

RESEARCH TITLE

**Educational Challenges for Arab Bedouin Students in
Unrecognized Villages of the Negev and Their Impact on
Motivation and Academic Achievement**

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Abstract

This study examines the educational challenges faced by Arab Bedouin students living in unrecognized villages in the Negev (Naqab) and analyzes their impact on students' motivation and academic achievement. Adopting a qualitative literature review approach, the study synthesizes peer-reviewed research, governmental reports, and international policy documents published between 2018 and 2025. The findings reveal that the absence of village recognition generates severe structural barriers, including inadequate school infrastructure, limited access to digital learning resources, transportation difficulties, and chronic shortages of qualified teachers. These conditions undermine students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by weakening their sense of autonomy, competence, and belonging, leading to low academic engagement, poor achievement outcomes, and high dropout rates. Drawing on structural inequality theory and self-determination theory, the study demonstrates that educational underachievement among Arab Bedouin students is primarily the result of systemic policy failures rather than cultural or individual deficits. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for policy reform, targeted educational investment, and culturally responsive practices to promote educational equity, enhance student motivation, and improve academic outcomes for Arab Bedouin students in unrecognized villages.

Key Words: Arab Bedouin students; unrecognized villages; educational inequality; academic motivation; academic achievement.

التحديات التعليمية التي يواجهها الطلاب العرب البدو في القرى غير المعترف بها في النقب وأثرها في الدافعية والتحصيل الأكاديمي

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة التحديات التعليمية التي يواجهها الطلاب العرب البدو المقيمون في القرى غير المعترف بها في منطقة النقب، وتحلل أثرها في دافعية الطلاب وإنجازهم الأكاديمي. اعتمدت الدراسة منهج المراجعة النوعية للأدبيات، من خلال تحليل دراسات محكمة وتقارير حكومية ووثائق سياسات دولية نُشرت خلال الفترة (2018-2025). وتُظهر النتائج أن غياب الاعتراف الرسمي بالقرى يفضي إلى عوائق بنيوية جسيمة، تشمل ضعف البنية التحتية المدرسية، ومحدودية الوصول إلى الموارد التعليمية الرقمية، وصعوبات النقل، والنقص المزمن في المعلمين المؤهلين. وتؤدي هذه الظروف إلى إضعاف الدافعية الداخلية والخارجية لدى الطلاب عبر تقويض شعورهم بالاستقلالية والكفاءة والانتماء، ما ينعكس سلبيًا على مستوى الاندماج الأكاديمي والتحصيل الدراسي، ويرفع معدلات التسرب. واستنادًا إلى نظرية اللامساواة البنوية ونظرية تقرير المصير، تبين الدراسة أن تدني التحصيل لدى الطلاب العرب البدو يعود أساسًا إلى إخفاقات وسياسات بنيوية ممنهجة، وليس إلى عوامل ثقافية أو فردية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى ضرورة إجراء إصلاحات سياساتية، وتوجيه استثمارات تعليمية هادفة، وتبني ممارسات تربوية حساسة ثقافيًا من أجل تعزيز العدالة التعليمية، ورفع دافعية الطلاب، وتحسين مخرجاتهم الأكاديمية في القرى غير المعترف بها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطلاب العرب البدو؛ القرى غير المعترف بها؛ اللامساواة التعليمية؛ الدافعية الأكاديمية؛ التحصيل الأكاديمي

Introduction

The Negev (Naqab) is a part of southern Israel located among the Arab Bedouins, a minority population that is an indigenous community with a high percentage of inhabitants living in unrecognized villages and towns (IWGIA, 2024). These communities have long been socially, economically, and politically marginalized, and this has directly impacted the availability of basic services in the community, including educational services. Education has been recognized as an important process for social mobility and economic engagement, but among the Bedouin students, access to education is still minimal with structural imbalances in the state policies and planning systems.

Unrecognized villages are considered to be Bedouin communities, which are not officially recognized by the Israeli government and thus not included in national infrastructure planning and service delivery (Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024). Consequently, schools that cater to the students in these villages tend to run within an environment that is marked by poor facilities, poor transport access, and low learning materials. Research that students in unrecognized villages have many more educational obstacles than those in familiar Bedouin towns/Jewish localities (Bashkin et al., 2023).

