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Exploring Online Learning Motivation among Undergraduates Through Social Cognitive Theory

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Abstract
Learning motivation is one of the important factors that ensure the success of language acquisition. Although numerous studies has been done on students' learning motivation, little is known about online learning motivation. Hence, this quantitative study aims to explore students' online learning motivation when learning a language through Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Data were collected using a survey of 5-point Likert scale given to learners studying languages in a Malaysian public university. The survey consisted of four sections. Section A has 2 items on demographic profile. Section B has 12 items on behavior. Section C has 14 items on personal factors. Section D has 12 items on environmental factors. The respondents were 108 diploma and bachelor degree students. Data analysis was done using SPSS. The findings showed that SCT has a positive impact on students' online learning motivation. All three elements of SCT which are behaviour, personal factors and environmental factors were significant in promoting students' online learning motivation for language learning. Moreover, there are also a strong positive relationship between behaviour and personal factors, a moderate positive relationship between behaviour and environmental factors, and a moderate positive relationship between environmental and personal factors. These findings established that SCT has an important role in cultivating online learning motivation in a language classroom. Teachers can also design their teaching and learning process based on SCT as it is proven to promote students' online learning motivation. Therefore, future studies on SCT can be beneficial towards students' online learning motivation.
Keywords: Social Cognitive Theory, Online Learning, Foreign Language Learning

Introduction

Background of Study

Post-Covid, online learning will continue to have and enjoy a greater role in shaping the education setting. With this, more and more issues need to be tackled to ensure the smooth sailing of online learning. One of the important aspects of learning is the learner's motivation. According to Melendy (2008), motivation is a complicated psychological process where it begins with a need and develops into a behavior that assists individuals in achieving their objectives. Students who have a strong motivation to succeed can achieve better academic results than those who do not, therefore it is essential to inspire them to learn (Juhana, 2012).

For online language learning, the students' motivation may differ from the traditional way of learning. A study by Che Soh et al (2022) stated that the pandemic has affected students' motivation as they have to adapt themselves to the new learning environment. According to Ismail et al (2022), students nowadays are familiar with the technologies which help to boost their self-efficacy and reduce computer anxiety when learning language online.

Statement of Problem

When the world was forced to shift from traditional classroom to remote/ online learning during the covid 19 pandemic, students' motivation became the focus of various studies. This is because online learning demands more from the students than the traditional classroom. According to research by Schunk and Usher (2012), Social Cognitive Theory puts forward that motivation affects learning and performance. A study by Juhana (2012) confirmed that better academic performance could be expected if students are motivated. In order to gain students' interest and to keep them fully engaged during online learning, it is crucial to ascertain factors influencing their motivation.

Hence, this study is done to investigate the factors that influence online learning motivation. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;
- How does behaviour influence learners' online motivation?
- How do personal factors influence learners' online motivation?
- How do environmental factors influence learners' online motivation?
- Is there a relationship between variables for online motivation?

Literature Review

Disadvantages and Advantages of Online Learning

With the need to move from traditional classroom teaching to online education caused by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the rapid development of technology, online learning is becoming a rapidly growing niche area in the education field. Numerous studies have been carried out on online learning, especially on advantages and disadvantages from different perspectives, such as from faculty, instructors and students' perceptions (Dinh & Nguyen, 2022; Thamri et al., 2022; Bączek et al., 2021; Yuhanna et al., 2020). A recent study by Almahasees et al. (2021) showed that students viewed flexibility, convenience, self-learning, cost-effectiveness and learning new experiences as advantages of online learning. On the contrary, students perceived technical issues, lack of motivation, lack of direct interaction, time management, and difficulty adapting faced by special needs students as disadvantages of online learning (Almahasees et al., 2021). In another study by Hussein et al. (2020) on students' attitudes towards online learning during COVID-19, students think that time- and

cost-effectiveness, safety during the pandemic and convenience are the advantages of online learning. Alternatively, distraction due to minimal self-discipline and motivation, increased workload, internet connectivity issues and inadequate support from instructors are disadvantages of online learning from students' perspective (Hussein et al., 2020). Overall, there seems to be some evidence to indicate that time- and cost-effectiveness, convenience, and flexibility are advantages of online learning. Conversely, internet connectivity issues, inadequate interaction and lack of motivation are disadvantages of online learning.

Motivations for Online Learning

Various studies have been conducted on motivations based on Bandura's Social cognitive theory for a traditional or face-to-face classroom setting (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Alvarez-Risco et al., 2022; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2020; Hattie et al, 2020). Social Cognitive Theory explains that motivational processes are goals and self-evaluations of progress, self-efficacy, social comparisons, values, outcome expectations, attributions, and self-regulation. Alternatively, very few studies have examined motivation-based Social Cognitive Theory in an online setting. A study by Sokman et al. (2022) was conducted on 255 undergraduate students' participation in an online learning setting by investigating the students' involvement in online learning. The study which was based on Social Cognitive Theory focused on the influence of environment, behaviour and cognition revealed that the interactions occurred between student to teacher and student to content were vital elements in successful online learning environment. Several studies also discovered the importance self-efficacy for successful online learning where the students will achieve greater learning satisfaction (Aldhahi et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2021; Alzahrani & Seth, 2021).

