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### Exploring Learners' Motivation and Burnout in Times of Post-Covid

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#### **Abstract**

Motivation and burnout are two closely related concepts that have varying effects on learners. Motivation may be the driving force behind academic progress in the context of learning, but burnout can hinder academic performance as well as overall well-being. The COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on how motivated and burned-out students are in Malaysia. Many students experience increased stress and anxiety as a result of the abrupt transition to online learning and disturbance of their normal routines. This research investigates the motivational elements that lead to learning and burnout in undergraduates. This study is quantitative in nature where 221 respondents were involved in answering 4-sections questionnaires. The findings indicate positive correlation between motivational, expectancy and affective components with total burnout. Understanding learners' motivation and the factors that lead to burnout is important for educators since it allows them to make the learning process easier for learners.

Keywords: Motivation, Language Learning, Burnout, Post-COVID

#### Introduction

**Background of Study** 

The term motivation is derived from the Latin verb *movere*, which means "to move." It is what motivates a person to make specific decisions, take action, exert effort, and remain in activity (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013).

Motivation and burnout are two closely related concepts that have varying effects on learners. Burnout is a condition of emotional, bodily, and mental weariness caused by continuous stress or dissatisfaction, whereas motivation is the drive or desire to pursue a certain goal or aim (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). In the context of learning, motivation may be the driving force behind academic achievement, but burnout can impair academic performance as well as general well-being. Academic burnout was defined by Zhang et al

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(2007) as being overworked due to study expectations (exhaustion), having a disconnected and cynical attitude towards one's schoolwork (cynicism), and feeling inept as a student (reduced efficacy).

The COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia has made a big difference in how motivated and burned-out students are. Many students feel more stress and anxiety because of the sudden switch to online learning and the disruption of their normal routines (Tee et al., 2022; Al-Kumaim et al., 2021). The return to face-to-face classrooms following the COVID-19 epidemic can provide a chance for learners to reconnect with their friends and lecturers, participate in hands-on learning, and develop a more structured routine. Face-to-face classes can provide students with more opportunities for social interaction and collaboration, which can be important for fostering a sense of connection and engagement. However, this can also impact the motivation and cause burn out for learners who might feel overwhelmed by the shifting of the learning norm.

#### Statement of Problem

Language learning success is dependent on motivation (Dörnyei, 1998; Mahadi & Jafari, 2012; Rahman et al., 2017; Lokman et al., 2022). Learners who are highly driven put in more time and effort into their language acquisition, and they are more likely to persevere in the face of difficulties or failures. Learners who lack motivation, on the other hand, may fail to interact with the language and are more likely to give up before completing their goals. Students who are not interested in learning English may consider it a "burden" in such an environment since studying English has become a compulsory "work" with little autonomy. As a result, these students are more likely to develop dissatisfaction in English learning and to experience burnout (Liu et al., 2021).

The shift from pandemic to post-pandemic impacted how learners and educators viewed different instructional activities. The abrupt transition from fully online learning to partially online or blended learning as a result of health limitations that have been relaxed as of the beginning of 2022 might have an effect on the students' motivation to learn. It is vital in the post-pandemic period to keep students motivated in learning. Firmansyah et al (2023) found that learners' motivation in learning English is only at the moderate level with intrinsic motivation scored a little bit higher than their extrinsic motivation.

#### Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore the motivating factors for learning and burnout among undergraduates. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions.

- How do motivation components influence learners' desire to learn?
- How do expectancy components influence learners' desire to learn?
- How do affective components influence learners' desire to learn?
- How do sources of burnout influence learners' desire to learn?
- Is there a relationship across variables for sources of burnout and motivating factors?

#### **Literature Review**

#### Motivators and Demotivators for Learning

Motivators and demotivators are related to students' intrinsic and intrinsic motivation to learn. Extrinsic motivation is related to an individual's external motivators such as getting a job, teacher's personality, teacher's method of teaching and passing examinations.

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Conversely, intrinsic motivation represents students' internal motivators such as self-improvement and self-satisfaction. An example of a very recent study done in Southeast Asia is by Firmansyah et al (2023) who reported that as a result of post-covid learning, EFL students mostly have a moderate level of intrinsic motivation. The students are also reported to have moderate but slightly a lower level of extrinsic motivation. In another study by Adara and Najmudin (2020), students' demotivators before and after covid were compared. The result shows that lack of school facilities and learning contents and materials were the most salient demotivators among students. However, after Covid, students seem to be more concerned about their test scores and also their teachers' competency and teaching styles. Intrinsic motivation was found to be the least salient demotivator during both pre- and post-Covid language learning.

