importance of education, as well as the negative influence of social media use. This situation indicates that learning motivation is not only influenced by external factors but is also largely determined by students' internal factors. According to Bandura, as cited in (Li, J., Ye, H., Tang, Y., Zhou, Z., & Hu, 2018), Self-regulation is an individual's ability to control their thoughts, motivation, and behavior in order to achieve learning goals. This ability plays a crucial role in determining students' success during the learning process. In addition, (Padamai, M., Yewang, M. U. K., & Loe, 2023) revealed that uncontrolled use of social media can reduce students' focus on their studies and diminish their discipline in learning. Therefore, an

approach that combines character development and digital literacy is needed so that students can manage their use of technology more wisely.

Overall, these findings indicate that principals' strategies for enhancing students' motivation to learn involve a combination of interrelated leadership, instructional, and social environment approaches. The integration of academic supervision, instructional innovation, rewards, and parental involvement is a key factor in fostering sustained motivation to learn. Thus, the principal's role extends beyond that of an administrator to that of a learning leader capable of building an educational ecosystem that optimally supports student development.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that the principal's strategies for enhancing student motivation at Moutong State High School No. 1 do not focus solely on classroom learning but also encompass a broader, integrated approach. The most notable finding is that a combination of direct motivation, learning supervision, support for teacher innovation, the provision of rewards, and the development of extracurricular activities, coupled with consistent parental involvement, is effective in boosting students' motivation to learn. It is interesting to note that non-academic approaches, such as awards and extracurricular activities, have a very strong influence on boosting students' enthusiasm for learning, an aspect that had previously not been fully recognized in school practices.

This study contributes to the field of educational management, particularly regarding the leadership of school principals in enhancing students' motivation to learn. These findings essentially reinforce the results of previous studies that emphasize the importance of the principal's role in creating a conducive learning environment. However, this study also offers an additional perspective: motivational strategies are not merely instructional but also social and emotional in nature, involving recognition, parental collaboration, and the development of non-academic activities. Thus, this study reinforces the concept that effective principal leadership must be holistic in mobilizing all elements of the school.

This study has several limitations, including the fact that it focuses on only one research site—Moutong State High School No. 1—so the results may not necessarily be generalizable to other schools with different characteristics. In addition, the limited scope of informants also means that the data does not cover a wide enough range, particularly in terms of differences in age, experience, and background among students and teachers. This study is also limited to a descriptive approach and therefore has not quantitatively measured the specific impact of each strategy. Consequently, further research is needed with a larger sample, more diverse locations, and a mixed-methods approach to gain a deeper, more comprehensive understanding that can serve as a basis for formulating more targeted educational policies

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