

Affiliation, Achievement and Power in Learning Motivation: How Do They Relate?

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Abstract

Motivation is a crucial factor in online learning as it can significantly impact the student's engagement and success. Some students may be more motivated by a need for affiliation and social connection, while others may be more motivated by a need for achievement and recognition, or a need for power and autonomy. Thus, this quantitative study aims to explore the perception of learners on their learning motivation by examining how affiliation, achievement, and power influence learners' motivation. A total of 208 respondents from public and private universities in Malaysia were gathered using a questionnaire that was adapted from a previous study by (Fowler, 2018). There are seven sections with related questions to measure the three types of factors that affected learning motivation. In general, the results revealed there is a significant association between affiliation, achievement, and power in learning motivation. By understanding the findings of this study, instructors might be able to design interventions and strategies to enhance learner motivation. Then, by recognizing the importance of affiliation, achievement, and power in learning motivation, policymakers may consider designing education frameworks that prioritize the supportive learning environment and promote student engagement and motivation.

Keywords: Learning Motivation, Affiliation, Achievement, Power, Online Learning

Introduction

Background of Study

According to Paris and Turner (1994), motivation is described as the 'engine' of learning. Motivation in teaching and learning activities is the overall driving force within students that raises, ensures continuity, and provides direction for learning activities so that learners' learning objectives are expected to be achieved. Motivation is also a crucial factor in online

learning as it can significantly impact a student's engagement and success in their study (Hartnett, 2016). Online learning can be a lonely experience as students do not have as much social interaction and support with peers and instructors. This lack of support can lead to a decrease in motivation. Distractions such as social media, family obligations, and work can also take away their focus. Some students may find the course material uninteresting or irrelevant to their career goals, which can lead to decreased motivation.

Affiliation, achievement, and power are three basic human needs that have been identified as important drivers of motivation (McClelland, 1987) in various contexts, including online learning. In the context of online learning, affiliation refers to the need for social interaction and a sense of belonging, achievement refers to the need for mastery and competence, and power refers to the need for autonomy and control. A student who feels a sense of affiliation with their peers and instructor may be more likely to be more motivated to achieve academically and may also feel more empowered to take control of their learning. Similarly, a student who feels a sense of achievement and mastery in their coursework may be more likely to seek out social connections with their peers and instructors. Moreover, the importance of these needs may vary depending on the individual student and their personal goals and values. Some students may be more motivated by a need for affiliation and recognition, or a need for power and autonomy.

Malaysia is known for its multicultural society, with diverse ethnic groups and languages. This diversity can impact learning motivation differently across learners. The study's findings on affiliation, achievement, and power can help instructors in Malaysia reorganize and address the varying motivational needs of learners from different cultural backgrounds. Besides that, the study can be relevant to educational policies and practices in Malaysia. Malaysia has been striving to improve its education system, focusing on student-centered learning, enhancing engagement, and promoting holistic learning. Understanding this study can inform the development of policies and strategies that support these goals.

Overall, motivation is a complex issue (Hartnett et al., 2011) that requires a multifaceted approach. Therefore, for the time being, it is important for researchers to reflect on and enhance the current practices of online learning through suitable designs and methodologies. By addressing some of the common problems that learners may face, instructors and learners can work together to create more motivating and successful learning experiences. Therefore, studies on the topic of motivation in online learning should be conducted to provide students with a better learning motivation and to increase learner motivation in online learning based on three motivation factors which are affiliation, achievement, and power.

Statement of Problem

Creating an ideal learning situation involves establishing a positive and supportive environment where students experience a strong sense of affiliation and belonging. Research suggests that when students perceive a supportive and inclusive environment, it positively impacts their motivation and engagement with learning tasks (Wentzel et al., 2018). In addition to that, students are driven by intrinsic motivation and pursue mastery goals, as studies have demonstrated that these factors contribute to higher levels of achievement and a sense of personal power in learning activities (Van Yperen and Orehek, 2013).

However, challenges arise that hinder the achievement of this ideal situation. For instance, Lazarides and Watt (2018) indicated that high levels of performance pressure and fear of failure can negatively impact learning motivation and achievement. When students

experience excessive pressure to achieve specific outcomes, it may undermine their sense of affiliation, create anxiety, and impede their ability to tap into their intrinsic motivation and personal power for learning. Research by Reeve and Jang (2018) highlighted the importance of autonomy and control in learning motivation. When students perceive a lack of choice, input, or control over their learning experiences, their sense of power diminishes, intrinsic motivation decreases, and their affiliation with the learning process is negatively impacted. To address these challenges, it is crucial to provide autonomy-supportive environments that grant students a voice, allow them to make decisions, and take responsibility for their learning. Therefore, this study could contribute to filling the research gap by investigating this relationship in more detail. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence learners' motivation to learn online and provide insights for instructors and instructional designers to design effective online learning environments that enhance learners' motivation.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore perception of learners on their learning motivation. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How does affiliation influence learners' motivation?
- How does achievement influence learners' motivation?
- How does power influence learners' motivation?
- Is there a relationship between affiliation, achievement and power in learning motivation?