#### **Burnout among Learners**

The COVID-19 epidemic has caused an alarming increase in learner burnout as a result of the abrupt transition to remote learning and the related effects on mental health (Smith & Lim, 2020). This burnout is worsened by social isolation, disruption of habits, and continual exposure to pandemic-related news (Maugeri et al., 2020). There is a requirement for efforts to be made to identify health issues and intervene in mental health issues for learners at an earlier age and it is imperative that the recommendations be implemented by educational institutions, mental health professionals, and the government (i.e., policy stakeholders) (Windarwati et al., n.d.). By implementing evidence-based interventions and building a well-balanced, resilient learning environment, the negative impacts of teacher burnout can be reduced, and kids can be better equipped for academic and emotional success (Lee, 2021).

#### Past Studies on Burnout among Learners

Several studies have been conducted to date on motivation and burnout in English language learning. Research conducted by Firmansyah et al (2023) investigates the students' motivation towards learning English after the Covid-19 pandemic. This study found out that students have diverse internal and external factors of motivation in learning English. The finding also showed the students' intrinsic motivation was higher than their extrinsic motivation. This study used an online questionnaire as data collection procedure which consisted of 100 senior high school students as the respondents. The questionnaire was used to measure the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This study helps the teachers to plan for an effective and appropriate teaching technique to improve on the students' performance.

Yu et al (2022) did a study on language learning motivation and burnout among English as foreign language students. The research investigates the association between motivation and burnout among EFL learners and maladaptive emotion regulation strategies. The researchers recruited 890 non-English major students from two universities in southern China who had to complete an online questionnaire via *Wenjuanxing* during College English Class. They found out that the respondents had high levels of language learning burnout and it is also proven that the effect of motivation and burnout was weaker when the students want to avoid unpleasant emotions. This study is beneficial because it helps with the effectiveness of the teaching as it suggests the teachers to screen their students' burnout levels, hence, the teachers can plan for suitable methods to approach the students.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is rooted from learning motivation by Pintrich & De Groot (1990) and also sources of learners' burnout by (Compos et. al., 2011). Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework of the study. In the context of this study, the researcher explores the relationship between motivation and learners' burnout. According to Pintrich & De Groot (1990), learners' desire to learn can stem from (1) motivational components, (2) expectancy components, and (3) affective components. Motivational components are measured by (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation and (iii)task value beliefs. Next, (2) expectancy components care measured by (i) students' Perception of Self- Efficacy and (ii) control beliefs for learning. Next, (3) affective components are measured by what learners feel, what they fear about the consequences of learning. For many learners, using affective strategies help them reduce their anxiety for learning (Rahmat, 2018). Burnout is measured by (i) exhaustion and (ii) disengagement.

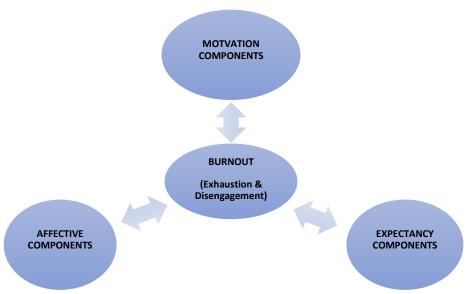


Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study-Motivation and Burnout among Learners

#### Methodology

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 221 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Pintrich & De Groot's (1990) motivational constructs and sources of burnout by Compos et al (1990) to reveal the variables in table 1 below. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile. Section B has 12 items on motivational components. Section C has 7 items on expectancy components. Section D has 5 items on affective components. Section E has 16 items on sources of burnout.

