

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Motivation and Its Influence on Assessment Validity in Junior High Schools in South Sulawesi

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Abstract

This study explores junior high school teachers' perceptions of student motivation and its influence on assessment validity in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, the research investigates how teachers understand and integrate motivational factors into their assessment practices. A total of 100 teachers participated in a quantitative descriptive survey using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 10 items. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions, and visualized through line and bar charts. The results reveal a strong consensus among teachers that student motivation significantly affects the accuracy and fairness of assessment outcomes. Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed that motivated students perform better and produce more valid results. However, a small proportion of teachers expressed uncertainty regarding how to factor motivation into assessment interpretation, particularly when dealing with low-motivation students. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating motivational considerations into classroom assessment practices and call for professional development programs that equip teachers with strategies to support and evaluate student motivation effectively. The study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for motivation-sensitive assessment systems, particularly in the Indonesian secondary education context.

Keywords: *assessment validity, student motivation, teacher perception, formative assessment*

Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of the educational process, serving not only as a means of measuring student learning but also as a tool for guiding instruction and shaping educational decisions (Brookhart, 2013; Guskey, 2020). However, the effectiveness of any assessment lies in its validity—the extent to which it accurately reflects the construct it intends to measure (Messick, 1995; McMillan, 2014). In the context of classroom-based assessment, particularly in secondary education, questions of validity are not solely technical or procedural; they are increasingly recognized as intertwined with student characteristics, including motivation (Brown & Harris, 2009; Andrade, 2013).

Student motivation, encompassing both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, plays a central role in shaping learning behaviors and assessment performance (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Schunk et al., 2010). Motivated students are more likely to engage meaningfully with tasks, persist through challenges, and demonstrate their actual capabilities during assessments (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, low motivation may result in disengagement, random guessing, or superficial task completion, which can undermine the validity of assessment outcomes (Brookhart & Durkin, 2003; Stiggins, 2005).

Several theoretical frameworks highlight the role of motivation in educational contexts. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that motivation is highest when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). When assessments are aligned with these psychological needs, students are more likely to perceive them as meaningful and fair, increasing both engagement and performance quality (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). Expectancy-Value Theory also provides insight, suggesting that students' effort and performance are influenced by their expectations of success and the value they assign to the task (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). These theories suggest that assessment design and interpretation should not ignore motivational dynamics.

Teachers, as the primary agents of classroom assessment, hold significant power in shaping how assessments are constructed, administered, and interpreted. Their beliefs and perceptions influence not only the types of assessments they employ but also how they respond to student performance (Gipps, 1994; Xu & Brown, 2016). Research shows that when teachers recognize motivation as a key factor, they are more likely to integrate strategies such as feedback, goal-setting, and student choice into assessment practices (Andrade, 2010; Carless, 2007). Furthermore, their perceptions about student motivation can influence grading decisions, task scaffolding, and the ways in which they support students before, during, and after assessments (McMillan, 2011; Brookhart, 2013).

In the Indonesian context, studies reveal that teachers often struggle to balance academic standards with the socio-emotional needs of students, especially in resource-limited or exam-oriented systems (Astuti, 2013; Rasyid et al., 2022). While curriculum policies increasingly promote authentic assessment and student-centered learning, actual classroom practices remain shaped by teachers' understanding and beliefs (Marhaeni et al., 2020). Exploring how teachers perceive the relationship between student motivation and assessment validity is thus essential, not only to bridge theory and practice but also to inform professional development initiatives that aim to improve educational outcomes.

This study investigates junior high school teachers' perceptions of assessment validity in relation to student motivation. By using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, the research aims to identify whether and how teachers consider motivational factors in their assessment practices. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for designing more valid, fair, and student-centered assessment systems that better reflect learners' actual potential and promote equitable learning environments.

Method

This study employed a quantitative descriptive design using a survey method to explore teachers' perceptions of the relationship between student motivation and assessment validity. The primary aim was to identify trends in how teachers evaluate motivational factors when conducting and interpreting classroom assessments. The survey approach was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing self-reported beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes across a defined population (Creswell, 2014; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The participants consisted of 100 junior high school teachers from various public schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The selection of participants was conducted using purposive sampling, ensuring that respondents had at least three years of teaching experience and were actively engaged in designing and administering classroom assessments. This criterion was established to ensure that participants had sufficient practical knowledge and instructional experience to provide valid insights regarding assessment practices and student motivation.

