

Investigating Parental Involvement and Pre-Diploma Students' Motivation in Learning English

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Abstract

Not everybody has the chance to further their studies after school despite having the desire to do so for the sake of self-betterment and enhancement of the socio-economic condition of the family. This may be due to several factors including the students' poor academic achievement and financial problems. In June 2010, the Pra Pendidikan Tinggi (PPT) Programme, formerly known as the Mengubah Destini Anak Bangsa (MDAB) Programme, a pre-diploma level of study was introduced by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) to serve as a platform for unfortunate Bumiputera (Malays and indigenous) students to continue their tertiary education. Since then, over 50,000 students have enrolled in this preparatory course. This study aims to look at one possible contributing factor to students' academic achievement and learning motivation which is parental involvement. In addition, this study also aimed to investigate these pre-diploma students' motivation to learn English as their second language. A modified questionnaire on parental involvement and students' motivation in learning English were distributed to the students. The main findings showed that there are sufficient levels of parental involvement and high student motivation to learn the language. It is hoped that this research has rendered specific information on the perceptions of the PPT students of their parents' involvement in their motivation in learning English.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Motivation, Pre-Diploma, Odl, Pra Pendidikan Tinggi (PPT)

Introduction

Education attainment is a critical measure of development of any country including Malaysia. A specially funded programme, referred to as the Pra Pendidikan Tinggi (PPT) programme, formerly known as Mengubah Destini Anak Bangsa (MDAB), was launched in 2010 by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) to allow underprivileged Malay and Bumiputera (indigenous) students who do not meet the minimum direct entry requirements to continue their tertiary education in UiTM. The vision of the PPT programme is to create a special route for Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Malay and Bumiputera school leavers who failed to meet the requirements to enter local universities an opportunity to do so in UiTM, specifically those who are from the low socioeconomic (B40 household) group. Meanwhile, the mission of the

PPT, which is based on the ethical and professional values of UiTM, is to enhance students' academic achievement through the Pre-Diploma in Commerce and Pre-diploma in Science Programs. Hence, the PPT serves as a platform and opportunity to guide its students to be equally competitive and ethically on par with other university level entrants.

Parental Involvement and Language Learning

The UiTM philosophy highlights that every student can become excellent through knowledge transfer and assimilated moral values. This includes the PPT students. Since the Movement Control Order (MCO) in Malaysia due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all university students including UiTM were forced to face with the prospects of open distance learning (ODL) in which students must learn their courses and have their classes online instead of the traditional face-to-face classroom approach. This affects the PPT students who are still fresh from their school days as well. They must attend their ODL classes.

Learning online means there is a need to retain and increase their learning motivation with proper support received both at home and in the university, especially during ODL. One of the extrinsic motivational factors that may play a significant role during ODL is parental involvement. Parental involvement studies have concentrated mainly in primary and secondary education and empirical evidence and studies on parental involvement in students from the B40 group is still rare in Malaysia. Therefore, there is a need for more research to investigate students from the tertiary education level and gain further insight into their parental involvement, especially in the current norm of ODL education.

This study investigates the PPT students' perception of their parental involvement and their motivation to learn the English language as the majority of the PPT and diploma courses are conducted in English. The current study also aims to find a link between parental involvement and motivation. By conducting this study, the researchers wish to add significant knowledge to the existing literature regarding these two inter-related variables during ODL.

Research Questions

This study is conducted to address the following research questions:

1. What is the PPT students' perception of their parents' involvement in their English language learning?
2. What is the PPT students' perception of their motivation in their English language learning?
3. Is there any relationship between the PPT students' perception of their parents' involvement and their motivation to learn the English language?

Review of Literature

PPT Students and Motivation in English Language Learning

Generally, the main objective of the PPT is to allow Bumiputera students from low-income families who have under-qualified entry results to further their studies in the tertiary education level. Eligible students from the B40 household group are fully sponsored in their academic fees, living accommodation and are given allowances. Given a chance to further their studies, PPT students are expected to be more motivated to be successful in the programme in which most of the courses are conducted and assessed in the English language. Motivation has a vital role in the success or failure of second language learning.

Students' motivation during ODL is highly important to ensure its success (Dey & Panda, 2024). In acquiring a second language, people who are more highly motivated and feel positive towards its use are often more successful (Nair et. al, 2014). In their study, Nair et.al. (2014), showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between students' perception of the importance of the English language and their attitude in learning the language. Students with adequate motivation can become efficient language learners as they are more likely to learn quicker than students who lack motivation (Wimolmas, 2013). Thang et al (2011), found that Malaysian students' realisation of the importance of English motivates them to learn the language. This proves that awareness of the importance of English in the current setting can result in enhancing the students' motivation towards learning the language (Nair et.al., 2014).