Educational inequality is defined as systematic differences in educational access, quality, and achievement that occur due to social and structural forces rather than personal capability or effort (DeMalach, 2023). In Arab Bedouin students, this inequality is reflected in the academic performance, which is lower; the rate of dropout is higher; and access to post-secondary education is also lower. Motivation is of paramount importance in mediating these outcomes. Academic motivation is described as the internal and external events that launch, guide, and persist learning behavior, as well as the involvement, persistence, and dedication of students to the objectives of learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

This study focuses on the educational difficulties of Arab Bedouin students in unrecognized villages in the Negev and discusses their impacts on the motivation and grade performance of students. The study will help inform current academic and policy debates on educational equity among marginalized and indigenous populations by correlating the conditions of structural education with motivational processes and learning outcomes.

Research Problem

The key research problem that is discussed in this study is the current educational disadvantage of Arab Bedouin children who live in the unrecognized villages in the Negev region. Since these villages do not receive official recognition, they are not included in the official state planning, and, as a consequence, there is a shortage or even absence of educational facilities and other support services (Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024). Most of the schools that accommodate students are usually in overcrowded classes, temporary structures, or even without the basic facilities like electricity, water, and internet connection (Abu-Kishk, 2024).

The barriers to transportation also contribute to educational inequality because many students have to travel long distances to obtain access to schools that are not within their localities, and they lack access to reliable means of transportation (DeMalach, 2023). Such circumstances lead to poor attendance, exhaustion, and a lack of academic interest among the younger and female students. Besides, Bedouin schools experience a chronic lack of qualified teachers and staff turnover, which adversely impacts the quality of instruction and continuity of education (Aburkayek, 2022).

Empirical evidence suggests that the mentioned structural challenges are directly

linked to poor academic performance and a high rate of dropout among the Bedouin students in Negev (Bashkin et al., 2023). Nevertheless, a lot of the literature available is mostly based on general educational differences and fails to actually analyze the effects of such circumstances on the academic motivation of students. Motivation is one of the most important factors that influence the outcomes of learning because students exposed to consistent obstacles and insecurity tend to disengage with schooling and reduce their goals in education (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

The gap in the literature is the absence of specific studies that determine a relationship between educational conditions in the unrecognized village and motivation and academic performance. This gap should be addressed to establish viable educational policies and interventions that address the experienced realities of Arab Bedouin students.

Research Questions

The paper is guided by a key research question based on the relationship between educational situations, student motivation, and academic performance among Arab Bedouin students residing in unrecognized villages of Negev. The main research question is:

- How do educational issues that Arab Bedouin students face in the unrecognized villages affect their motivation and performance?

In order to provide the answer to this general question, a number of secondary research questions are put forth. The questions aim to unravel the dimension of educational inequality, in particular, and its impacts on the learning process and outcomes of students:

- What are the structural and institutional educational obstacles that Arab Bedouin students in unrecognized villages face, especially regarding the school infrastructure, transportation, and access to learning materials?
- What is the extent to which these educational barriers affect academic motivation involving engagement, persistence, and academic self-efficacy of students?
- What are the trends of scholastic performance in terms of performance levels, attendance, and dropout rates of schooling at unrecognized villages?
- How is the interaction between family background, school leadership, and the overall educational policies and their effects on the motivation and school achievement of Bedouin students?

The research questions aim to develop a holistic picture of the effects of the systemic educational conditions on the psychological and academic aspects of study among Arab Bedouin students (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

Significance of the Research

The research is important because it aims to add to academic, educational, and policy-based discourses of educational equity concerning marginalized and indigenous populations. Academically, this research fills a gap in the recent scholarly literature by clearly connecting structural educational issues in unrecognized Bedouin villages with motivation and academic performance among students. Although other researchers have reported access and outcome differences, not many have investigated the motivational processes involved in how these differences influence learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The implications of this study, regarding the educational aspect, are enormous, given the fact that the results of this study identify reasons for poor learning environments as the causes of poor student engagement and perseverance in school. The role of motivation is especially relevant in the development of interventions that should extend beyond material resources and meet the psychological needs of students related to autonomy, competence, and

belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The research also leads to culturally responsive education, where the lived experience of Arab Bedouin students is prioritized, and the interplay between cultural context and the institutional organization is identified (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

The social and political implications of the research are also important because the study provides insights into the implications of non-recognition policies on the educational rights and future opportunities of children. This study can guide policymakers, educators, and advocacy groups to enhance educational access and outcomes in the Negev area by offering evidence-based information (Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024; IWGIA, 2024). Finally, the study furthers the overall cause to advocate educational justice and equality in multicultural and diverse societies.