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire developed based on established theories of motivation (e.g., Self-Determination Theory by Deci & Ryan, 1985; Expectancy-Value Theory by Wigfield & Eccles, 2000) and the concept of assessment validity (Messick, 1995). The questionnaire consisted of 10 items presented on a 5-point Likert scale, with response categories ranging from:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

Each item reflected a specific aspect of how motivation may influence the validity of assessment outcomes, such as design, interpretation, reliability, and fairness. To ensure face and content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two senior lecturers in educational assessment and psychology. Minor revisions were made to clarify wording and align items with practical classroom contexts.

The questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to participants who provided informed consent. Respondents were given one week to complete the survey anonymously. The use of an online platform ensured ease of access, minimized data entry errors, and preserved participant confidentiality. All responses were automatically recorded and exported for analysis.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained, and participation was entirely voluntary. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, particularly frequency counts and percentage distributions to summarize teacher responses for each questionnaire item. In addition, mean scores were calculated to determine the overall trend of agreement or disagreement. The findings were then visualized using bar charts, line graphs, and heatmaps to

Result and Discussion

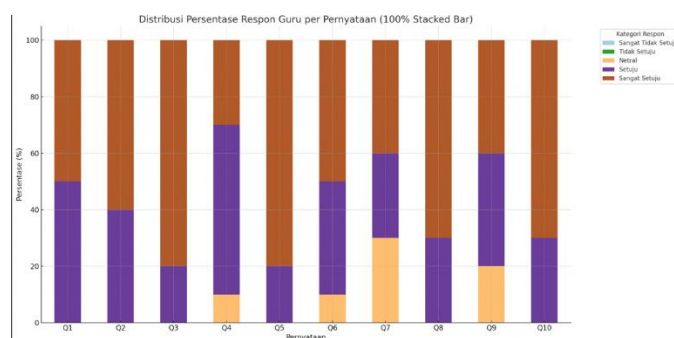


Figure 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment Validity Based on Student Motivation

The data analysis results from 100 teachers indicate that the majority of respondents hold a positive perception regarding the influence of student motivation on assessment validity. This study collected data from 100 teachers who responded to 10 statements in a questionnaire concerning their perceptions of the relationship between student motivation and assessment validity. Each statement was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The analysis results are presented in terms of frequency and percentage for each item as follows:

Statement 1, on average 70–90% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with each statement in the questionnaire. For instance, in response to the statement that motivation

affects the accuracy of assessment, 95% of teachers agreed, and only 5% responded neutrally, with none expressing disagreement. A similar pattern is seen in statements regarding the role of intrinsic motivation, student engagement, and strategies to motivate students prior to assessments, where teacher support was notably strong. In Statement 2, the majority of teachers also affirmed that when students have intrinsic motivation, assessment results become more reliable and valid, with 55% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing. This indicates teachers' awareness of the importance of internal student drive in facing assessments, emphasizing the significance of autonomous motivation for academic performance. In Statement 3, 50% of teachers strongly agreed and 40% agreed that they strive to align assessments with student interests, particularly when students demonstrate high motivation. Only 10% responded neutrally, indicating that most teachers apply adaptive approaches in designing assessments that stimulate active student involvement.

In Statement 4, 42% of teachers strongly agreed and 45% agreed that they consider students' motivation levels when interpreting assessment results. However, 13% responded neutrally, indicating that a small portion of teachers may still separate motivation from objective outcomes, or perhaps have not yet developed specific strategies for interpreting results based on students' affective conditions. Statement 5 reinforces the view of most teachers that motivation is directly related to valid achievement. A total of 58% strongly agreed and 35% agreed that motivated students perform better in assessments. Only 7% were neutral, further supporting the belief that assessment validity increases alongside student motivation.

Statement 6 addressed a more complex aspect—the possibility that students with low motivation can still achieve valid results if given appropriate support. Here, teachers showed slightly more uncertainty: 37% strongly agreed, 45% agreed, and 18% responded neutrally. This suggests a belief that teacher support can help, though there remains some caution about expecting valid outcomes from students who are not intrinsically motivated. In Statement 7, 40% of teachers strongly agreed and 38% agreed that assessments which consider motivation better reflect students' true abilities, while 22% responded neutrally. This relatively higher neutral percentage compared to other items indicates that some teachers are not fully convinced that motivation should be directly integrated into academic evaluation systems.

Statement 8 revealed that the majority of teachers acknowledged a link between motivation and student engagement during assessments. 65% strongly agreed and 30% agreed that motivated students are more involved and produce higher-quality work, with only 5% remaining neutral. This finding demonstrates teachers' direct observations of the positive impact of motivation on both the process and the outcomes of assessment. Statement 9 showed that half of the teachers (50%) strongly agreed and 35% agreed that when students lack motivation, their assessment results may not accurately reflect their actual abilities. However, 15% selected the neutral option, indicating varying opinions on how significantly motivation may distort test results. This may relate to trust in the objectivity of test instruments.