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Table 1
Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECT	CONSTRUCT		VARIABLE	No	Total
				Of Items	Items
В	MOTIVATIONAL	(i)	Intrinsic Goal Orientation	4	12
	COMPONENTS	(ii)	Extrinsic Goal Orientation	3	
	(Pintrich, & De Groot ,1990)	(iii)	Task Value Beliefs	5	
С	EXPECTANCY COMPONENT (Pintrich, & De Groot, 1990)	(i)	Students' Perception of Self- Efficacy	5	7
	(Finiticii, & De Groot, 1990)	(ii)	Control Beliefs for Learning	2	
D	AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS (Pintrich, & De Groot ,1990)				5
E	SOURCES OF BURNOUT (Compos,et.al, 2011)	(i) (ii)	Burnout-Exhaustion Burnout-Disengagement	8	16
	TOTAL NO OF ITEMS				40

Table 2
Reliability of Survey

### **Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	
.918	40	

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .918, thus, revealing a 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

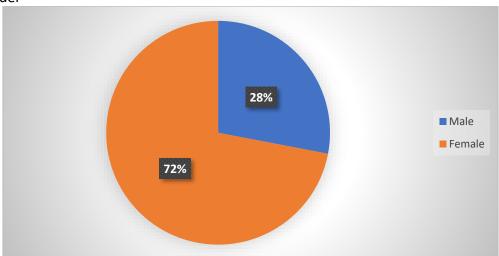


Figure 2- Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 presents the distributions of respondents (in percentage) in this study according to their gender. The majority of the respondents in this study were female, which comprises 72% of the respondents. The remaining 28% respondents were male.

#### Q2 Semester

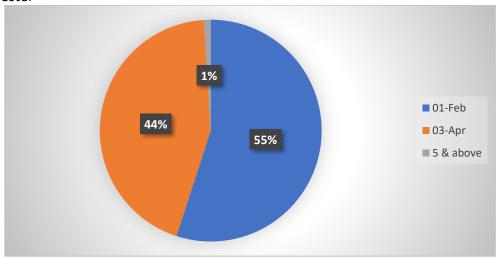


Figure 3- Percentage for Semester

This study has involved students from semester 1 until semester 5 (and above). As presented in Figure 3, the majority of the respondents (55%) were in Semester 1 and 2. 44% of the respondents were in Semester 3 and 4, and only 1% of the respondents were from Semester 5 and above).



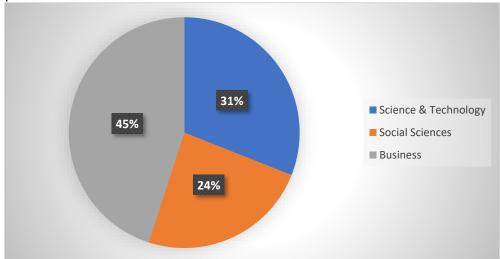
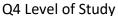


Figure 4- Percentage for Discipline

Figure 4 shows the distribution of respondents according to their discipline. 45% of the students were studying in Business, 31% were Science and Technology students, and 24% were students in Social Sciences.



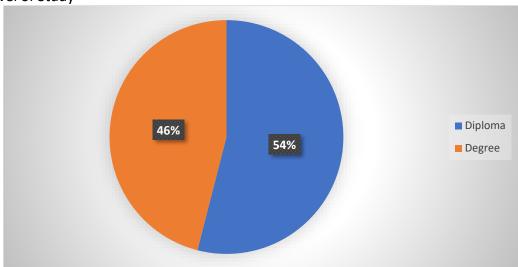
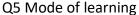


Figure 5- Percentage for Level of Study

The respondents' level of study is presented in Figure 5. 54% of the students were studying at Diploma level while 46% of them were studying for a Bachelor degree.



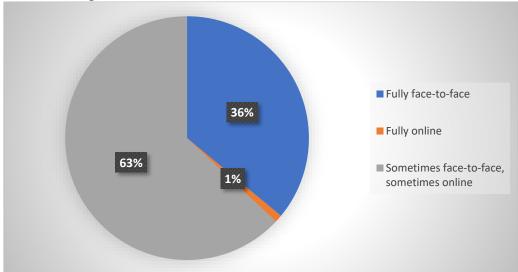


Figure 6- Percentage for Mode of Learning

There were 3 different modes of study when this research was carried out. As illustrated in Figure 6, 63% of the respondents reported that they had the combination of face-to-face and online learning. 36% of the respondents had fully face-to-face learning while only 1% of the respondents had fully online learning.