Past Studies on Motivation for Learning Language

Many Studies have been done to investigate the motivation for learning language. Motivation is important because it can help students to perform better and to be a successful language learner. The study by Kau and Thach (2021) is done to investigate whether the learners are motivated in learning English or not, focusing on extrinsic motivational factors. The instrument was a questionnaire given to 52 senior major English students at a university. The findings show that learners' motivation is related to learning facilities and teacher's personality. These findings show that having good learning facilities and a keen instructor can boost students' motivation. Next, the study by Zanne et al (2022) investigates online engagement in foreign language classrooms. The respondents are 151 students from a public university in Malaysia. The instrument is a questionnaire with 22 items. The findings reveal that peer support motivated the learners when studying a foreign language. It also shows that the students prefer to work with their chosen teammate during learning activities.

Conceptual Framework

The framework of the study is rooted from Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory. The theory states that the process of learning does not only involve the learner's (A) Behaviour; also involves some (B) Personal factors as well as (C) Environmental Factors. Learners' behaviour is influenced by his/her environment. This means a positive environment will create a positive learning outcome and vice versa (Rahmat, 2018).

In the context of this study, Fowler's (2018) is scaffolded from Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory to reveal the connection in figure 1 below. In the learning process, learners'

(A) Behaviour is displayed through Expectancy through (i) self-efficacy and (ii) control of learning beliefs. Nevertheless, the learning process is affected by the learners' (B) Personal Factors such as Value. Value is measured by (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation and also (ii) task value. The learning process is also influenced by the (C)Environmental factors such as social support. This social support involves (i) social engagement and (ii) instructor support.
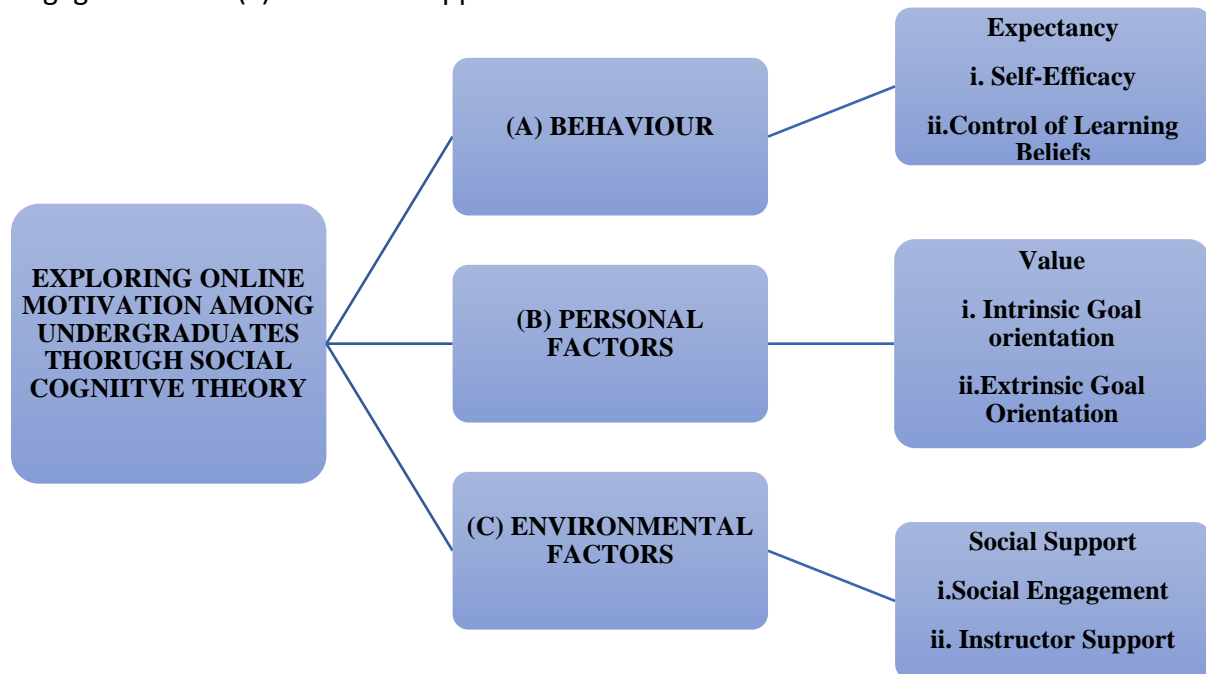

Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study-
Online Motivation among Undergraduates through the Social Cognitive Theory

Methodology
This quantitative study is done to explore/investigate students' online learning motivation using the social cognitive theory. A purposive sample of 108 participants responded to the survey. The instrument adopts the social cognitive theory by (Bandura, 1977). The components in the theory are then scaffolded to merge with Fowler's (2018) online motivation constructs to reveal the sections in table 1. The instrument used is a survey. It has 4 sections. Section A has 2 items on demographic profile. Section B has 12 items on behavior. Section C has 14 items on personal factors. Section D has 12 items on environmental factors.