Literature Review

Motivation for Learning Online

Online learning is a form of remote education that is made feasible by technological tools utilized by learners in their environments away from the primary educational source (Hartnett, 2016). A study by Chen & Jang (2008) tested a model of self-determination theory in the context of online learning and found that a student's level of motivation in online learning can be enhanced if teachers provide a relaxed classroom environment, thorough and encouraging feedback, and support. A study done by Yantrapkorn et al (2018) likewise came to the same conclusion. Self-determination theory suggests that individuals are motivated when they feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In online learning, providing learners with choices, and opportunities for self-paced learning, and fostering a sense of connection with instructors and peers can enhance motivation. It's important to note that motivation for learning online can vary among individuals and can be influenced by various factors. Thus, understanding learners' unique needs and preferences is vital for fostering motivation and creating engaging online learning experiences.

Past Studies on Online Learning Motivation

Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the factors contributing to students' motivation in online learning. Tati and Joitun (2021) conducted a study that revealed higher motivation among students in online learning. The research found that students' primary motivation for engaging in online learning is driven by extrinsic goal orientation, which empowers them to take control of their learning needs and achieve better outcomes. Additionally, online learning allows students to fully utilize learning tools, leading some

students to prefer it over traditional learning. According to the researchers, the students' own extrinsic goals and their ability to independently excel were influenced by well-designed instruction and guidance from teachers. On the other hand, Soh et al (2021) conducted a study examining how learners' motivation in online learning is influenced by their motives for studying a Social Marketing subject. The findings indicated that students derived the most satisfaction from attempting to comprehend the course content and aiming for good grades. Moreover, extrinsic goal orientation had the highest average score, indicating that students' engagement in activities, classes, and tasks related to the subject significantly affected their motivation. Enjoyment of the course content and self-discipline were also identified as contributing factors. The study concluded that a pedagogical approach is crucial for motivating learners, especially in subjects that heavily rely on group work.

Sevilen and Mese (2021) conducted a study to investigate how students perceived online teaching and how it influenced their motivation in a seven-week English as a Foreign Language course. The study primarily focused on two key aspects: affiliation and students' achievements in the context of online learning. The research took place within the context of a fully online course, with 18 students enrolled and attendance being optional. For this study, a total of 12 students participated, with an equal distribution of 50% having completed the pre-intermediate level and 50% having completed the intermediate level prior to the start of the seven-week online module. Importantly, none of the participants had prior experience with online language courses. To delve into the students' perspectives, semi-structured interviews (SSI) were conducted, and students were given creative writing assignments (CWA) on the topic of the advantages and disadvantages of online education.

Analysis of the SSI and CWA revealed two major themes: internal and external factors affecting motivation. Internal factors included satisfaction with course content, the need for communication, and self-regulation, while external factors encompassed teachers, classmates, organizational problems, and situational problems. The study found that participants cited various reasons for feeling less motivated during the online learning process, such as dissatisfaction with course content and materials, lack of self-discipline, insufficient communication between teachers and students, and a lack of private space for studying. The study also identified pedagogical implications, emphasizing the importance of teacher-student interaction and cohesion within student groups. Furthermore, engaging course content and materials, instructional design promoting independent learning, and encouraging and satisfying teacher feedback were highlighted as significant factors.

Siok et al (2023) conducted a quantitative study examining the influence of affiliation and achievements on motivation to learn online. The study investigated learners' online motivation from the perspective of McClelland's theory, which emphasizes the importance of affiliation, power, and achievement as basic needs derived from life experiences. The survey included 156 participants from a public university in Malaysia, chosen purposively. The study examined the Need for Achievement, which indicated that students were influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to perform better in online language learning. In comparison to face-to-face learners, online learners exhibited higher levels of intrinsic motivation.

The study's results regarding the Need for Affiliation demonstrated that students felt engaged and able to interact freely with their classmates and instructors in the online language classroom. Teachers were identified as playing a significant role, as their personalities influenced student motivation. The study's impact lies in providing academics and instructors with a clearer plan to increase students' motivation for learning languages online. The use of

advanced online teaching methods tailored to the 21st-century education landscape, including meeting technical requirements, can maximize student motivation. The study recommends further exploration of motivation to learn languages online from various perspectives and theories, along with comparisons of motivation theories in the context of online learning.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study- Relationship between Affiliation, Achievement and Power for Learning Motivation

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study explores learning motivation using McClelland's (McClelland, 1965) theory. The theory states that the root cause of motivation is affiliation. The affiliation gives people a sense of engagement. Next, what motivates people is also a feeling of achievement. This is derived from the person's motivational beliefs. With motivation, people would feel they have the power. In the context of this study, this motivation is transferred to that of learning motivation. According to Rahmat et al. (2021), when learners gain knowledge, they gain confidence, this confidence gives them power. The components in McClelland (1965) are scaffolded onto Fowler's (2018) motivational scales to reveal the framework in Figure 1. Learners' sense of affiliation is gained from social support such as (i) social engagement and (ii) instructor support. Next, learners'



drive for achievement is rooted in their sense of value such as (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation, and (iii) task value. Motivated learners have a sense of power over themselves as they have increased (i) self-efficacy and (ii) control of learning beliefs.