Hence, motivation can play a key role in helping PPT students to succeed in their studies during ODL as they need all the motivation they can get after failing to qualify to further their studies due to their school examination results. The PPT presents a glimmer of hope for these students from the low-income family to continue their education and further strengthen their English language proficiency.

Parental Involvement and Students' Motivation in English Language Learning

One extrinsic motivational factor that gains more importance during ODL is parental involvement. Students need the presence of others who they respect and trust to be able to motivate them in achieving their goals. Lapuhapu and Oco (2024) and Jeynes (2022) mentioned this presence in terms of parental involvement as parents being the closest authority to their children. More specifically, Muhammad Shahid Farooq and Iqra Asim (2020) believed that parental involvement influences students' academic performance in terms of their self-motivation and self-evaluation values that are the components of self-regulated or autonomous learning. This is vital in the success of ODL as students must be highly motivated to learn and attend online classes independently for most of the time and they need to self-regulate their learning.

The need for autonomous learning is even higher during ODL than traditional face-to-face classroom learning. It is shown in several studies that parental involvement can have many positive effects on students including increasing motivation, which determines the learning achievement of students regardless of their socio-economic background (Anastasiou & Papagianni, 2020; Lestari, 2020; Marina & Eamoraphan, 2020). Parents' attention can improve the spirit and motivation of learning and affect students' learning readiness at home (Lestari, 2020).

Academicians have been focusing continuously on research in parental involvement. In the study by Nair et al (2014), parental involvement plays a sufficient role in students' attitude in learning the English language. Also, Hou and Lynch (2017), in their study observed there is a link between parental encouragement with their children's motivation and academic achievement and this was echoed in Adeyemi's (2020), study on undergraduate students in Nigeria. Another study conducted by Bindu and Aruna (2014), found that upper secondary school students who received high perceived parental encouragement were highly motivated than students who received low perceived parental encouragement. Their findings

are supported by Lestari (2020), who noticed that parental attention has a significant influence on the motivation for students to learn.

Sultana and Nuraini Rosli (2016), revealed that a parent's socio-economic condition is irrelevant, but the level of parental involvement and motivation influence the students' achievement in the English subject. This was also echoed in Nair et al (2014), as they stated that parents do not have to be rich or wealthy to offer motivational support in their child's learning process. In relation to learner's autonomy, Katz, Kaplan and Buzukashvilly (2011), suggested that parental involvement is perceived by students to be autonomy-supportive and is considered a high-quality motivation for their learning and completion of the academic assignments. All in all, the literature has shown that parental involvement plays a vital role in students' motivation which is linked to their academic achievement regardless of any level of education. Parental attachment may provide a foundation for positive social relationships and motivation for students in university (Gan et. al, 2018) and parental involvement can be a catalyst to instill motivation in students' academic performance. This can be especially true for PPT students who need encouragement and guidance during ODL.

Methodology

Participants

Due to the lack of studies conducted on early tertiary education students who are in the pre-diploma courses, the study used purposive sampling of PPT students in UiTM. The population of the study comprises Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTM CPP) PPT pre-diploma students. There were 485 students and an invite link to the survey was sent to the students through the WhatsApp group. A sample of 357 respondents were recorded. PPT students are specifically chosen for this study because the main objective of the PPT programme itself is to help landscaping the future of Malay and Bumiputera students by giving them the appropriate motivation to improve their self-development. Most of the students come from poor families (less than RM2500 of income per month) but they are believed to have the same chance as others in developing themselves in many aspects of life. Therefore, other than the support provided by UiTM, the researchers would like to investigate on how well the support given by the people around them, in which this study focused on the PPT students' parental involvement in their English language learning as a possible factor that can enhance their learning motivation.

Research Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study is a four-point Likert Scale questionnaire, prepared in both English and Malay language to ensure the participants can understand each item better. There are 4 sections in the questionnaire, namely, Section A: Demographic background information, Section B: Family background related to parents' education level, income and family size, Section C: Students' perceptions of parental support and Section D: Students' motivation in learning English. The questionnaire consists of two main parts: student's perception of their parent's involvement in their English learning (8 items adopted from Sultana & Nuraini Rosli, 2016) and students' motivation in learning English (12 items, adopted from Katz, Kaplan & Buzukashvily, 2011). Both studies have proven that there is a positive link between parental involvement and students' learning motivation and the researchers aimed to investigate whether this link is evident in PPT students' learning during ODL.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 29. Descriptive analysis was employed to summarize demographic characteristics and study variables using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD).

