

Motivation and Burnout in Final Year Projects: A Correlational Study of Malay-Major Undergraduates, University Teknologi MARA, Selangor

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the perceptions of final-year students regarding the motivational components (value, expectancy and affective domains) and burnout (emotional exhaustion and disengagement) and to examine the relationships among the key variables. This study utilized a survey-based correlational research to investigate students' views on motivational components and burnout factors as well as the relationships between them. The study used an adapted questionnaire blending items from Campos et.al (2011) and Pintrich and De Groot (1990). A consensus of 85 Malay-Major final year students from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Malaysia, participated in the study. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation. The findings revealed that value, expectancy, and affective components play in shaping learners' motivation. Exhaustion and disengagement were burnout factors that caused students to lose interest in completing their final-year projects. This study found statistically significant positive correlations between emotional exhaustion and three motivational components, which are value, expectancy, and affective domain among Malay-major undergraduates working on their final year projects. The findings suggest that educational institutions should implement targeted interventions and support systems to enhance motivation and address burnout among final year students doing their Final Year Projects.

Keywords: Motivation, Burnout, Correlations, Final Year Projects, Final Year Students

Introduction

Often cited as a critical phase of final-year projects (FYPs) in undergraduate education, this phase demands sustained cognitive effort, emotional resilience, and autonomous learning. Final-year students are not only required to be involved in a complex research

process, but they also must manage time effectively and maintain consistent engagement to complete the projects successfully. Within this context, motivation is widely recognised as instrumental in influencing students' capacity to persist and perform in their academic tasks, a view supported by recent work in higher education contexts (Mirzaei et al., 2024; Rahmat & Thasrabiab, 2024; Omari, 2024). Without sufficient motivation as a catalyst, students may struggle to maintain the consistent engagement needed to bring such complex projects to successful completion.

Motivation plays a crucial role in the academic success of students, particularly those working on final year projects. Being a key component of a degree programme in many higher institutions of learning, FYP is a self-learning path that enables students to enhance their problem-solving and research skills, facilitated by close supervision (Naeem et al., 2019). Beyond academic achievement, final-year projects help develop key transferable skills valued by employers such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and time management (Gunnels et al., 2024; Rana et al., 2024). Final-year students are a unique cohort driven by a diverse array of motivations as they navigate their academic journey. This phase is marked by a blend of excitement, pressure, and anticipation, all of which shape their motivation and engagement with their FYP, influencing both the quality of output and the learning process itself.

While motivation drives students to achieve their academic and personal goals, burnout can significantly hinder their progress. The pressure and demands of their academic work can lead to burnout. Students in their final year face significant academic stress, which can impact their mental health and academic performance. Various studies have shown that academic stress is a significant factor affecting students' mental health, leading to issues such as burnout due to prolonged stress and overwork (Gemechu Abera Gobena, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Additionally, high levels of stress can hinder academic performance by reducing concentration, motivation, and overall cognitive function (Wuthrich et al., 2020). This period is often marked by intense academic demands and the pressure to transition into the professional world. They need to excel in exams, complete projects, and meet deadlines, which can be overwhelming. This pressure often leads to heightened stress and anxiety, contributing to burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Understanding the motivational components that drive students and identifying the factors contributing to their burnout is essential for developing effective interventions to support their educational journey.

Final-year students often face significant challenges when completing their final-year projects, leading to varying levels of motivation and burnout. FYPs demand sustained effort, independent learning, and resilience, making them a high-stakes academic milestone where motivation can drive excellence and burnout can derail progress. Motivation is crucial for keeping students motivated and engaged, which is vital for their academic success and overall well-being. Othman et al. (2020) showed that the study results indicate a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and academic achievement. Meanwhile, burnout among university students is a significant issue in higher education, leading to negative outcomes such as reduced engagement, lower performance, and a decline in motivation, which can ultimately result in students dropping out (Jagodics & Szabó, 2023). Investigating motivation and burnout in final-year projects is crucial because these factors directly influence not only academic outcomes but also students' readiness for employment. By doing so, the study enables an understanding of these dynamics that benefits multiple

stakeholders - students can gain strategies to sustain engagement, supervisors can tailor guidance to individual needs, and institutions can design support systems that reduce burnout risks.

The study specifically addressed limited research on potential factors that drive motivation and factors that lead to burnout among final-year students, doing FYPs, particularly in a local setting. Understanding how these aspects impact students' academic performance and overall well-being is crucial for developing effective interventions to support and motivate learners during this critical phase of their education. The lack of learning motivation can reduce students' interest in studying and become one of the factors that can hinder the achievement of educational goals. Thus, it aimed to investigate how final-year graduate students perceived motivational components and burnout factors in their final year projects.

Research Questions

This study investigated the undergraduates' perceptions of their motivational components and burnout factors. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- a) What were the Malay-Major undergraduates' perceptions of motivational components (value, expectancy, and affective) during their final-year projects?
- b) What were the Malay-Major undergraduates' perceptions of burnout (emotional exhaustion and disengagement) during their final-year projects?
- c) Are there significant relationships between motivational components and burnout factors of the Malay-Major undergraduates?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

The theory that the study underpinned was the Motivational-Cognitive Model of Learning Self-regulated Learning by Pintrich and De Groot (1990). Drawn heavily from social-cognitive theory (especially Bandura's work on self-efficacy) and expectancy-value models of motivation, the researchers developed the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), blending the motivational beliefs component, comprising self-efficacy, intrinsic value, and test anxiety elements, with the cognitive and metacognitive strategies component, which includes rehearsal, elaboration, and self-regulation. But its uniqueness lies in linking students' motivational orientations with their strategic learning behaviours.