Methodology

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 208 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted in McClelland (1965) and Fowler (2018) to reveal the variables in Table 1 below. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on the demographic profile. Section B has 12 items on power. Section C has 14 items on achievement and section D has 12 items on social support. This study has been approved by UiTM Research Ethics Committee (REC/05/2023 (ST/MR/132)).

Table 1

Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	McClelland Theory (1965)	MOTIVATION (Fowler, 2018)	SUB-SCALES	NO OF ITEMS
B	POWER	EXPECTANCY	Self-Efficacy	8
			Control of Learning Beliefs	4
C	ACHIEVEMENT	VALUE	Intrinsic Goal Orientation	4
			Extrinsic Goal Orientation	4
			Task Value	6
D	AFFILIATION	SOCIAL SUPPORT	Social Engagement	5
			Instructor Support	7
				38

Table 2
Reliability of Survey
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.923	38

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .923; 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

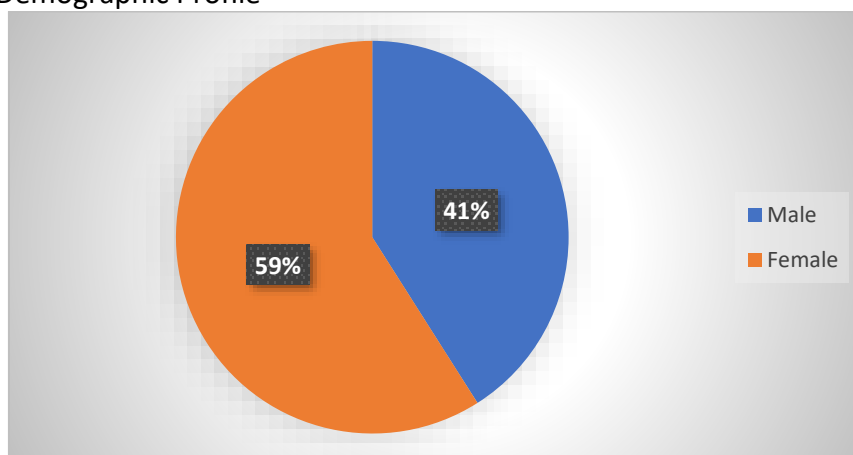


Figure 2- Percentage for Gender

Figure 2 shows the percentage of gender. Data from the survey shows that 41% are male and 59% of the respondents are female.

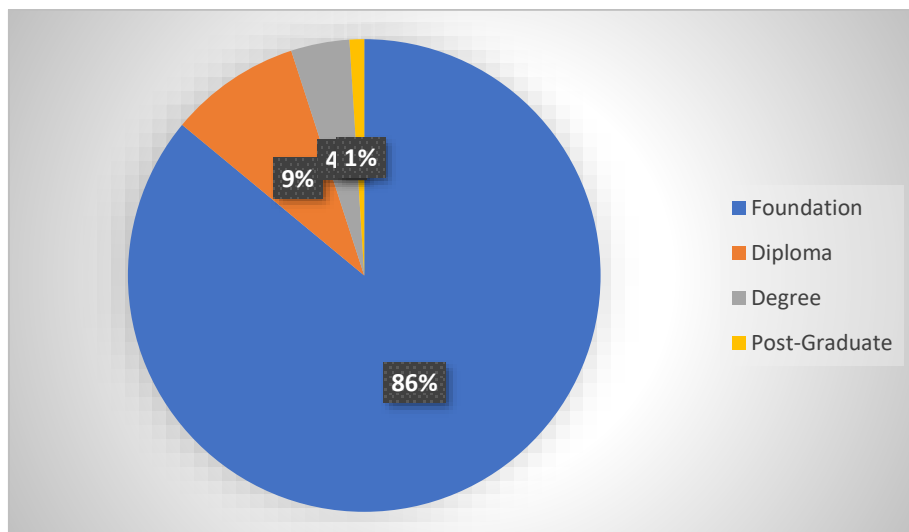


Figure 3- Percentage for Level of Study

The distribution of the respondent’s academic level is shown in Figure 3. Most of the respondents (86%) are from the Foundation Programme. This is followed by Diploma (9%), Degree (4%), and finally, only 1% of the total respondents were Postgraduate students.