Table 1
Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY (Bandura, 1977)	ONLINE MOTIVATION (Fowler,2018)	SUB-SCALES	NO OF ITEMS
B	BEHAVIOUR	EXPECTANCY	Self-Efficacy	8
			Control of Learning Beliefs	4
C	PERSONAL FACTORS	VALUE	Intrinsic Goal Orientation	4
			Extrinsic Goal Orientation	4
			Task Value	6
D	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	SOCIAL SUPPORT	Social Engagement	5
			Instructor Support	7
				38

Table 2
Reliability of Survey

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.911	38

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .911; thus, revealing good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

Findings
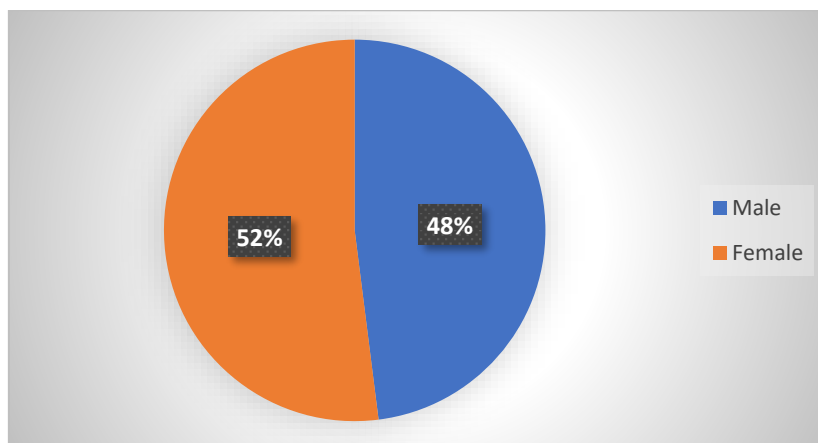Findings for Demographic Profile
Q1.Gender

Figure 2- Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 shows the percentage for gender. Out of 108 respondents, 48% are male and 52% are female.
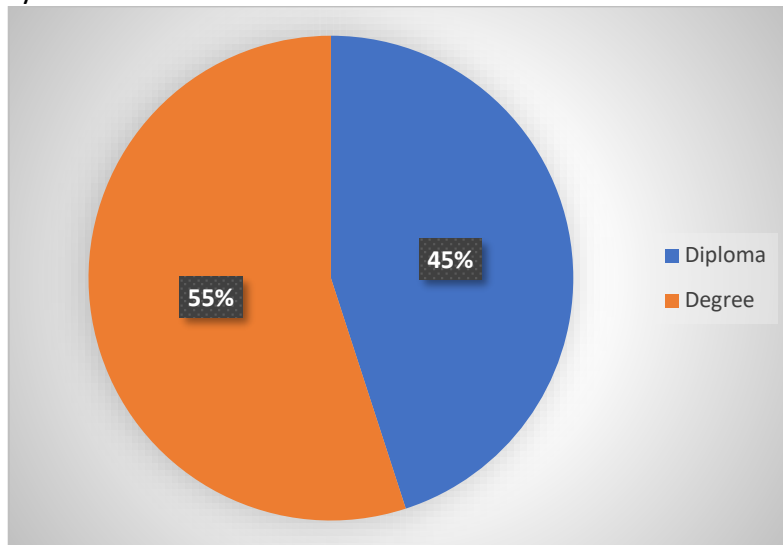
Q2. Level of Study

Figure 3- Percentage for Level of Study

Figure 3 shows the percentage for level of study. 45% of the respondents are diploma students while 55% are bachelor degree students.