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was conducted on the variables. The alpha values have ranged from 0 to 1; with alpha values more than 0.5 is acceptable. However, the ideal value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient should be above 0.7 (DeVellis, 2003). The questionnaire's reliability index was 0.864.

There are four scales of agreement or disagreement statements including strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree, with 1 to 4 scale numbers, respectively. The mean score of each variable of interest was analysed and represented in decimal form. Such score was used to specify the level of the agreement or disagreement based on the following criteria in Table 1.

Table 1

Degree of involvement and motivation (Adapted from Wimolmas, 2013)

Mean Range	Interpretation
3.68 – 5.00	High degree of parental involvement or student's motivation
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate degree of parental involvement or student's motivation
1.00 – 2.33	Low degree of parental involvement or student's motivation

Moreover, correlation analysis and ordinal regression analysis were adopted to seek the information about not only the strength but also the direction of the relationship between the two variables i.e. the parental involvement and students' motivation in learning English.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are divided into three parts: (1) respondent's profile; (2) perception on parental involvement in respondents' English learning, (3) respondents' motivation in learning English, (4) relationship between parental involvement and students' motivation in English Language Learning.

Respondent's Profile

There are 228 females (63.9%) and 129 males (36.1%) in the sample of 357 respondents (N) out of the total population size of 485 students who have enrolled in the PPT programs in UiTM CPP. Demographically, the subjects were Malay students who are mostly aged 18 years old (93.8%). Most of them are from the B40 group (74.7%) with many of them having at least one parent with a secondary school level of education or above (97.8%).

Students' perception of their parents' involvement in their second language learning

Based on Table 2 and with reference to Table 1, it can be clearly seen that all the items have a moderate mean between 2.40 and 3.28. This shows that almost all the respondents receive moderate encouragement and support from their parents in their English language learning despite their family educational and socioeconomic background. These results show that the support was generally positive and encouraging, indicating that the students believed that their parents were concerned about their learning of English subjects. Corresponding to studies done by Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020), Lestari (2020) and Marina and

Eamoraphan (2020), these positive parental involvements can affect students positively, including increasing motivation, which determines their learning achievement. All the standard deviations are low i.e. the students' responses are consistent.

Table 2: Measuring parental involvement on respondents' English learning (N = 357)

Item	Response Option				Mean	Standard Deviation
	SD	D	A	SA		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
My parent talks to me about my learning of the English subject.	2	13.1	77.9	7	2.90	0.52
My parent talks to the lecturer about my progress in learning English.	3.9	35.5	56.3	4.5	2.61	0.64
My parent will be upset if I do not perform well in the English subject.	0.9	5	63	31.1	3.24	0.58
My parent encourages me by telling me that I have to do better in the English subject	1.1	3.1	62.5	33.3	3.28	0.57
My parent has a higher expectation in my English subject than other subjects.	2	28.8	56.6	12.6	2.80	0.67
My parent helps me with my English assignment and check my exercises.	5.6	45.9	45.1	3.4	2.46	0.65
My parent gives me emotional and moral support to do the best in the English subject.	2	7.5	70.9	19.6	3.08	0.59
My parent involves himself/herself in my English subject activities.	7	49.9	39.2	3.9	2.40	0.68

The results presented in Table 2 show that most of the respondents agreed (77.9%) that their parents always talked to them about their learning progress in the English subject (M = 2.90, SD = 0.52). In the second statement "My parent talks to the lecturer about my progress in learning English", more than half of the target respondents agreed (56.3%) with the statement. A significant parental involvement was found in the next statement where almost all respondents agreed (63%) and strongly agreed (31.1%) that their parents will be upset if they do not perform well in the English subject (M = 3.24, SD = 0.58). Moreover, the majority of the respondents agreed that their parents encourage them to do better in the English subject (M = 3.28, SD = 0.57) which shows a stronger positive attitude of the students' parents towards their children's learning in the English subject. Next, 56.6% and 12.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that their parents have a higher expectation in the English subject than other subjects. Another high number of parental involvements was found in the seventh statement, "My parent gives me emotional and moral

support to do the best in the English subject”, which recorded 70.0% and 19.6% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.59$). Generally, the respondents’ believed that their parents monitor their progress and encourage them to perform better in English although they still think that their parents were not physically involved in assisting them with their English assignments and exercises. This statement is reflected in Item 6 ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.65$) and Item 8 ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.68$).