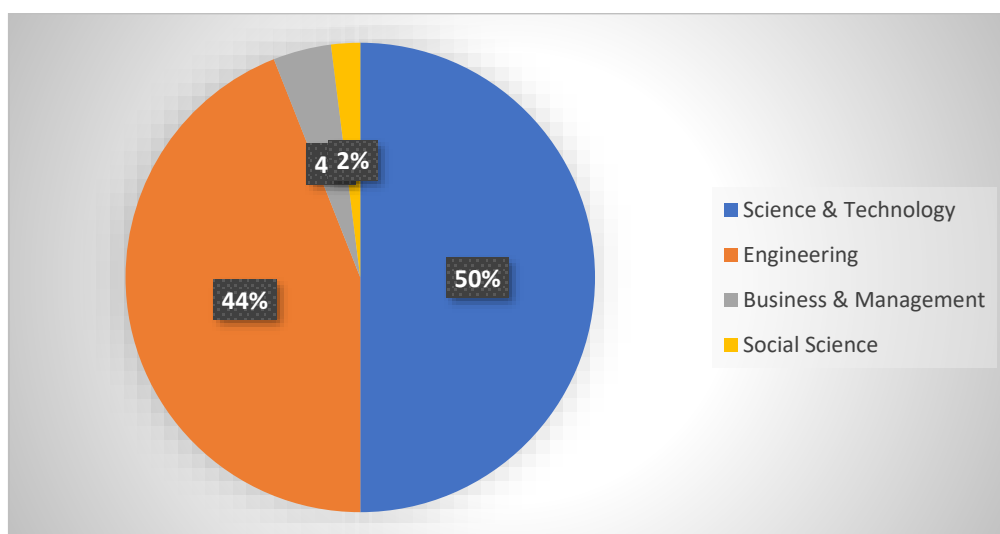


Figure 4- Percentage for Discipline

The discipline distribution of the respondents who participated in the study is provided in Figure 4 above. The highest percentage of respondents (50%) were from science and technology disciplines. This is followed by 44% of respondents from engineering disciplines, 4% from business and management, and the least number of respondents were from social science disciplines which was 2% out of the total responses received. Overall, the respondents from the science and technology discipline, indicated that those involved in the study were chosen for a science stream during their secondary school and might be further involving themselves in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field. This might help to enhance the growth of STEM in Malaysia for Industry Revolution 4.0 goals.

Findings for Affiliation

This section presents data to answer research question 1- How does affiliation influence learners' motivation? In the context of this study, affiliation is measured by social support. According to Fowler (2018), social support consists of (i) social engagement, and (ii) instructor support.

Social Support (S)

(i) Social Engagement (SSE)

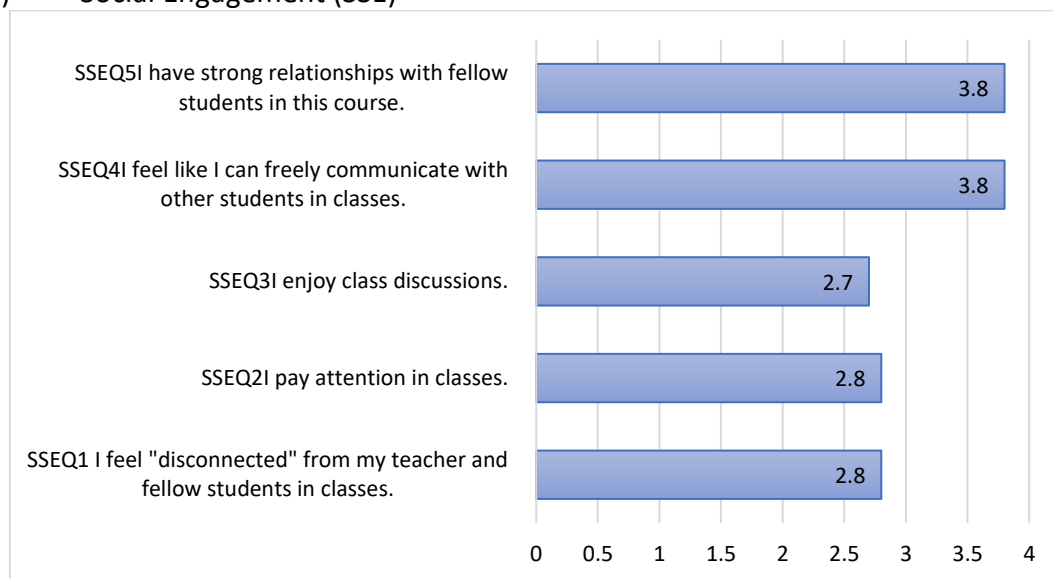


Figure 5- Mean for Social Engagement

In Figure 5, the average scores for social engagement are presented based on four statements. The fourth and fifth statements both received the highest mean score of 3.8. The fourth statement indicates that respondents feel they can freely communicate with other students in classes, while the fifth statement reflects their strong relationship with fellow students in the course. Moving on, the first and second statements obtained a mean score of 2.8. The first statement expresses respondents' disconnection from their teacher and fellow students in classes, whereas the second statement represents their ability to pay attention in class. Conversely, the third statement received the lowest mean score of 2.7, indicating that the respondents derived minimal enjoyment from class discussions. From these findings, it can be concluded that although the respondents have a positive relationship with their classmates regarding classroom interactions, they do not find it enjoyable.