Findings for Behaviour
This section presents data to answer research question 1- How does behaviour influence learners' online motivation? In the context of this study, behaviour is measured by (a) self-efficacy and (b) control of learning beliefs.
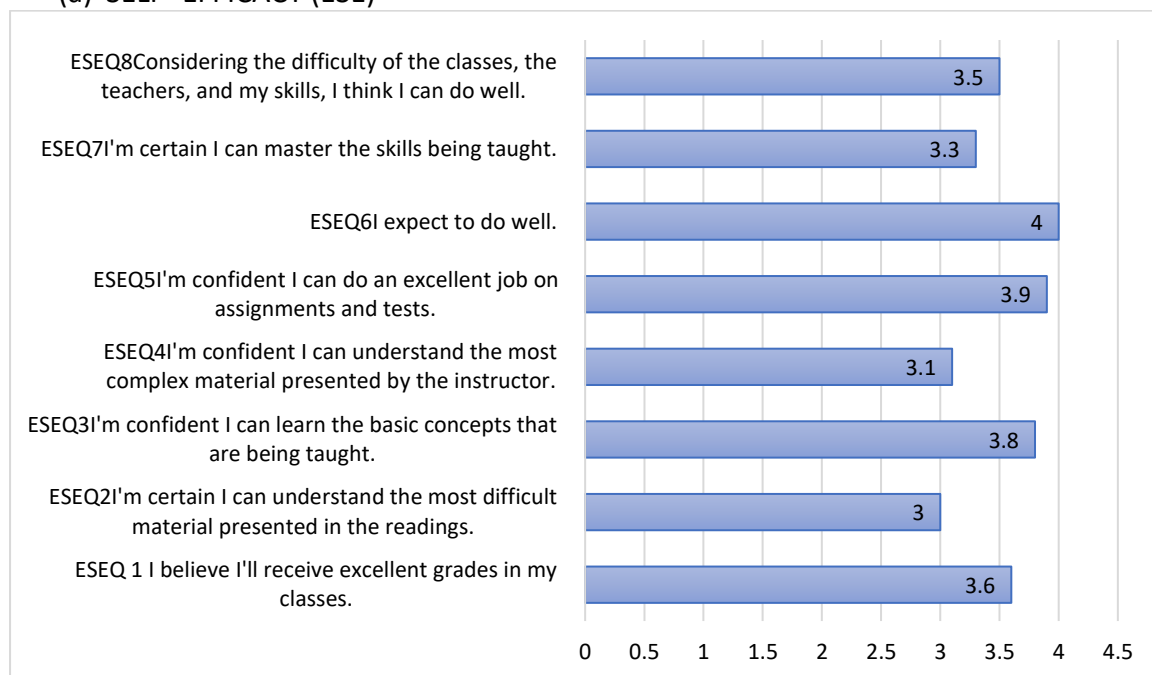
(a) SELF- EFFICACY (ESE)

Figure 5- Mean for Self-Efficacy

Figure 5 presents the mean score of self-efficacy related to learners' online motivation. The mean scores ranged from 3.0 to 4.0, with eight items. Learners have high expectations of themselves to perform well, with the highest mean at 4.0. Furthermore, learners also agreed that they are confident in doing an excellent job in assignments and tests (*M* = 3.9) and learning the basic concepts that are being taught (*M* = 3.8). The lowest mean at 3.0 was recorded by the item ESEQ2, showing that leaners are certain they can understand the most difficult material presented in readings.

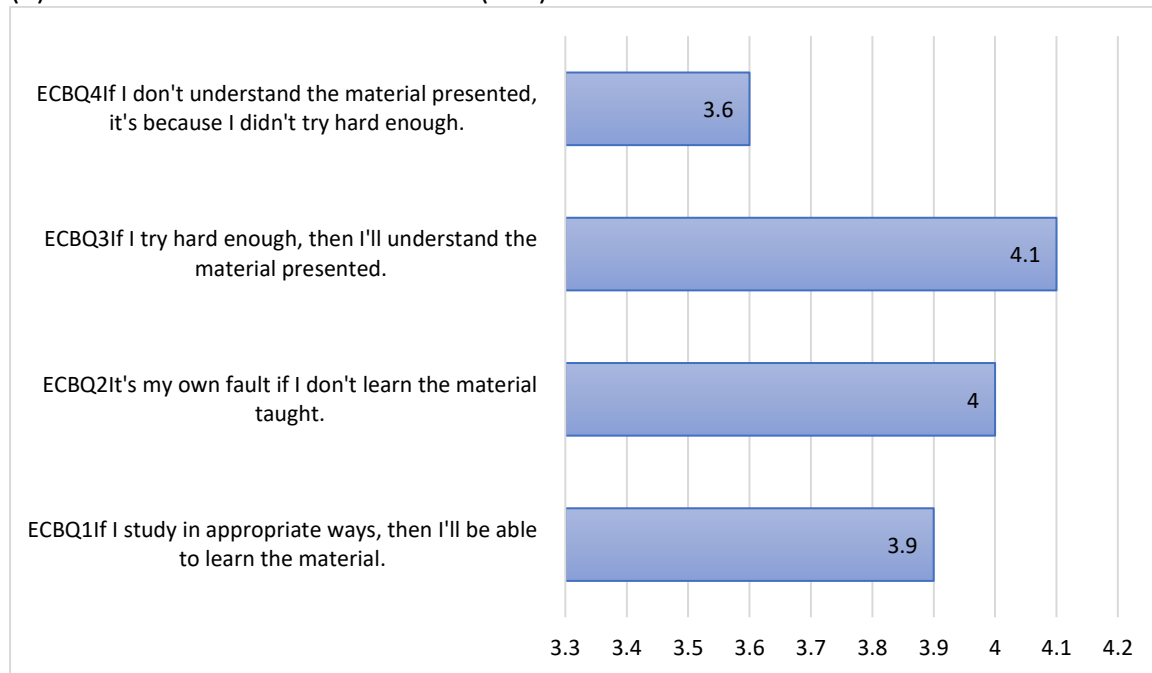### (b) CONTROL OF LEARNING BELIEFS (ECB)

Figure 6- Mean for Control of Learning Beliefs

As shown in Figure 6, learners think they will understand the material presented if they try hard enough, with the highest mean recorded at 4.1. Moreover, learners believe that it is their fault if they do not learn the material taught (*M* = 4.0). Learners also think that if they study appropriately, they can learn the material (*M* = 3.9). The item ECBQ4 recorded the lowest mean at 3.6. Learners feel that they did not understand the material presented because they did not try hard enough.