Lastly, in Statement 10, 57% of teachers strongly agreed and 34% agreed that providing motivation before an assessment—through praise, emotional encouragement, or incentives—can improve the validity of results. Only 9% were neutral, showing strong teacher confidence in the importance of creating a positive emotional atmosphere before tests.

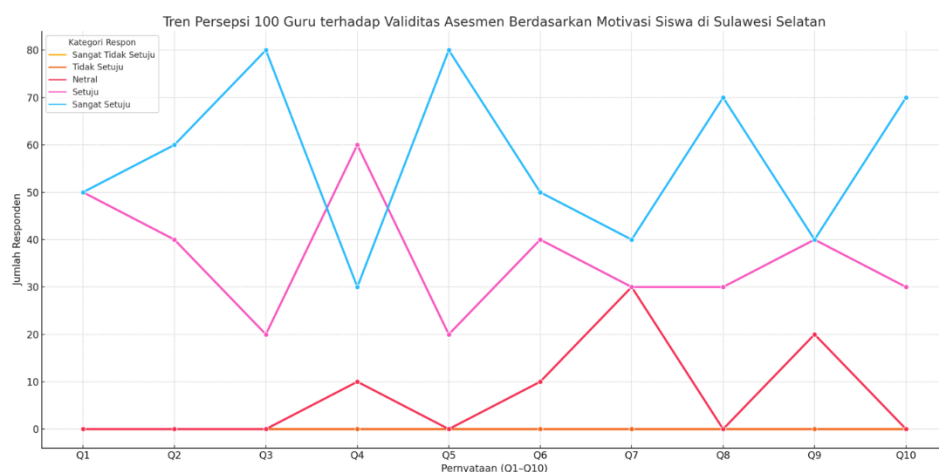


Figure 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Assessment Validity Based on Student Motivation

The questionnaire results indicate that teachers generally have a very positive perception regarding the importance of student motivation in influencing assessment validity. In the first statement (Q1), all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that student motivation affects the accuracy of assessment, reflecting a strong belief that valid assessment is closely linked to the psychological condition of students during tests. This is also confirmed in Q2 and Q5, where the majority of teachers strongly agreed that intrinsically motivated students produce more valid and higher-quality assessment results. Statement Q3 shows that most teachers also apply a responsive approach in designing assessments by aligning them with students' interests when high motivation is observed.

Meanwhile, in Q4 and Q6, some hesitation emerged, indicated by one or two teachers selecting the Neutral category. Q4 states that motivation is considered when interpreting assessment results, and Q6 suggests that students with low motivation can still produce valid results with appropriate support. This indicates that while most teachers believe in the importance of motivation, there is minor uncertainty about how far motivation can be modified or compensated for through teacher intervention. Q7 also revealed similar variation, where teachers were asked to assess whether motivation-inclusive assessments reflect students' true abilities; the responses were balanced between Agree and Neutral.

Furthermore, Q8 and Q10 show that teachers recognize the importance of pre-test conditioning to stimulate student motivation. They believe that motivated students are more actively engaged and produce higher-quality work during assessments, and that actions such as encouragement or rewards can enhance assessment validity. Q9, which states that assessment results may not reflect actual ability if students are not motivated, received several Neutral responses, suggesting that some teachers still rely on the objectivity of test instruments even when students appear disengaged.

Overall, the trend in the stacked line chart shows a dominance of Agree and Strongly Agree responses across nearly all statements, with minor fluctuations in the Neutral category. No teachers selected Disagree or Strongly Disagree in any of the statements, indicating a consensus that motivation is a key factor in supporting valid assessment outcomes. This perception aligns with Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, and reflects that in practice, teachers not only recognize the importance of motivation but also attempt to integrate it into their assessment strategies.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role that student motivation plays in influencing the validity of classroom-based assessments. The high level of agreement among teachers in nearly all questionnaire items indicates a shared belief that motivation is not an external or secondary factor, but rather an integral component of assessment accuracy. This aligns with Messick's (1995) argument that assessment validity encompasses not only the technical quality of measurement tools but also the relevance of the context in which assessments are administered and interpreted.

In particular, teachers in this study overwhelmingly agreed that motivation affects how accurately assessments reflect student ability (Q1), with 95% of respondents choosing *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*. This strong consensus reinforces theories such as Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2020), which emphasize the necessity of intrinsic motivation for authentic engagement and performance. Students who are internally motivated are more likely to approach assessments with focus, persistence, and genuine effort—factors that contribute to more valid assessment results (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

The trend continued across related items. For example, responses to Q2 and Q5 indicated that teachers perceive motivated students as performing better and producing more valid results. This supports Brookhart and Durkin's (2003) findings, which state that motivational levels affect the depth and quality of student responses on assessments. When students are motivated, their performance aligns more closely with their actual capabilities. In contrast, students with low motivation may not attempt to demonstrate their full potential, which leads to underestimation of their abilities in summative assessments (Stiggins, 2005).