#### Findings for Motivational Components

This section presents data to answer research question 1 - How do motivation components influence learners' desire to learn? In the context of this study, motivation is measured by value components such as (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation, and (ii) task value beliefs

#### Value Component

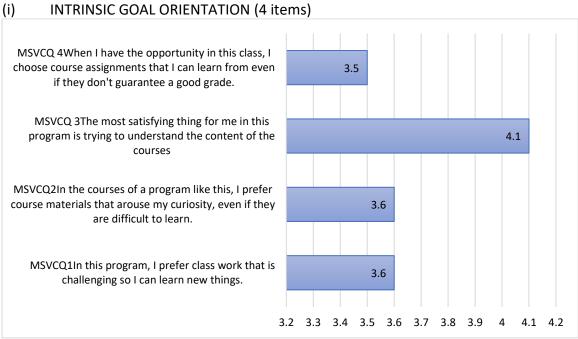


Figure 7- Mean for Intrinsic Goal Orientation

The mean for the intrinsic goal orientation is shown in figure 7. The highest mean is M=4.1, and the learners find that making an effort to comprehend the material covered in the classes is the single most enjoyable aspect of the experience. It also demonstrates that there are two numbers on the mean that are the same. These are learners who prefer to have class work that is challenging to learn new things (M=3.6) and learners who prefer to have course materials that arouse learners' curiosity even if they are difficult to learn (M=3.6). Both of these numbers are the same. Some students opt for assignments in their classes that will teach them anything, regardless of whether or not they would result in a grade higher than M=3.5 on average.

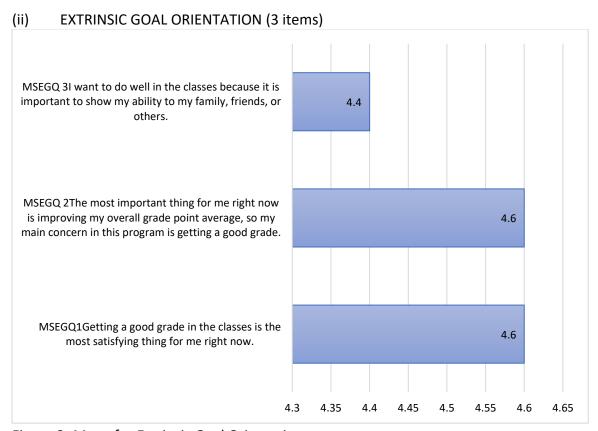


Figure 8- Mean for Extrinsic Goal Orientation

Figure 8 depicts the mean value for the extrinsic goal orientation. There are 2 highest means, each of which is M=4.6, respectively. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average (MSEGQ 1), and the most pleasant thing for me right now is obtaining a good grade in the classes, therefore earning a good grade is my primary priority in this programme (MSEGQ 2). I want to do well in the classes because it is vital to display my abilities to my family, friends, or others (MSEGQ 3), with a mean score of M=4.4, has the lowest mean score out of the three items that are included in this area.

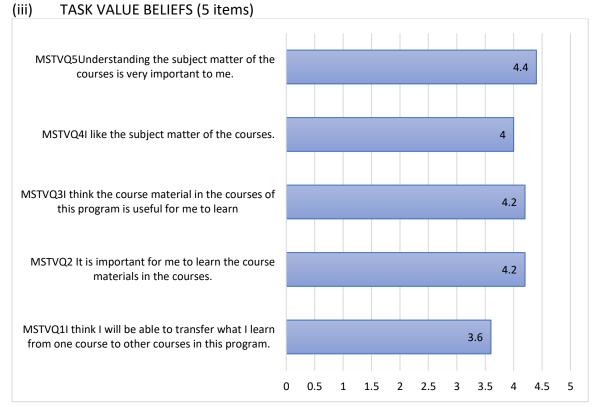


Figure 9- Mean for Task value Beliefs

The median value for task value beliefs is illustrated in figure 9. The M=4.4 represents the greatest possible mean with having a solid grasp of the material covered in the classes is of utmost importance (MSTVQ5). Followed by both of these statements, "I believe it is vital for me to study the course content in the courses of this programme" (MSTVQ2) and "I think it is useful for me to learn the course material in the courses of this programme" (MSTVQ3), each have a score of mean M=4.2 correspondingly. (MSTVQ4) with a mean score of M=4.0, I find the subject matter of the classes to be interesting. The statement "I think I will be able to transfer what I learn from one course to other courses in this programme" (MSTVQ1) has the lowest mean score out of the five items that are included in this section, with a mean score of M=3.6.