Findings for Personal factors

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do personal factors influence learners' online motivation? In the context of this study, personal factors are measured by (a) intrinsic goal orientation, (b) extrinsic goal orientation, and (c) task value.
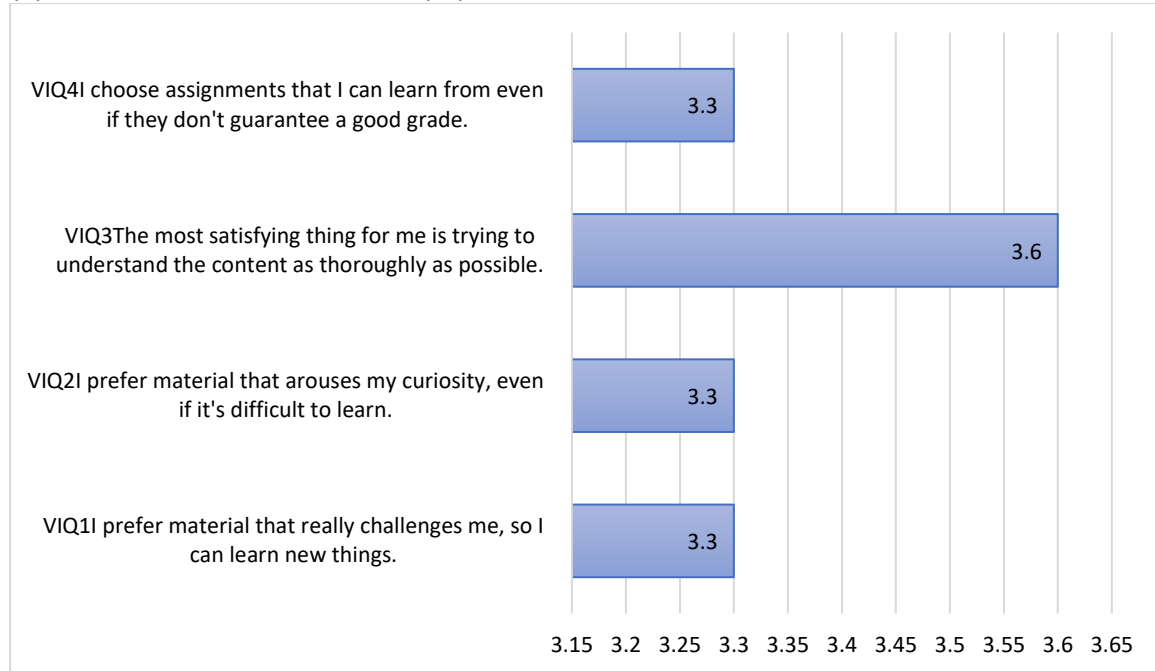
(a)   Intrinsic Goal Orientation (VI)

Figure 7- Mean for Intrinsic Goal Orientation

Figure 7 presents learners' responses on statements relating to intrinsic goal orientation that influence learners' online motivation. The highest mean score, which was 3.6 indicates that the learners believed that the most satisfying thing for them was trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible. The next three intrinsic goal orientations shared the same mean score of 3.3, implies the learners prefer material that really challenges them, so they can learn new things. The learners also prefer material that arouses their curiosity, even if it's difficult to learn and they choose assignments that they can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.
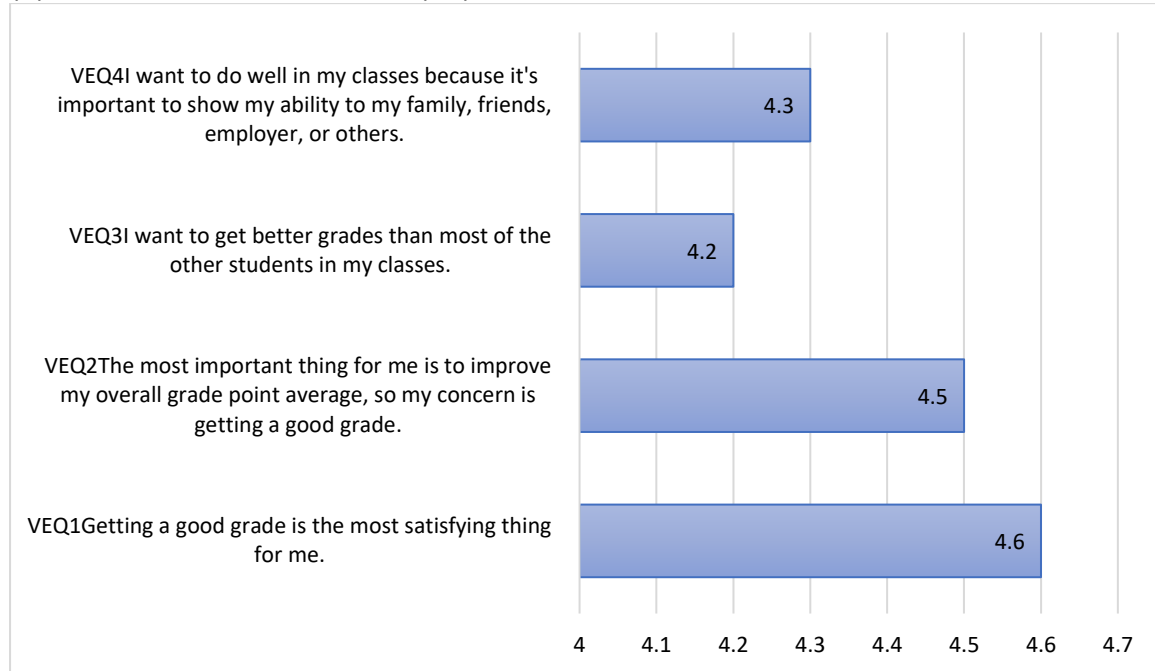
(b)   Extrinsic Goal Orientation(VE)