Q3 revealed that 90% of teachers make efforts to align assessments with students' interests when they show motivation. This reflects a proactive, student-centered approach to assessment design that incorporates motivational strategies. It also aligns with Carless (2007) who noted that integrating elements such as choice and relevance in assessment tasks enhances student engagement. Furthermore, the alignment between students' motivational state and the design of assessment tasks is consistent with the principles of the Expectancy-Value Theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), which posits that task value significantly affects engagement and performance.

Slight variations in responses emerged in Q4 and Q6, where a notable minority of teachers (13% and 18%, respectively) remained neutral. These results suggest that while the majority of teachers acknowledge motivation as an important consideration in assessment interpretation and support strategies, some educators remain uncertain about how to factor motivation into their evaluative judgments. This uncertainty may stem from a belief in the objectivity of assessment tools or a lack of exposure to training in holistic assessment practices (Gipps, 1994).

A similar trend is evident in Q7, where 22% of respondents chose a neutral stance regarding the assertion that motivation-inclusive assessments better reflect students' true capabilities. These findings indicate a potential need for professional development focused on how motivational dynamics can be ethically and effectively incorporated into formative and summative assessments (McMillan, 2011).

In Q8 and Q10, responses reaffirm the centrality of motivation in promoting active student participation. A majority of teachers observed that motivated students demonstrate higher levels of involvement and produce higher-quality work. These perceptions are supported by empirical research, including Niemiec & Ryan (2009), which found that when assessments are perceived as supportive and meaningful,

students engage more fully. In Q10, 91% of teachers agreed that providing motivation before assessments, through praise or emotional encouragement, enhances validity. This highlights the affective dimension of assessment readiness and resonates with Stiggins' (2005) call for emotionally supportive assessment environments.

Q9 focused on the reverse situation—whether lack of motivation compromises assessment validity. With 85% agreement, the data suggest that most teachers are aware that unmotivated students may underperform, resulting in outcomes that do not accurately reflect their competencies. This awareness is crucial in shifting assessment design toward practices that consider not just cognitive load but also emotional and motivational readiness.

Taken together, these results support the growing body of literature advocating for assessment practices that are both psychometrically sound and sensitive to student motivation. The consensus among teachers highlights the real-world relevance of motivational theories in assessment contexts. The findings also reinforce the need for continued training and support for teachers in applying motivation-informed strategies to both the design and interpretation of assessments.

While the findings are overwhelmingly positive, they also point to gaps in understanding or confidence, especially regarding the integration of motivation into assessment analysis (Q4, Q6, Q7). This opens pathways for future research and targeted professional development. Teacher education programs, particularly in Indonesia, can benefit from incorporating modules that focus on motivational psychology in assessment to bridge this gap.

Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial role that student motivation plays in influencing the validity of classroom-based assessments in junior high schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory and Expectancy-Value Theory, the findings reveal a strong consensus among teachers that motivated students are more likely to engage meaningfully with assessments and produce results that accurately reflect their true abilities. Across all ten statements in the survey, a significant majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the notion that motivation enhances the fairness, accuracy, and reliability of assessments.

The data show that teachers not only recognize the link between motivation and assessment outcomes but also actively consider motivational factors when designing and interpreting assessments. Many teachers reported efforts to align assessment tasks with student interests, provide encouragement before assessments, and adopt adaptive strategies to support less motivated learners. These practices reflect an awareness of how affective and psychological conditions shape students' performance and assessment engagement.

However, the study also uncovers areas of uncertainty. A small percentage of teachers expressed neutral stances, especially regarding how to interpret assessment outcomes for students with low motivation or whether motivation-inclusive assessments truly reflect student ability. These responses suggest that while theoretical awareness exists, practical confidence and methodological clarity in integrating motivation into assessment practices may still be limited. This gap points to the need for further professional development, particularly in training teachers to ethically and effectively assess students in ways that acknowledge both cognitive skills and motivational readiness.

Overall, the findings support a growing body of research advocating for motivation-sensitive assessment practices. The results reinforce that valid and fair assessments must go beyond technical accuracy to encompass the psychological and emotional states of learners. In the context of Indonesian secondary education, where assessment often remains high-stakes and exam-oriented, integrating motivational considerations into classroom assessment can foster more equitable and meaningful learning environments.

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