(ii) Instructor Support (SIS)

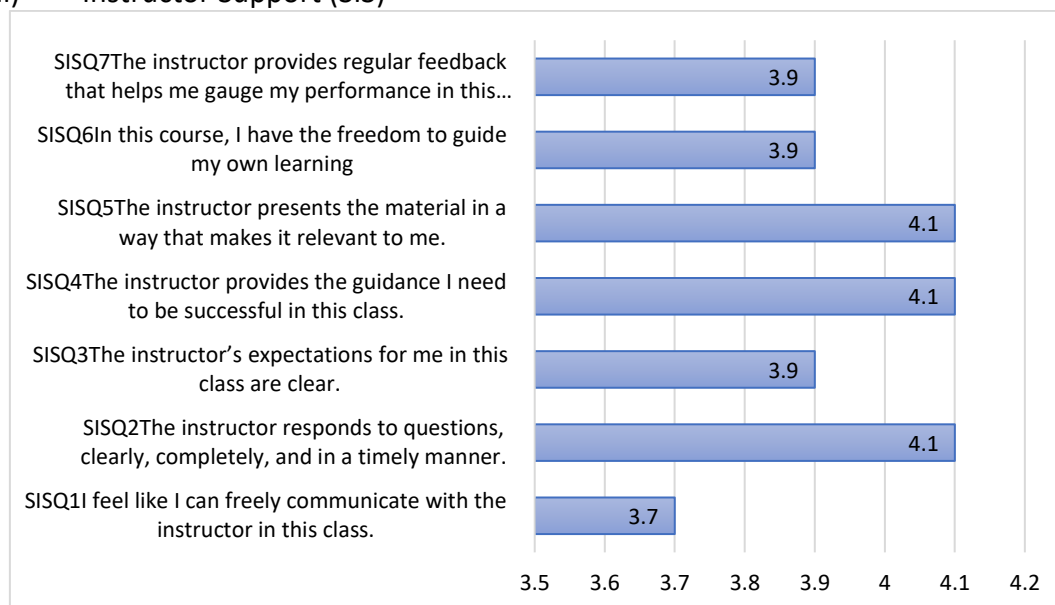


Figure 6- Mean for Instructor Support

Figure 6 presents the mean scores for instructor support, as measured by four statements. The second, fourth, and fifth statements obtained an equal mean score of 4.1. The second statement reflects the respondents' perception of being able to freely communicate with the instructor in the class, while the fourth and fifth statements indicate that the instructor provides the necessary guidance for the respondents to succeed in the class and presents the course material in a relevant manner, respectively. Similarly, the third, sixth, and seventh statements all achieved a mean score of 3.9. The third statement refers to the clarity of the instructor's expectations for the respondents in the class, while the sixth statement highlights the respondents' freedom to guide their learning in the course. The seventh statement indicates that the instructor provides regular feedback, which helps the respondents assess their performance in the class. On the other hand, the first statement received the lowest mean score of 3.7, suggesting that the respondents feel less able to freely communicate with the instructor in the class. Here, we can conclude that the instructors are being very helpful in assisting students to achieve the objective of the course.

Findings for Achievement

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How does achievement influence learners' motivation? In the context of this study, achievement is measured by value. According to Fowler (2018) value is divided into (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation, and (iii) task value.

VALUE (V)

(i) Intrinsic Goal Orientation (VI)

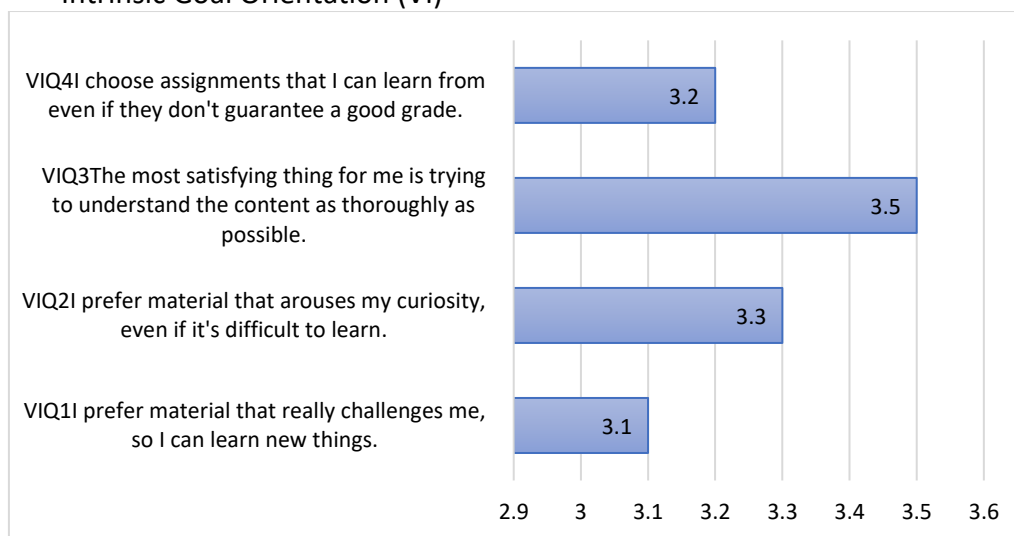


Figure 7- Mean for Intrinsic Goal Orientation

In Figure 7, the mean findings for the components of intrinsic motivation, as measured by four statements, are presented. The statement with the highest mean, scoring 3.5, was the third statement, which stated that the most satisfying thing for the respondents is trying to understand the content of the course as thoroughly as possible. The second highest statement, scoring 3.3, indicated that the respondents prefer material that arouses their curiosity, even if it's difficult to learn. Following closely was the fourth statement, which scored a mean of 3.2, where the respondents choose assignments that they can learn from, even if they don't guarantee a good grade. On the other hand, the statement in which the respondents prefer material that challenges them, so they can learn new things scored the lowest mean with 3.1. These results show the eagerness of the students to understand the content itself though some of them are difficult to learn.