These highly perceived parental encouragements entail higher level of motivation among learners, which corresponds to studies done by Bindu and Aruna (2014), Hou and Lynch (2017), Gan et.al. (2018), Adeyemi (2020) and Lestari (2020). On the other hand, the findings also showed that parents focused more on emotional support in their PPT children’s English language learning and there is a lack of physical support. Most respondents agreed that their parents do not involve themselves physically in helping the subject activities, assignments or exercises. This may be due to their parents’ low educational background and lack of English language proficiency. Hence, most parents only provide emotional support when it is related to the English language subject.

PPT Students’ Motivation in their Second Language Learning

Based on Table 3 and with reference to Table 1, it is obvious from the scores that all the items have a moderate to high mean, between 3.20 and 3.68. Thus, the respondents’ motivation to learn English is generally high. This backs the view that the sample has a positive mindset towards their English language learning regardless of their background and study stream in PPT. It was also found that the values of standard deviation are relatively low.

Table 3

Measuring respondents’ motivation in learning English (N = 357)

Item	Response Option				Mean	Standard Deviation
	SD	D	A	SA		
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)		
I learn English in order to make progress in my studies.	0	0	38.9	61.1	3.60	0.51
I learn English because it can help me in the future.	0	0	31.7	68.3	3.68	0.47
I learn English because I understand that it helps me succeed in university.	0	0	38.4	61.6	3.62	0.49
I learn English because of the value and contribution of it to my learning.	0	0.5	53.8	45.7	3.45	0.51
I learn English because I think it is important for me.	0	0	38.7	61.3	3.61	0.49
I learn English because it is interesting to me.	0	6.2	60.2	33.6	3.27	0.58
I learn English in order to improve my understanding of other subjects.	0	0.8	44.5	54.7	3.54	0.52
I learn English because it is fun.	0	6.2	63.6	30.2	3.23	0.56
I learn English because I feel good when I do it.	0	6.7	65.2	28.1	3.21	0.56
I learn English because I want to get a better grade.	0	1.1	39.8	59.1	3.58	0.52

I learn English because if I don't, I would feel bad when I communicate with my friends in English.	0	7	51.8	41.2	3.34	0.60
I learn English because I will feel ashamed if lecturers ask me questions in English.	0.6	12.3	53.2	33.9	3.20	0.67

The variables were measured using 12 statements by using a four-point Likert scale. The results presented in Table 3 showed that all respondents either strongly agreed (61.1%) or agreed (38.9%) that they learn English to make progress in their studies ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.51$). The most significant motivation factor for the respondents' motivation is in the second statement, "I learn English because it can help me in the future" in which all respondents agreed with (68.3% strongly agreed and 31.7% agreed, $M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.47$). Another significant measure was found in the next statement where all respondents either strongly agreed (61.6%) or agreed (38.4%) that they understand that the English subject helps them to succeed in university ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.49$). Next, almost all the respondents agreed (53.8%) or strongly agreed (45.7%) that the subject has a value, and it contributes towards their learning ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.51$). For the fifth statement, 61.3% and 38.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that English is important for them ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.49$). Only 6.2% of the respondents disagreed that they learn English because it is interesting to them ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.58$). Another high measure is in the seventh statement, "I learn English in order to improve my understanding of other subjects" in which only 0.8% responded negatively and the remaining respondents strongly agreed (54.7%) and agreed (44.5%) that the subject can improve their understanding of other subjects that they are taking during PPT ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.52$).

In the next item that stated whether they learn the English subject because it is fun, most respondents agreed (63.6%) and 30.2% strongly agreed ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.56$). Another high number of student motivation in learning English was found in the tenth statement, "I learn English because I want to get a better grade", which showed 59.1% and 39.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.52$). The next statement, "I learn English because if I don't, I would feel bad when I communicate with my friends in English", showed 51.8% agreement from the respondents and 41.2% strongly agreed with the statement ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.60$).

The two lowest medians in the findings came from the ninth and twelfth statements (3.21 and 3.20 respectively), albeit the numbers are still high to indicate the moderately high student's motivation in learning the English subject. 93% agreed that they feel good when they learn English ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.56$). Meanwhile, only 12.3% disagreed and 0.6% strongly disagreed with the statement "I learn English because I will feel ashamed if lecturers ask me questions in English", which makes the final statement the only one that garnered a strong disagreement from a few of the respondents. Thus, it can be deduced that the respondents were moderately to highly motivated to learn English. They did not learn English for fear of being questioned in English. Instead, all of them acknowledged the importance of learning English to progress in their future studies. English is also agreed by these respondents as a vital tool for academic success at tertiary level. It is also crucial to note that the respondents realize that English is the key to help their understanding of other subjects. They view English as fun, and it has an important role in assisting communication with others. The findings are

like the studies done by Thang et. al (2011) and Nair et.al. (2014) in which the realization of the importance of the English language can increase students' motivations and encourage them to learn more.

