

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Development and Validation of the Academic Disinterest Questionnaire in the University Environment

Mehdi Shomali Ahmadabadi ¹  Atefeh Barkhordari Ahmadabadi ^{*2} 

1- PhD in Psychology, Education department, Ardakan, Yazd, Iran
2- Masters in clinical psychology, Department of Psychology, Azad University, Isfahan branch (Khorasgan), Isfahan, Iran.

Correspondence:

Atefeh Barkhordari Ahmadabadi
Email: atefeh.8449@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Academic disinterest in the university environment, as a pivotal psychological construct, is linked to reduced motivation, university attendance, and academic engagement, potentially resulting in adverse outcomes such as diminished academic performance and dropout. This study purposed to develop and validate a questionnaire to assess academic disinterest in the university environment among students. Conducted as a survey and applied research in the 2024-2025 academic year in Ardakan, the study involved a sample of 375 students selected via cluster sampling. The research instruments comprised the Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire, Pekrun's Academic Boredom Questionnaire, and Schaufeli's Academic Engagement Questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, Pearson correlation, KMO and Bartlett's test, and SPSS version 26 and AMOS version 24 software. Exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors—institutional barriers and negative faculty behavior—accounting for 68.404% of the total variance. Confirmatory factor analysis supported the model fit (RMSEA = 0.058; CFI = 0.972; GFI = 0.931). Convergent validity was established through a positive correlation with academic boredom ($r = 0.517$), while divergent validity was confirmed by a negative correlation with academic engagement ($r = -0.533$). The overall scale reliability, assessed via Cronbach's alpha, was 0.946. The Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire proved to be a reliable and valid instrument for measuring disinterest among students, offering utility in identifying at-risk students and designing interventions to enhance academic engagement.

KEY WORDS

Academic Disinterest, University Environment, Questionnaire, Validation, Students.



Introduction

University students encounter multiple academic and environmental demands that influence their motivation, emotions, and performance. Academic disinterest, characterized by indifference to learning activities, low enthusiasm, and reduced participation, has recently attracted increased attention due to its association with disengagement, academic difficulties, and potential dropout (Pekrun et al, 2002). Internal factors such as psychological stress, lack of perceived value, and low self-efficacy, together with external factors such as inadequate facilities and negative faculty–student interactions, contribute to this phenomenon (Mahdiah, 2021; Liu et al, 2023). Academic disinterest is conceptually related to academic burnout, boredom, and engagement. Research on academic burnout has shown that emotional exhaustion and cynicism are related to lower engagement and lower achievement (Olson et al, 2025). Studies on academic boredom and classroom climate also highlight the role of psychosocial factors in shaping students' emotional reactions to learning (Mazlounian et al, 2022). Similarly, academic engagement and motivation are sensitive to the quality of learning environments and teacher–student relationships (Heydari et al., 2024). However, existing instruments primarily focus on broader constructs such as burnout, boredom, or achievement emotions (Pekrun et al., 2005) and do not specifically target academic disinterest as a distinct construct within the university context. suggesting that negative faculty behavior and institutional shortcomings may foster disinterest. Therefore, there is a need for an instrument that directly measures academic disinterest and captures relevant contextual factors in the university environment. The present study aimed to develop and standardize the Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire and to examine its psychometric properties among university students. Based on previous literature, it was hypothesized that a multidimensional structure reflecting negative faculty behavior and institutional barriers would emerge, and that the scale would show satisfactory reliability and validity.

Methodology

This study employed a psychometric research design to develop and validate the Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire. The target population consisted of university students from different academic levels and institutional types. Using available sampling, 375 students participated in the study, including 216 females (57.6%) and 159 males (42.4%). Participants were informed about the research purpose and completed the questionnaires voluntarily and anonymously, in line with ethical research standards. Item generation was grounded in a review of the literature on academic burnout, boredom, engagement, and academic emotions (Pekrun et al., 2002; Mazlounian et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023) as well as empirical evidence on faculty–student relationships and institutional factors in Iranian higher education (Mahdiah, 2021; Jalali et al., 2025). Initial items were written to reflect two main domains: negative faculty behavior and institutional barriers. Content validity was examined using expert judgment and the content validity ratio procedure (Lawshe, 1975), and items with inadequate agreement were removed or revised. Participants completed the Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire along with a brief demographic form. Data were screened for missing values and outliers. The normality of item distributions was examined using skewness and kurtosis, with values between -2 and $+2$ indicating acceptable normality (Hoe, 2008). Sampling adequacy for factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) index and Bartlett's test of sphericity. After

confirming suitability, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with an appropriate extraction method and rotation was conducted to identify the underlying factor structure. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for the total scale and each subscale. Descriptive analyses were used to explore differences in academic disinterest scores across gender, academic level, and university type. All analyses were performed using conventional statistical software.

Results

Exploratory factor analysis supported a two-factor solution for the Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire. The two extracted factors—negative faculty behavior and institutional barriers—jointly explained 68.404% of the total variance, suggesting substantial explanatory power for the construct of academic disinterest in higher education settings (Hoe, 2008). The negative faculty behavior factor included items describing disrespectful or unfair treatment, lack of support, and insufficient responsiveness to students' academic needs. This subscale showed high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.915 and an average factor loading of approximately 0.799. The institutional barriers factor comprised items referring to inadequate facilities, poor curriculum planning, weak academic support, and inflexible regulations. This subscale also demonstrated strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.925 and an average factor loading of about 0.762. The overall questionnaire exhibited excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.946, indicating that the items coherently measure a unified construct of academic disinterest. Descriptive analyses indicated relatively similar levels of academic disinterest for male and female students, whereas higher disinterest scores were observed among associate degree students and those with lower academic performance. Students in public universities tended to report lower academic disinterest, possibly reflecting differences in institutional resources and support (Jalali et al., 2025).

Discussion and conclusion

The present study developed and validated the Academic Disinterest in the University Environment Questionnaire as a context-sensitive measure of academic disinterest among university students. The results confirmed a robust two-factor structure consisting of negative faculty behavior and institutional barriers, explaining a considerable proportion of variance and demonstrating excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.946$). These findings align with previous research emphasizing the role of teacher–student relationships, classroom climate, and institutional factors in academic burnout, boredom, and engagement (Pekrun et al., 2002; Salmela-Aro et al., 2009; Mazlounian et al., 2022; Mahdiah, 2021). By focusing specifically on academic disinterest in the university context, this instrument fills a gap left by broader measures of burnout, engagement, and achievement emotions (Pekrun et al., 2005; Olson et al., 2025). The questionnaire can be used by researchers and university administrators to identify key sources of disinterest and to design targeted interventions aimed at enhancing academic engagement, improving institutional practices, and ultimately reducing dropout risk.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and design of the study, development of the questionnaire, data collection, statistical analysis, and interpretation of the findings. All authors participated in drafting, revising, and finalizing the manuscript, and they approve the final version of the work. The authors are collectively responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the conduct of this research or the publication of this manuscript. The findings are reported independently of any organizational or personal interests.

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