(ii) Extrinsic Goal Orientation (VE)

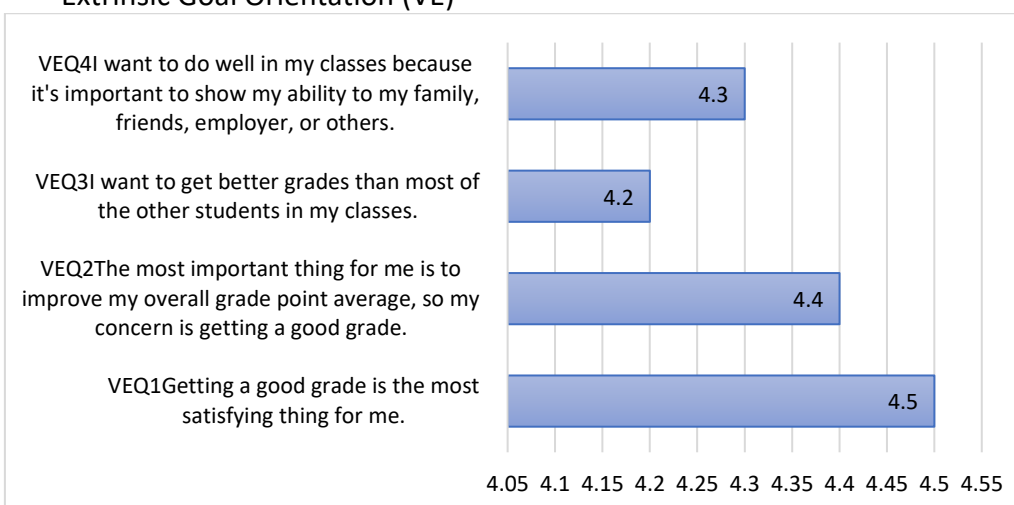


Figure 8- Mean for Extrinsic Goal Orientation

Figure 8 presents the mean findings for the components of Extrinsic Goal Orientation, as measured by four statements. The scores for all four statements were notably high. The statement with the highest mean, scoring 4.5, was the first statement, which stated that getting a good grade is the most satisfying thing for the respondents. The second highest statement, scoring 4.4, indicated that the most important thing for the respondents is to improve their overall grade point average, so their concern is getting a good grade. Meanwhile, the fourth statement, which scored a mean of 4.3 stated that the respondents want to do well in their classes because it's important to show their ability to their family, friends, employer, or others. The statement in which the respondents want to get better grades than most of the other students in their classes scored the lowest mean with 4.2. From these results, it is proven the importance of achievement to the students, and it can be portrayed by obtaining good grades.

(iii) Task Value (VT)