Figure 8- Mean for Extrinsic Goal Orientation

Figure 8 displays the mean scores for Extrinsic Goal Orientation which influence learners' online motivation. The highest mean score with 4.6 indicates the learners claim that getting a good grade is the most satisfying thing for me. The second mean score with 4.5 implies that the learners believe that the most important thing for them is to improve their overall grade point average, so their concern is getting a good grade. The third mean score of 4.3 denotes that the learners want to do well in their classes because it is important to show their ability to my family, friends, employer, or others. The final mean score of 3.7 suggests the learners want to get better grades than most of the other students in their classes.
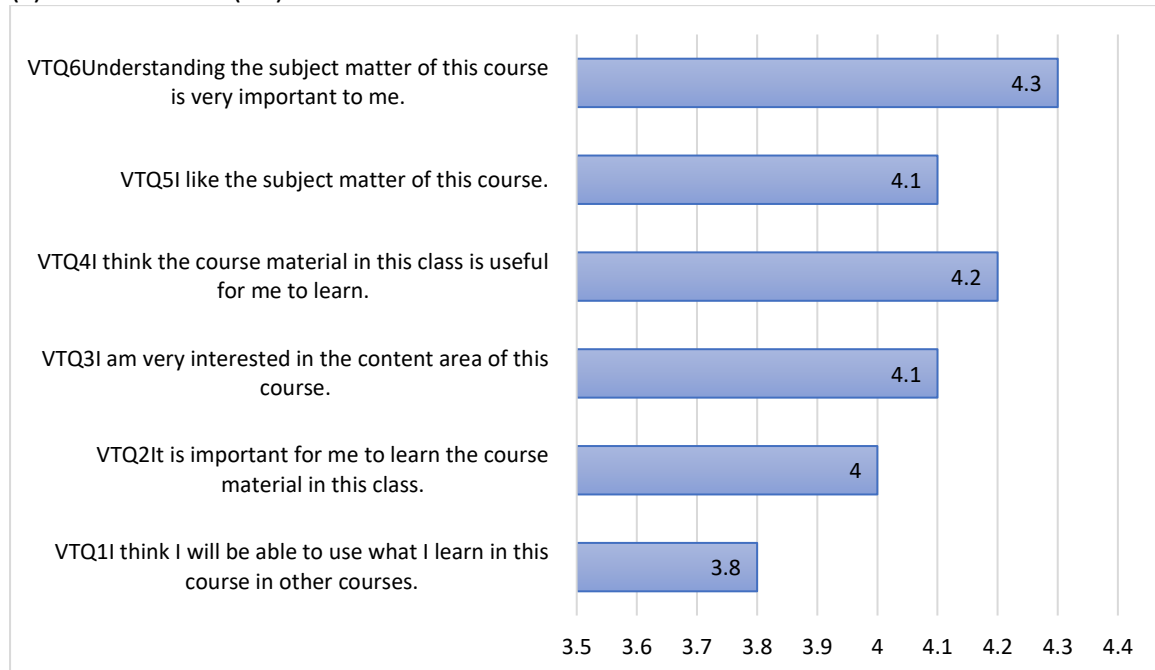
(c)   Task Value (VT)

Figure 9- Mean for Task Value

Figure 9 depicts the mean scores for "Task Value" which affect learners' online motivation. The highest mean score with 4.3 reflects that learners feel that understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to them. The second mean score with 4.2 shows that the learners believe that the course material in this class is useful for them to learn. The third and fourth mean score with 4.1 indicates that the learners feel very interested in the content area of this course and also they like the subject matter of this course. The fifth mean score with 4.0 suggests that the learners claim that it is important for them to learn the course material in this class. The last mean score with 3.8 implies that the learners think they will be able to use what they learn in this course in other courses.