#### Findings for Expectancy Components

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do expectancy components influence learners' desire to learn? In the context of this study, expectancy components are measured by (i) students' perception of self-efficacy, and (ii) control beliefs for learning.

#### **Expectancy Component**

#### STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SELF-EFFICACY (5 items) (i). ECSEQ5 Considering the difficulty of the courses, the teachers, and my skills, I think I will do well in the 3.7 classes. ECSEQ4I'm certain I can master the skills being taught 3.6 in the classes. ECSEQ3I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the 3.7 assignments and tests in this program. ECSEQ2I'm confident I can understand the most complex materials presented by the instructors in the 3.5 courses. ECSEQ1I believe I will receive excellent grades in the 3.7 classes. 3.4 3.45 3.5 3.55 3.6 3.65 3.7 3.75

Figure 10- Mean for Students Perception of Self-Efficacy

Figure 10 shows the mean value for 5 items to measure students' perception of self-efficacy. The highest mean value from the data is 3.7, which is the mean value for two of the statements: "I believe I will receive excellent grades in the classes" and "Considering the difficulty of the courses, the teachers, and my skills, I think I will do well in the classes". The lowest mean value from the data is 3.5, which is the mean value for the statement "I'm confident I can understand the most complex materials presented by the instructors in the courses".

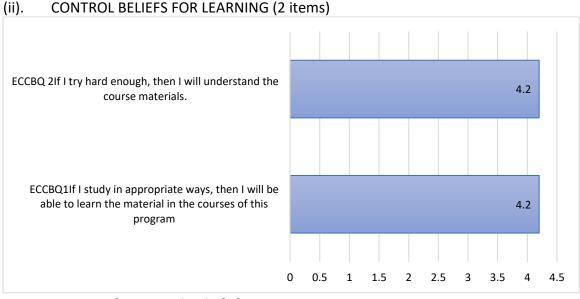


Figure 11- Mean for Control Beliefs for Learning

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Figure 11 displays mean values for control beliefs for learning. Both ECCBQ1 (I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in the courses of this program) and ECCBQ2 (I try hard enough, then I will understand the course materials) have the same mean score, M=4.1.

#### Findings for Affective Components

This section presents data to answer research question 3 - How do affective components influence learners' desire to learn?

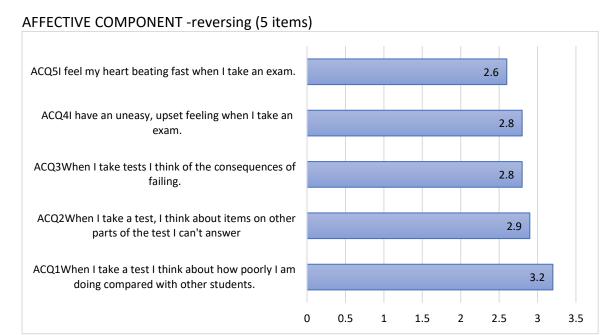


Figure 12- Mean for Affective Component

Figure 12 depicts the mean values for effective components. ACQ1 (I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students) has the highest mean value M=3.1, followed by ACQ2 (When I take a test, I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer) with mean value M=2.9. ACQ3 (When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing) and ACQ4 (I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam) have the same mean value M=2.8. ACQ5 (I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam) has the lowest mean value M=2.6.

#### Findings for Sources of Learners' Burnout

This section presents data to answer research question 4 - How do sources of burnout influence learners' desire to learn? In the context of this study, burnout components are measured by (i) exhaustion, and (ii) disengagement.