Scope of the Research

This research has a defined scope that is geographical, demographical, temporal, and conceptual to maintain a clear scope and focus. The geographical location of the study is the Arab Bedouin communities in unrecognized villages in the Negev (Naqab) desert of southern Israel. These villages can be differentiated from known Bedouin towns, as they do not have legal status and do not have access to educational infrastructure and services provided by the state (Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024).

The study is demographically targeted at the Arab Bedouin students who are enrolled in primary and secondary school systems because these two school levels play significant roles in cognitive development, formation of motivation, and long-term academic paths. Although the experiences of teachers, school leaders, and families are mentioned by using the existing studies, the primary focus of the analysis is on the student outcomes in terms of motivation and academic performance (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

Temporally, the study will be based on empirical research, policy reports, and educational data published in the period between 2018 and 2025, so that the analysis captures the current state of education and policy situation. In theory, it is only the study of educational access, learning conditions, student motivation, and educational outcomes, but not the overall socioeconomic or political outcome. The reduced scope will enable the research to provide a rational and comprehensive explanation of how educational problems in unrecognized villages affect the motivation and academic performance of students.

Research Methodology

The methodological technique employed in this paper is the qualitative approach of a literature review, where the researcher seeks to address the problem of education among Arab Bedouin students in the unrecognized villages and how it affects the motivation and performance of the students. The qualitative approach is suitable due to the opportunity to conduct in-depth research of several complex social and educational processes that might be influenced by structural inequality, policy frameworks, and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research information was gathered in the shape of peer-reviewed academic journal articles, state books, reports prepared by non-governmental organizations and international human rights records, and the particular study area of the research was Bedouin education in the Negev. The following inclusion criteria guided the selection of sources: relevance to the educational process of the Arab Bedouin, a clear focus on the unrecognized villages or structural constraints on education, the publication date must not be older than five years, and the materials should either use empirical or policy-based evidence on motivation or academic performance.

The analytical model guiding this research is based on the structural inequality theory that focuses on how institutional structures and policy-making decisions have a systemic

disadvantage to marginalized populations and the Self-Determination Theory, the conceptualization of motivation as the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Using thematic analysis, the repetitive patterns in terms of educational access, learning conditions, student motivation, and academic achievement were determined and cross-synthesized across the sources.

Ethical aspects were discussed using only the publicly available data and published works, and since all necessary information was provided, the attribution had to be made, and the guidelines of academic integrity were observed. Although the literature-based design makes it impossible to produce new empirical data, it gives an opportunity to conduct a thorough synthesis of the available evidence and to make a sound basis for policy-relevant conclusions.

Presentation of Results

The review of recent empirical research and policy reports detects a certain tendency to propose structural educational challenges of Arab Bedouin students as residents of unrecognized villages in the Negev. These challenges are closely associated with decreased academic motivation and decreased academic achievement. These results can be classified into three general themes, which are structural educational problems, impact on student motivation, and outcome of academic achievements.

Structural Educational Challenges

The findings indicate that the non-official status of Bedouin villages is among the elements that both attract and severely limit the existence and quality of educational establishments and institutions. Many of the schools that serve the students in villages that are not identified have to operate in improvised or overcrowded facilities that lack essential amenities such as electricity, running water, and access to the internet (Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024). These poor circumstances restrict the use of modern teaching methods and online educational resources, which provide an advantage to the students in the developed territories over those in the less developed ones (Abu-Kishk, 2024).

Transport is another major challenge. The students tend to travel long distances to attend schools that are not in their neighborhoods, and most of the time, they lack an efficient way of transportation. Research has shown that long commuting times cause irregular attendance, exhaustion, and increased absenteeism, particularly among younger students and women learners (DeMalach, 2023). Additionally, one of the most common problems in Bedouin schools is a lack of qualified teachers and high turnover, which creates a disruption of the instructional process and low quality of learning (Aburkayek, 2022).