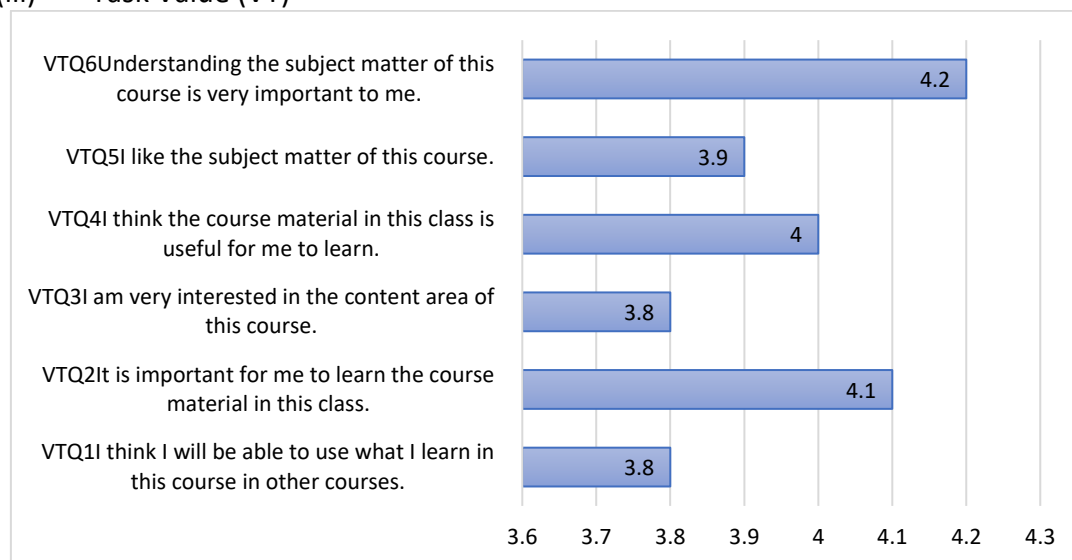


Figure 9- Mean for Task value

Figure 9 above presents the mean of six task value items. The item “VTQ6 Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me” had the highest mean at 4.2, followed by “VTQ2 It is important for me to learn the course material in this class” with the second-highest mean at 4.1. Following that, for the item “VTQ4 I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn” and “VTQ5 I like the subject matter of this course”, the mean are 4 and 3.9, respectively. Two items share the lowest mean of 3.8 and they are “VTQ1 I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses” and “VTQ3 I am very interested in the content area of this course”. Overall, the data shows that understanding the subject matter of the particular course is very important to enhance learners’ motivation in their learning.

Findings for Power

This section presents data to answer research question 3- How does power influence learners’ motivation? In the context of this study, power is measured by expectancy components. According to Fowler (2018), expectancy is categorised into (i) self-efficacy, and (ii) control of learning beliefs.

EXPECTANCY(E)

(i) SELF- EFFICACY (ESE)

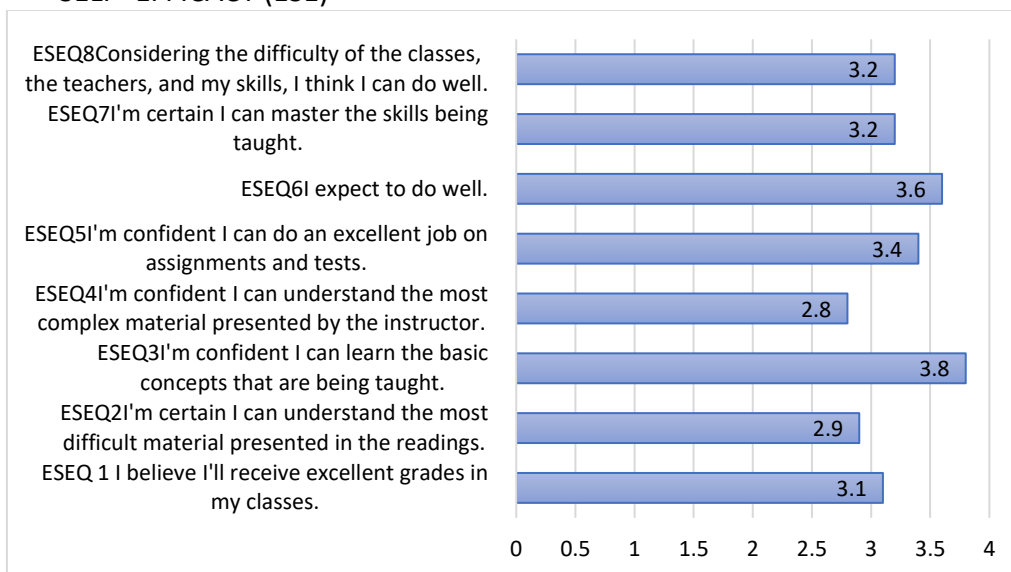


Figure 10- Mean for Self-Efficacy

Figure 10 above presents the mean of eight self-efficacy items. The item “ESEQ3 I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts that are being taught” had the highest mean at 3.8, followed by “ESEQ6 I expect to do well” with the second-highest mean at 3.6. Following that, for the item “ESEQ5 I'm confident I can do an excellent job on assignments and tests”, “ESEQ7 I'm certain I can master the skills being taught”, “ESEQ8 Considering the difficulty of the classes, the teachers, and my skills, I think I can do well”, “ESEQ 1 I believe I'll receive excellent grades in my classes”, and “ESEQ2 I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings”, the mean are 3.4, 3.2, 3.2, 3.1, and 2.9, respectively. The lowest mean was 2.8 for the item “ESEQ4 I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor”. Overall, the data shows that the learners are confident to learn basic concepts but low confidence in understanding the most complex material presented by the instructor.

ii) CONTROL OF LEARNING BELIEFS (ECB)