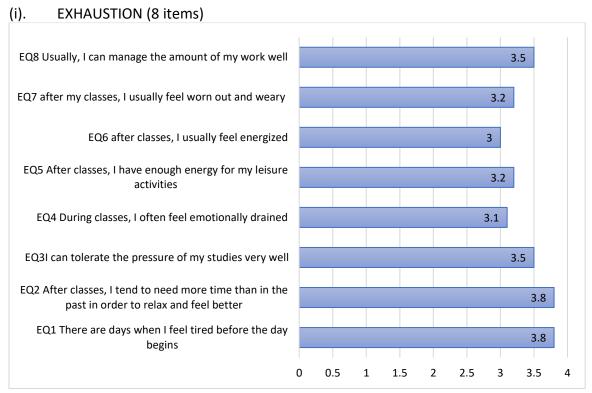


Figure 13- Mean for Burnout-Exhaustion

Figure 13 provides a list of the eight factors on learners' mean for burnout-exhaustion, all of which have an impact on learners' desire to study. The statement that "there are days when I feel tired before the day begins" (EQ1) and the statement that "after classes, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better" (EQ2) have the highest mean scores among the items, with a mean M=3.8 and a mean M=3.8 respectively. There are two more statements, both of which have the same mean score of M=3.5. These statements are as follows: "I can tolerate the pressure of my studies extremely well" (EQ3) and "I can typically manage the amount of my work well" (EQ8). All these statements, "after courses, I have enough energy for my leisure activities" (EQ5) and "after classes, I usually feel worn out and weary" (EQ7), got the same mean value of M=3.2 on this category. A mean score of M=3.1 indicates that I frequently feel emotionally drained when in class (EQ4). The assertion that "after lessons, I generally feel energised" has a mean of M=3.0, which is the lowest possible value (EQ6).

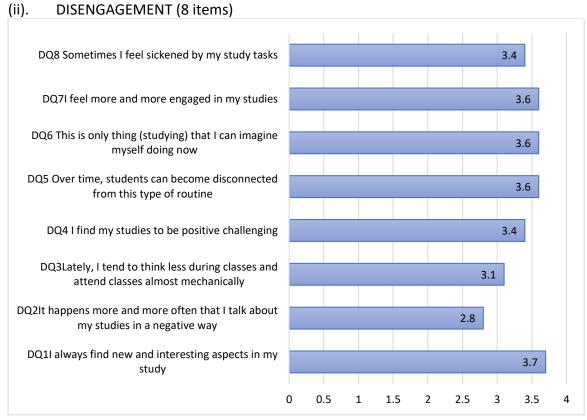


Figure 14- Mean for Burnout-Disengagement

Figure 14 gives a list of the eight characteristics that influence learners' mean for burnout-disengagement. Each of these elements has an effect on the learners' motivation to continue their education. Among the other items stated, the statement that "I always find new and intriguing parts in my studies" (DQ1) has the highest mean score, with a mean of M=3.7. This is because it has the biggest number of respondents. There are three statements that all have the same score of mean (M=3.6), and they are as follows: "Over time, students can become disconnected from this type of routine" (DQ5), "This is the only thing (studying) that I can imagine myself doing now" (DQ6), and "I feel more and more engaged in my studies." (DQ7). There are two more assertions, and the mean score for both is M=3.4. Two statements are as follows: "I find that my studies are positively difficult" (DQ4) and "Sometimes I feel disgusted by the tasks that I have to complete for my studies" (DQ8). A mean score of M=3.1, which shows that, as of late, I have a tendency to think less during lessons and attend classes practically mechanically (DQ3). The statement "It happens more and more often that I talk about my studies in a negative way" (DQ2) has a mean of 2.8, which is the lowest possible value.

#### Findings for Relationship between source of burnout and motivation

This section presents data to answer research question 5 - Is there a relationship across variables for sources of burnout and motivating factors?

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between metacognitive, effort regulation, cognitive, social, and affective strategies data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in table 3, 4, 5 and 6 below.

Table 3
Correlation between Motivational Components and Total Burnout

#### **Correlations**

		TOTALMOTIV ATIONAL	TOTALBOTH SOURCESBUR NOUT
TOTALMOTIVATIONAL	Pearson Correlation	1	.581**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	221	221
TOTALBOTHSOURCESBU	Pearson Correlation	.581**	1
RNOUT	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	221	221

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows there is an association between motivational components and burnout. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between motivational components and burnout (r=.581\*\*) 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 motivational components and burnout.

Table 4
Correlation between Expectancy Components and Total Burnout

#### **Correlations**

		TOTALEXPEC TANCY	TOTALBURN OUTEXHAUS TION
TOTALEXPECTANCY	Pearson Correlation	1	.532**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	221	221
TOTALBURNOUTEXHAU	Pearson Correlation	.532**	1
STION	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	221	221

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows there is an association between expectancy components and burnout. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between expectancy components and burnout (r=.532\*\*) 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 expectancy components and burnout.

