

Motivation and engagement in English, mathematics and science high school subjects: Towards an understanding of multidimensional domain specificity.

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# Motivation and engagement in English, mathematics and science high school subjects: Towards an understanding of multidimensional domain specificity

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the domain specificity of multidimensional motivation and engagement (adaptive cognitions, adaptive behaviors, impeding/maladaptive cognitions, maladaptive behaviors) in mathematics, English and science high school subjects, with an additional focus on three key educational correlates (educational aspirations, class participation, enjoyment of subject). Based on a sample of 1801 students from six Australian high schools, confirmatory factor analysis offered modest support for the domain specificity of motivation and engagement (as measured by the Motivation and Engagement Scale " High School: MES-HS) across three

distinct high school subject areas and also in relation to the three key educational correlates. Interestingly, the level of specificity varied as a function of the particular academic motivation construct. For example, between-subject correlations for more "state-like" constructs such as "valuing of school subject" were relatively lower, whereas correlations for more "trait-like" constructs such as "anxiety" were relatively higher suggesting that the latter is relatively more general across mathematics, English and science. The implications of these findings for future practice and research are discussed.



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## Keywords

Motivation; Engagement; Domain-specificity

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