



Peer Review Report Form

Manuscript Title:	Learning Environment Challenges and Student Motivation in Higher Education
Type of Article:	Original Article

FIRST ROUND

Editor

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The reviewers acknowledge the strengths of your manuscript and suggest revisions to improve its clarity, organization, and overall quality. In addition, you are required to conduct a thorough inventory of the references in your manuscript. Please ensure that only the sources cited within the text are included in the References section, and likewise, that all references listed in the References section are properly cited in the manuscript. For example, if you have 20 cited references in the manuscript, then only 20 references should be included in the References section. However, please note that repeated citations of the same source within the text are counted as a single entry in the References list; therefore, the total number of entries in the References section may be lower than the total number of in-text citations.

Reviewer 1

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The topic is relevant today because higher education needs evidence-based strategies to improve student motivation. The authors used the PRISMA framework to guide the systematic review.

<u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u>
The authors stated they used the PRISMA framework. But the methodology section does not mention any tool used to assess the quality or the risk of bias of the 15 included studies. A true systematic review must evaluate the rigorousness of the chosen papers. Please include a formal quality appraisal step. You can use standard tools to evaluate the individual papers before you synthesize the data. Without this, the reader cannot know if the evidence presented is strong or weak.
The authors also searched Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar for articles published from 2020 to 2026. However, the initial search only yielded 126 records. This number is very low for a broad topic like student motivation and educational environments in higher education. The search keywords might be too narrow. The authors need to justify why the initial yield is so small, or they must revise the search string to capture more relevant studies.
The authors mentioned they used a narrative synthesis approach. But the Results section simply grouped the extracted ideas into four themes in a table. The paper just summarized what the previous authors said without critically comparing the strength of evidence across the



15 studies. The authors must provide a deeper synthesis. They should compare the methodologies of the included studies and highlight conflicting findings instead of just listing similar points.

The recommendations provided in the paper are very broad. For example, suggesting that institutions prioritize supportive and inclusive classroom climates is already common knowledge. The authors should provide specific and data-driven recommendations that academic leaders and administrators can actually measure and apply. They must anchor these recommendations directly to the unique findings of the 15 reviewed papers to make the conclusion valuable for actual educational management.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
	Accept the manuscript for publication.
/	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

Reviewer 2

<u>General Comments and Recommendations</u>
The topic is timely and relevant, and the paper has a clear practical value. However, the main concern is the systematic review rigor. At present, the manuscript reads more like a broad narrative overview than a fully documented systematic review. Although the paper states that PRISMA was followed, many important review details are still too limited, while the results and discussion already make strong synthesized claims based on only 15 included studies. Because of this, the credibility of the synthesis is not yet fully convincing.
<u>Specific Comments and Recommendations</u>
The biggest issue is that the review process is not reported with enough detail for readers to judge whether the synthesis is comprehensive, reproducible, and sufficiently rigorous. The manuscript mentions the databases, keywords, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and final number of studies, but it does not show enough concrete information on the actual search strings, date of search, screening procedure in operational terms, and especially the characteristics and quality of the included studies. Since the paper used narrative synthesis and then produced four major themes, the reader needs to see more clearly how each theme was derived from the 15 studies, which studies contributed to each theme, and how strong or consistent the evidence was across studies. Right now, Table 1 is too general, so the themes look more asserted than demonstrated.
Related to this, the paper says two reviewers independently screened studies and resolved disagreements by consensus with a third senior reviewer when needed, but no clearer audit trail is shown. For a systematic review, the manuscript will be much stronger if the authors add a more transparent study matrix showing author/year, country, design, sample/context, environmental factor examined, motivation-related outcome, and main finding per included



article. This is important because the present results section gives thematic conclusions, but the reader cannot easily verify how those conclusions were grounded in the included evidence.

Another important point is that the discussion and conclusion sometimes sound too definitive compared with the actual evidence base. The paper concludes that motivation is “environmentally constructed” and gives broad institutional recommendations, but the included studies appear heterogeneous in design, context, and measured outcomes, and the review itself already acknowledges this heterogeneity as a limitation. Because of this, the interpretation should be made more careful and calibrated. It will help if the authors consistently frame the findings as trends from limited and heterogeneous evidence, instead of as settled conclusions. This revision will make the paper more credible and academically safer.

Please indicate your recommendation by checking the appropriate box below.

<u>Decision</u>	
	Accept the manuscript for publication.
/	Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.
	Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.

SECOND ROUND

<u>Decision</u>	<u>Editor</u>	<u>Reviewer 1</u>	<u>Reviewer 2</u>
Accept the manuscript for publication.	/	/	/
Reconsider the manuscript after the authors have satisfactorily addressed and complied with the reviewers' comments and recommendations.			
Reject the manuscript, as it is not suitable for publication.			