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Table 5
Correlation between Affective Components and Total Burnout

#### **Correlations**

		TOTALAFFEC TIVE	TOTALBOTH SOURCESBUR NOUT
TOTALAFFECTIVE	Pearson Correlation	1	.314**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	221	221
TOTALBOTHSOURCESBU	Pearson Correlation	.314**	1
RNOUT	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	221	221

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 shows there is an association between affective components and burnout. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between affective components and burnout (r=.314\*\*) 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 affective components and burnout.

#### Conclusion

#### Summary of Findings and Discussions

This study proves that intrinsic motivation very often influences the learners during their postcovid learning. The learners claim that they very often feel very satisfied to try to understand the content of the courses and prefer challenging course work to help them learn new things, and course material that stimulates their interest. Besides, they opt for course assignments that they can learn from. In this study, extrinsic goal orientation has very often to always influence participants in this study. They claimed that getting good grades, improving overall grade point average, and doing well in class to show their ability to their family, friends and others are the stimuli that always trigger them to have extrinsic motivation. Task value belief has very often influence on the learners. They stated that they are very often to have the ability to transfer what they have learned from one course to another, and they always claimed that it is important for them to learn course material as they always think that course material of the courses is useful for them and they always like the subject matter of the course and it is always important for them to understand the subject matter. Hence, the motivation component does influence learners' desire to learn. Fiddiyasari and Pustika (2021) mentioned in their study that motivation is good for the learners and the teachers in the teaching and learning process as it affects the learners' attitudes and achievement. In general, some component very often influences the learners to learn while a few components always influence them to acquire the language

This study found out that self-efficacy very often has influence on the learners after the pandemic because most of the participants in this study claimed that they very often believe in themselves to receive excellent grades, understand the most complex materials, and do an

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excellent job in completing the assignments and tests. They are very often certain that they can master the taught skills and do well in class. Control beliefs for learning has very often influence on the participants as they asserted that they very often are able to learn the material in the courses if they study in appropriate ways and they very often understand the course material if they work hard enough. Affective components sometimes influence the learners' desire to learn as the participants sometimes think about the items that they cannot answer when they are taking a test. They also sometimes think about the consequences of failing and feel uneasy and upset when they take an exam. The participants of the study sometimes feel their hearts beat fast when they take an exam. Zhang et al (2021) asserted that learners with positive academic emotions are more inclined to give effort into learning which contributes to reaching higher levels of engagement (King et al., 2015). Thus, expectancy components very often influence the learners' desire to learn while affective components sometimes have influence on the learners' desire.

In this study, we found out that the sources of burnout among learners when they learn are exhaustion and disengagement. They very often feel exhausted when they learn as there are days when they feel tired before the day begins and they very often need more time after classes than in the past to relax and feel better and manage the amount of work very well. Sometimes, they feel emotionally drained and have enough energy for their leisure activities. They sometimes feel energised, worn out and weary after classes. Another source for burnout is disengagement. The participants stated that they very often find new and interesting aspects in their study, and they can become disconnected from the routine over time. Very often they imagine studying is the only thing that they can do now and feel more and more engaged in their studies. The finding also found that the participants sometimes talk negatively about their study more often and they tend to think less during class and attend class almost mechanically. They also sometimes find their studies to be positively challenging and feel sickened by their study tasks. This is in line with study by Rogala et al (2016), emotional exhaustion affected self-efficacy and self-efficacy may intervene the relationship between exhaustion and other burnout components. So, the sources of burnout like exhaustion and disengagement very often influence learners' desire to learn.

This study found that there is also a strong positive relationship between motivational components and burnout. The correlation between expectancy components and burnout also shows a strong positive correlation. While there is a moderate positive relationship between affective components and burnout.

#### Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study have led to some fascinating implications for teachers and learners, which will help make the process of teaching and learning more efficient. Motivation is closely related to academic accomplishment, and motivated learners outperform those who are less motivated. Burnout, on the other hand, can impede learning outcomes and have a detrimental influence on academic achievement. Understanding learners' motivation and the factors that lead to burnout is important for educators since it allows them to make the learning process easier for learners.

Possible topics for research in the future include longitudinal studies that chart the progression of burnout and demotivation over time. This might give some insights into the factors that lead to burnout as well as how those factors evolve over time.

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