On the other hand, the findings showed that regardless of their parents' involvement in their studies, the PPT students are motivated to learn the English language. This can be seen as almost all respondents agreed that they are highly motivated to learn in the PPT programme even though it was shown in Table 2 that they did not receive physical parental involvement in the form of assistance in their studies.

Relationship between Parental Involvement and Students' Motivation in English Language Learning

Before further action, a normality test was done to check whether the data obtained was normally distributed and to decide which statistical test that is appropriate for the respective data. There are several types of normality tests such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the Anderson-Darling test, and the Shapiro-Wilk test. For this study, since the sample size is big enough ($n=357$), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was chosen. From the test, the p -value = 0.000 which is less than 0.05, hence the data was not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric methods will be adopted, namely Spearman rank correlation and ordinal regression analysis.

Next, a correlation analysis was conducted. For non-normal distributions, correlation coefficients should be calculated from the ranks of the data, not from their actual values (Akoglu, 2018). Therefore, we used Spearman Rank Correlation for the analysis between such data. A Spearman coefficient is commonly abbreviated as ρ (rho) and ranges between -1 to +1. From the analysis, we obtained the value of $\rho=0.242$. The correlation was statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a weak positive relationship between parental involvement and students' motivation in learning English. In other words, there is evidence of an association between parental involvement and students' motivation to learn the language.

Lastly, an ordinal regression analysis was carried out to identify the causal relationship between the parental involvement and students' motivation in their second language learning. Independent variable refers to parental involvement while dependent variable is students' motivation. The analysis showed that the Goodness-of-fit test made the model statistically significant ($p>0.05$), hence we conclude that the model fits the data very well. We also found that parental involvement was a significant predictor of students' motivation ($p=0.000$). For every one unit increase in parental involvement, there is a predicted increase of 1.015 in the long odds of being a higher level of students' motivation. This indicates that there is an increased probability of being at a greater level of the students' motivation.

Hence, it can be summarized that there is a link between parental involvement with student motivation to a certain extent whereby most PPT students' parents can only offer emotional support, but such action is sufficient to motivate their children in their studies during ODL.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Sultana and Nuraini Rosli (2016), found that parental economic status was not as important as parental involvement and motivation in influencing students' English subject achievement. Similarly, it can be seen in the current study that despite their parents socioeconomic and academic background, the respondents received encouraging support from their parents, and this is crucial to retain their positive motivation towards their learning of the English subject. Although students' perception of learning English may be influenced by multiple factors, parental emotional involvement through encouragement may be able to retain their positive motivational level as this positive motivation was found to entail positive attitudes among the learners in the learning process (Thang et. al, 2011). Thus, as far as the sample is concerned, the students are aware of the importance of the English language and are highly motivated to learn the language during their PPT programme. Even if their parents are not wealthy and not highly educated, it is perceived by the students that their parents are still encouraging and aware of the importance of the language in their children's tertiary education (Nair et.al., 2014). This study provides an indication that there is no lacking in student motivation in English language learning and there is sufficient support given in their parental involvement in their academic life.

As with most studies, there are limitations that need to be addressed. This study did not attempt to construct any longitudinal arguments; hence, longitudinal investigations would be helpful in facilitating the changes and causal effect of parental involvement in relation to learning motivation of PPT students. Next, the data collection was purely quantitative which can lead to social desirability bias, so, multiple data collection is needed to corroborate the findings such as open-ended interviews, comparative analysis and other qualitative approaches to validate the hypotheses regarding parental involvement and student motivation. Perceptions from parents can also be considered for future studies as this study only focuses on students' perception and may not reflect the adults' actual behaviour.

The findings seem to suggest that there are still areas which can be improved with respect to teaching effectiveness. The lecturers or academicians should be practical and flexible when teaching learners especially during this challenging era of Covid-19 pandemic. This is to ensure that students stay positive and interested in learning. Scaffolding learning experiences and constantly providing feedback to the students may be able to fill in the empty gap which is left missing physically despite the constant positive emotional support the students received from their parents.

At the university level, a platform may be introduced to get parents involved in the learner's learning process. They could be informed of the courses taken and be reminded of the ways in which they can help provide more positive support for their children. The Ministry may also want to take proactive measures in encouraging parental support in the children's learning not just in the university but more importantly at home, where positive support at home may encourage better learning environment and experiences among the learners.

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