Findings for Environmental Factors
This section presents data to answer research question 3- How do environmental factors influence learners' online motivation? In the context of this study, environmental factors are measured by (a) social engagement, and (b) instructor support.

(a) Social Engagement (SSE)
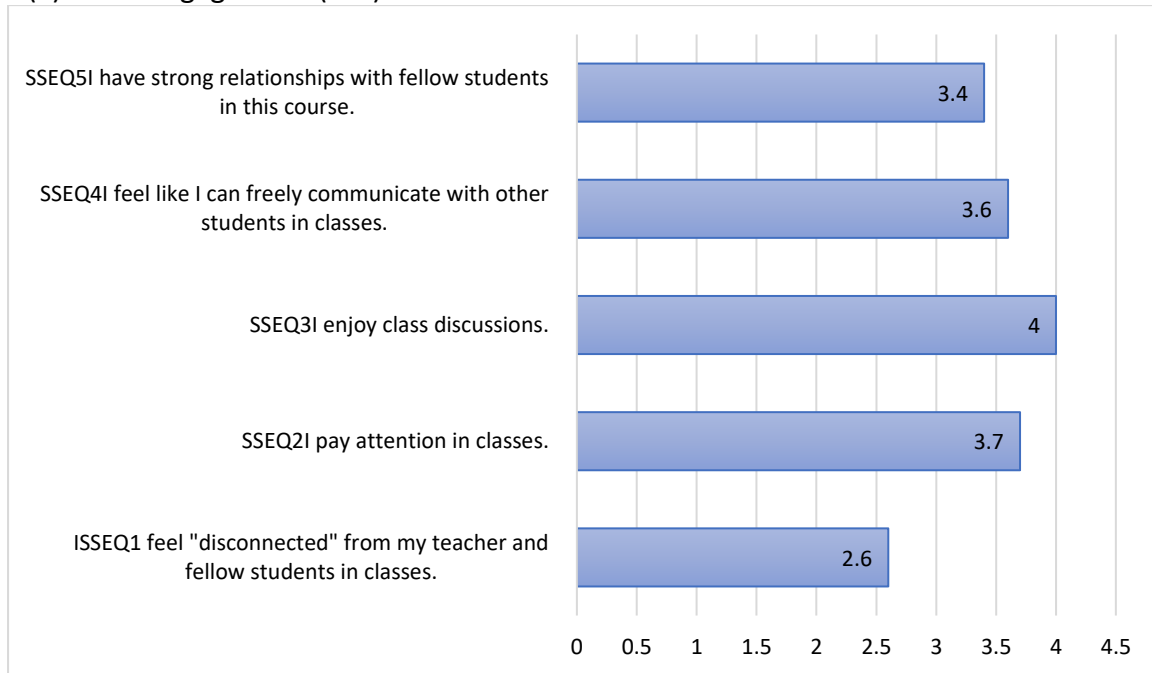
Figure 10- Mean for Social Engagement

Figure 10 shows the highest mean for Social Engagement is item 3 (*M* = 4). It reveals that students enjoy the discussions during class. Meanwhile the lowest mean measured for social engagement is item 1 (*M* = 2.6). The respondents stated that they are feeling "disconnected" from the teacher and fellow students. Items 2, 4 and 5 have a mean of 3.7, 3.6 and 3.4 respectively.

(b) Instructor Support (SIS)

Figure 11- Mean for Instructor Support

Figure 11 shows that item 2 and item 4 have the highest mean for Instructor's support (*M* = 4.2). According to the respondents, the instructor responds to questions clearly, completely and in a timely manner (item 2). They also indicate that the instructor provides