Impact on Student Motivation

The literature reviewed confirms that unfavorable educational terms have a very close correlation with the lack of motivation of students. The students in unrecognized villages usually experience feelings of instability, uncertainty, and marginality, a state of feeling that weakens their sense of belonging at school (Abu-Gweder, 2024). According to the Self-Determination Theory, such circumstances interfere with the most basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness and reduce intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Several studies show that Bedouin students are characterized by a lower degree of academic activity, lower perseverance in academic activities, and less confidence in their academic skills in comparison with those available in higher-equipped environments (Bashkin et al., 2023). There are gender variations as well because transport issues and cultural

requirements expose female students to disproportionate school attendance and engagement (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

Academic Achievement Outcomes

The results of academic success among Bedouin students in villages that are not recognized indicate the aggregate effect of structural barriers and the loss of motivation. A constantly low standardized test performance, increased grade retention, and very high dropout rates in comparison with the national averages. Lack of access to academic support services and extracurricular learning opportunities also inhibits the ability of students to enhance their performance and pursue post-secondary educational pathways.

Discussion of Results

The results of this research show that the issues of educational difficulties among the Arab Bedouin in the unrecognized village are rooted in the structural inequality as opposed to the personal or cultural element. In line with structural inequality theory, where the lack of state recognition systematically constrained access to educational infrastructure, resources, and services, this forms unequal learning environments (DeMalach, 2023; Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024). These structural conditions are perpetuating disadvantages that build up over time and have a direct impact on the academic path of students.

The findings would be closely associated with Self-Determination Theory, which states that the motivation of students depends on whether their psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The unstable learning conditions, high rate of teacher changeover, and little academic support negate the sense of ability and belonging of the students and disengage them from schooling. In cases where students do not feel that they have much control over their educational situations and have limited chances of success, intrinsic motivation decreases, and learning becomes more externally motivated or the opposite (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

Family context and educational conditions also turned out to be major influencers. Although most Bedouin families highly value education as a social mobility avenue, structural barriers tend to reduce the capacity to maintain academic participation in the long run (Abu-Gweder, 2024). The problem of transportation and safety, as well as economic strains, are disproportionately impacting students in the unrecognized villages, especially female students, which strengthens the gendered dynamics of educational enrollment and performance.

Notably, the results of the presented research are consistent with the existing studies on indigenous and marginalized communities, in which educational exclusion is often closely correlated with the lack of consideration of policies and systemic inequity instead of cultural aversion to education (Osborne et al., 2025). This comparison allows seeing the wider applicability of the findings and the necessity of the structural changes as the conditions of the positive shift in motivation and academic performance among Arab Bedouin students.

Recommendations

According to the results of this study, a number of policy, educational, and research-based recommendations are offered to handle educational disparity and enhance motivation and educational success among Arab Bedouin learners in the unrecognized villages.

Policy Recommendations

To begin with, ensuring fair access to educational facilities and social services, it is necessary to formally recognize the Bedouin villages. This would allow building permanent

school facilities, supplying utilities, and inclusion in national transportation planning (Negev Coexistence Forum, 2024). Also, models of education funding are to be updated in order to consider structural disadvantage, where schools in unrecognized villages must be targeted and supported.

Educational Recommendations

Investment in school infrastructure, digital connectivity, and learning resources at the educational level is necessary to enhance the quality of instruction and student engagement. The strategies to be employed to reduce staff turnover in Bedouin schools should be teacher recruitment and retention strategies, such as financial incentives and professional development opportunities (Aburkayek, 2022). In addition, culturally responsive teaching methods that consider the Bedouin identity, language, and community principles can empower the sense of belongingness and motivation among students (Abu-Gweder, 2024).

Future Research Directions

Future research needs to utilize longitudinal designs to examine the impacts of variation in educational policy and infrastructure on motivation and achievement in the long term. To get a better understanding of the experiences and aspirations of learners, the inclusion of student voice in the form of qualitative interviews and participatory research would be appropriate. Additional comparative research of recognized and unrecognized Bedouin groups would help more clearly determine the effect of recognition status on educational results.

Conclusion

This study has explored educational issues affecting Arab Bedouin students residing in unrecognized villages in Negev and has examined the effect of these problems in terms of student motivation and academic success. The study shows that lack of proper infrastructure, access to educational facilities, transportation, and institutional negligence play a major role in demotivating the students and also causing their continued poor performance in school. The paper utilizes the structural inequality theory and self-determination theory to show that the issue of educational disparity among Bedouin students is not personal, but one of a structural situation wherein learning opportunities are limited by conditions.

The total change of the policy, the specific investments in education, and the culture-sensitive practice, extremely conscious of the needs and rights of the Arab Bedouin, are required to overcome such problems. To provide better education in remote villages not only deals with academic achievement but also is a highly vital step to attain social justice, equity, and inclusion in the education system.

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