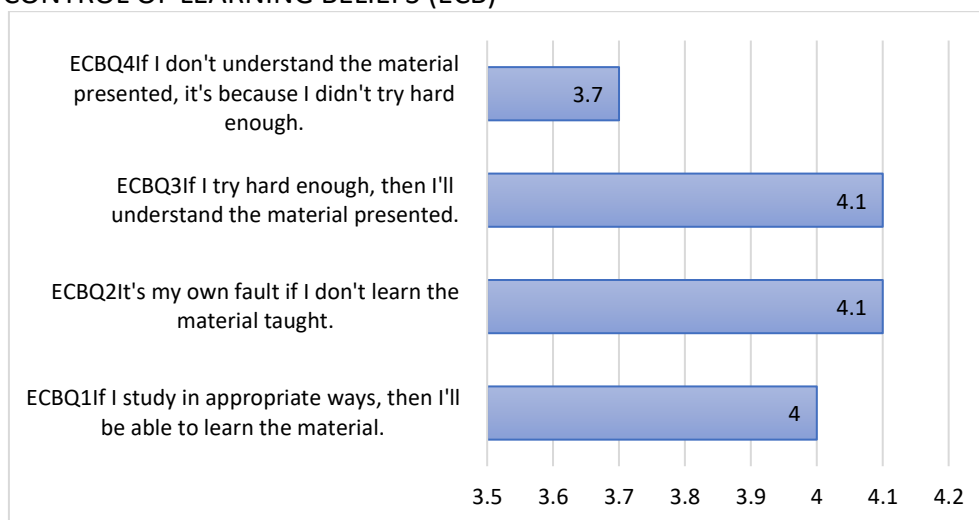


Figure 11- Mean for Control of Learning Beliefs

Figure 11 above presents the means for control of learning beliefs. There are two items with the highest mean of 4.1 which are “ECBQ2 It's my own fault if I don't learn the material taught” and “ECBQ3 If I try hard enough, then I'll understand the material presented”. This is followed by the second-highest mean of 4 which is “ECBQ1 If I study in appropriate ways, then I'll be able to learn the material”. The lowest mean of 3.7 presented is for the item “ECBQ4 If I don't understand the material presented, it's because I didn't try hard enough”. The learner will understand the lesson if they study hard and study smart. So, it can help to enhance their motivation to learn online and succeed with good marks and grades.

Findings for Relationship between

This section presents data to answer research question 4- Is there a relationship between affiliation, achievement, and power in learning motivation? To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between power, affiliation, and achievement, data is analyzed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in Tables 3, 4, and 5 below.

Table 3
Correlation between Power and Achievement

		POWER	ACHIEVEMENT
POWER	Pearson Correlation	1	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	208	208
ACHIEVEMENT	Pearson Correlation	.555**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	208

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

Table 3 shows there is an association between power and achievement. Correlation analysis shows that there is a highly significant association between power and achievement ($r=.555^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), the coefficient is significant at the .05 level, and a positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. A weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, a moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and a strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between power and achievement.

Table 4

Correlation between Power and Affiliation

		POWER	AFFILIATION
POWER	Pearson Correlation	1	.400**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	208	208
AFFILIATION	Pearson Correlation	.400**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	208

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

Table 4 shows there is an association between power and affiliation. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderately significant association between power and affiliation ($r=.400^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), the coefficient is significant at the .05 level, and a positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. A weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, a moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and a strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between power and affiliation.

Table 5

Correlation between Achievement and Affiliation

		ACHIEVEMENT	AFFILIATION
ACHIEVEMENT	Pearson Correlation	1	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	208	208
AFFILIATION	Pearson Correlation	.643**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	208	208

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

Table 5 shows there is an association between achievement and affiliation. Correlation analysis shows that there is a highly significant association between achievement and affiliation ($r=.643^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), the coefficient is significant at the .05 level and a positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. A weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, a moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and a strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between achievement and affiliation.

Conclusion*Summary of Findings and Discussions*

This study aims to explore the perception of learners on their learning motivation by examining how affiliation, achievement, and power influence learners' motivation. The relationship between affiliation, achievement and power in learning motivation has been investigated. The major findings revealed that learners' motivation is influenced by all the three factors which are affiliation, achievement and power. For affiliation factor which is measured by social engagement and instructor support, the findings yielded to have strong positive relationships with peers (student-student interactions) as well as instructors giving clear guidance (student-instructor interactions) could influence learners' motivation. This is also reported by Hollister et al (2022) who reported that learners stay connected to peers and successful online learning requires strong instructor support. Moreover, their motivation is also influenced by their achievement which is measured by intrinsic goal motivation, extrinsic goal orientation, and task value. Respondents in this study also reported that they were satisfied when they understood the subject matter and got good grades. The study by Gopal et al (2021) supported that students with high-grade expectations will exhibit greater satisfaction than those with lesser expectations. Finally, findings also reported that learners' motivation is influenced by power which is measured by self-efficacy and control of learning beliefs. Respondents reported that they are confident in learning the basic concept and understanding the lesson if they study hard and study smart, which is supported by Gamage et al (2021), who found that the learners showed the characteristics of a deep approach to learning as they had longer studies. Overall, the findings have shown that there exists a significant relationship between affiliation, achievement, and power in learning motivation.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study have shown that affiliation, achievement, and power is related in learning motivation. Acknowledging the significant relationship between affiliation, achievement, and power in learning motivation can guide instructors in creating a supportive, engaging, and empowering learning environment. Instructors can enhance student motivation, foster a love for learning, and promote academic achievement and success. Learners have unique motivations, strengths, and interests that are beneficial to personalize learning experiences. By understanding individual learners' motivational profiles, instructors can tailor instruction, assignments, and assessments to align with their specific needs and interests. This individualized approach can enhance learners' motivation and promote a deeper engagement with the context of the subject matter. Future researchers could investigate the role of technology especially Artificial Intelligence concerning affiliation, achievement, and power in learning motivation to provide more valuable insights. Research could explore how digital platforms and gamification impact learners' motivation and engagement.

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