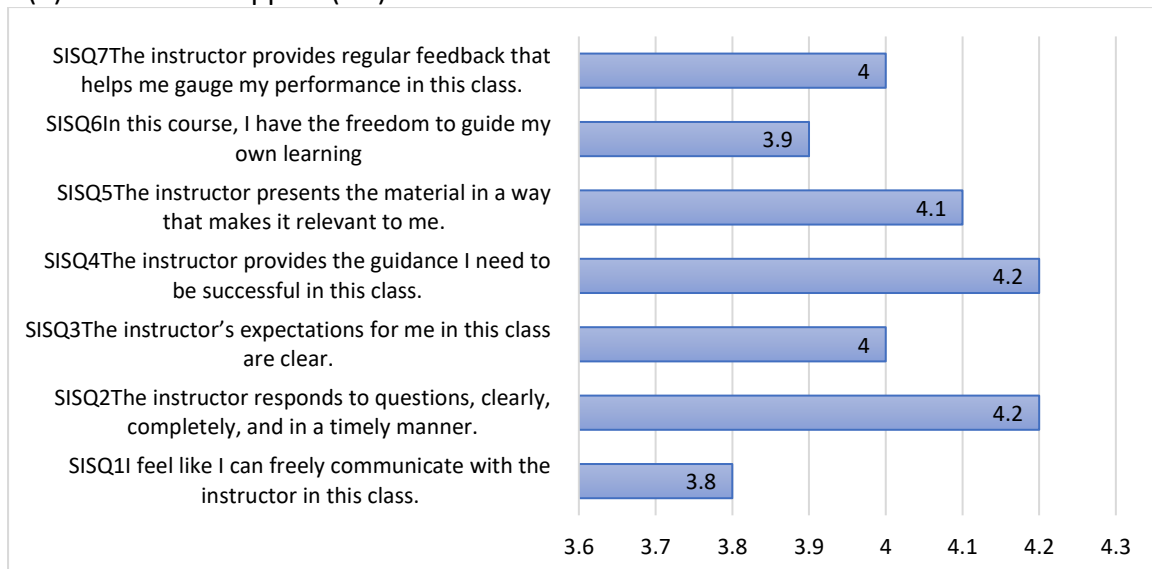the guidance that they need to be successful in class (item 4). The respondents also stated the instructor presents the material in a way that makes it relevant to them ($M = 4.1$). They added that the regular feedback provided by the instructor helps them gauge their performance ($M = 4$).

Findings Relationship of Variables with Online Motivation

This section presents data to answer research question 4: Is there a relationship between variable for online motivational constructs for foreign language learning?

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between behaviour, personal factors, and environmental factors, data is anlaysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in table 3, 4 and 5 below.

Table 3
Correlation between behaviour and personal factors

Correlations

		TOTALBEHAVIOUR	TOTALPERSONALFACTORS
TOTALBEHAVIOUR	Pearson Correlation	1	.583**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	108
TOTALPERSONALFACTORS	Pearson Correlation	.583**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	108	108

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows there is an association between behaviour and personal factors. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between behaviour and personal factors ($r=.583$**) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between behaviour and personal factors.

Table 4
Correlation between behaviour and environmental factors

Correlations

		TOTALBEHA VIOUR	TOTALENVIR ONMENTALF ACTORS
TOTALBEHAVIOUR	Pearson Correlation	1	.347[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	108
TOTALENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	Pearson Correlation	.347[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	108	108

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows there is an association between behaviour and environmental factors. Correlation analysis shows that there is a low significant association between behaviour and environmental factors (r=.347**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between behaviour and environmental factors.

Table 5
Correlation between Environmental and Personal Factors

Correlations

		TOTALENVIR ONMENTALF ACTORS	TOTALPERSO NALFACTORS
TOTALENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	Pearson Correlation	1	.491[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	108
TOTALPERSONALFACTO RS	Pearson Correlation	.491[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	108	108

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows there is an association between environmental and personal factors. Correlation analysis shows that there is a low significant association between environmental and personal factors (r=.491**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from

0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between environmental and personal factors.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The first factor that influences students' online learning motivation is behaviour. The findings revealed that behavior has an influence on students' online learning motivation measured by self-efficacy (ESE) and control of learning beliefs (ECB). A high level of self-efficacy has a positive effect on students' behavior towards their online learning motivation. This is supported by Tang et al (2022) where the findings revealed that there was a significant correlation between online learning self-efficacy and performance proficiency. Kasuma et al (2021) also found that the students perceived a high level of self-efficacy towards online class. The students indicated a strong motivation to complete online tasks in relation to self-efficacy in carrying out online submissions. A high level of control of learning beliefs also has a positive effect on students' behavior towards their online learning motivation. This is aligned with Alhamami's (2018) findings, language learners' intentions are influenced by their attitudes toward the language-learning environment, the beliefs of people around them, and their beliefs about their abilities to perform in the language-learning environment. The second factor is personal factors and it is measured by intrinsic goal orientation (VI), extrinsic goal orientation (VE), and task value (VT). The findings showed that personal factors have an influence on students' online learning motivation. According to Fandiño et al. (2019), in the personal factors, there is coexistence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, both of which are connected to the psychological process of the learners as well as their social specific development framework. This is also supported by Bailey & Rakushin-Lee (2021) where task value and self-efficacy encouraged students' participation in social networking for language learning. The last factor is environmental factors measured by social engagement (SSE) and instructor support (SIS). Environmental factors also have an influence on students' online learning motivation. This is supported by Zanne et al. (2022) where the findings showed that students are more motivated to learn when teachers allow students involvement during class. Lastly, the findings revealed that there are positive relationships between all the factors that influence students' online learning motivation.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Online learning is here to stay as part of the education system. Hence, social cognitive theory (SCT) can be beneficial and serves as a guide for educators when designing their curriculum, especially for online classes. As any other research, this one has limitations. Future studies should be done on developing in-depth teaching strategies based on SCT for both online and offline classes.

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