The decision to base the study on Pintrich and De Groot's adapted framework was driven by its direct relevance to academic and performance-related contexts, as well as its conceptual alignment with burnout dimensions such as emotional exhaustion and disengagement. The study did not pick other motivational theories like Self-Determination Theory because it lacked the task-specific focus and emotional dimensions needed to explore burnout symptoms in academic settings. Furthermore, it was more appropriate for long-term developmental studies than short-term academic projects. In conducting a final-year project that explores the causal relationship between motivational factors, specifically, expectancy, value, and affective components, and burnout dimensions, such as emotional exhaustion and disengagement, the selection of Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) framework was both strategic and academically sound. Since it was originally developed to understand student motivation and learning strategies, and doing the final-year project was within an academic environment,

the framework, therefore, offered a contextually appropriate perspective to examine how students' beliefs and emotions influence their vulnerability to burnout.

As suggested by Pintrich and De Groot (1990), three components that make up the motivational components were the expectancy component (self-efficacy), value component (intrinsic motivation), and affective component (test anxiety) (Ahmad & Khalid, 2011). The expectancy component in Pintrich and De Groot's framework, which in fact refers to students' self-efficacy. Bandura defines self-efficacy as "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." (1977, p.93). Next, the value component basically refers to the importance or usefulness of the task, which can influence sustained effort. Students with low value perceptions can lead to emotional exhaustion due to a lack of meaningful engagement. Lastly, the affective components (e.g., anxiety, emotional strain) directly mirror the emotional dimension of burnout, making this framework uniquely suited to explore these links.

Conceptualisation of Motivation

Motivation is essentially a driving force that prompts, incites, or stimulates action. It's not just about sparking initial interest but also about converting that interest into a decision to engage in an activity (Gilakjani et al., 2012). Pincus (2023) emphasized that motivation is a driving force that prompts or encourages action. It is not only about the initial interest but also about sustaining and converting that interest into ongoing engagement in an activity. Motivation influences the direction, intensity, and persistence of an individual's performance behaviour.

Motivation can be classified into two types: intrinsic motivation, which is driven by a person's internal beliefs and choices, and extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by external factors other than the individual themselves (Cerasoli et al., 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2017). In the field of psychology, motivation is understood as an internal mechanism that stimulates, directs, and sustains a person's behaviour over time (Anderman et al., 2013). Halim. et al. (2024) stated that learning motivation is a psychological element that drives students to learn and achieve success. Motivation is fundamentally a driving force that stimulates, directs, and sustains an individual's actions over time. It is not only about igniting initial interest but also converting that interest into a sustained engagement in activities. Motivation encompasses both the initiation and persistence of behaviours. It influences the direction, intensity, and persistence of performance and the importance of motivation in shaping an individual's performance and engagement across various activities and contexts.

Conceptualization of Burnout

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, or mental exhaustion caused by prolonged or repeated stress. Burnout is influenced by a dynamic interplay of individual factors—such as personality traits, coping strategies, and levels of resilience—and organizational conditions, including workload intensity, the presence or absence of support systems, and the overarching institutional culture (Edú-Valsania & Moriano, 2022).

Students facing burnout usually experience fatigue, a cynical attitude, and diminished effectiveness. This is often driven by the pressure to study, a negative outlook on homework or exams, and a sense of low personal achievement (Rahmatpour et al., 2019). Burnout extends beyond the boundaries of helping professions, affecting students, educators, and

individuals across diverse occupational sectors. Its widespread prevalence underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon.

Previous Studies

Despite numerous studies exploring academic motivation using frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory, Expectancy-Value Theory, and Achievement Goal Theory, researchers have primarily applied these frameworks to general academic tasks (e.g., Ishida & Sekiyama, 2024; Carranza Esteban et al., 2023; Vu et al., 2024), rather than to final-year projects. These studies examined how factors like self-efficacy, interest in learning, and emotional exhaustion influence students' engagement and performance. For example, Carranza Esteban et al. (2023) found that academic self-efficacy positively predicts research motivation, while emotional exhaustion does not significantly reduce motivation levels. Ishida and Sekiyama (2024) reviewed a wide range of studies and highlighted psychological values and social support as key motivators in learning. Vu et al. (2024) showed that motivation and achievement influence each other over time, especially in regular coursework. However, most of this research focused on general academic tasks such as attending classes or preparing for exams. There is still limited evidence on how motivation and burnout interact during final-year projects, which are often long, stressful, and personally meaningful. Therefore, more research is needed to understand the interaction between motivation and burnout factors in students who are doing their FYPs.

Several researchers, such as Madigan and Curran (2021), Carranza Esteban et al. (2023) and Zhang et al. (2024) have contributed to a growing body of research, emphasising the association between motivational factors such as personal psychological resources and burnout in academic contexts. Madigan and Curran's (2021) meta-analysis reported that burnout negatively correlated with academic performance across school, college, and university settings. Although their focus was on burnout, they found that motivation and personality traits were key psychological factors influencing achievement. In a more recent study, Zhang et al. (2024) found that students with strong emotional regulation skills were less likely to experience burnout and were able to sustain academic engagement over time. They suggest that the ability to manage emotional responses (affective domains) plays a crucial role in maintaining motivation and focus, especially under stress. Carranza Esteban et al. (2023) similarly identified academic self-efficacy as a positive predictor of research motivation and found that emotional exhaustion did not significantly diminish motivation levels. This finding implies that students with high self-belief may remain motivated even when they are emotionally strained.

In the literature focusing on burnout, Biremanoe and Saputri (2024) found that several factors have caused academic burnout in final-year students in one of the universities in Jakarta, including lack of social support, poor time management, workload, and individual factors such as lack of self-efficacy, low self-esteem, and low hardiness. The findings suggest that addressing these factors through improved social support, better time management skills, and workload management could help reduce academic burnout among final-year students. Analysing gender differences on burnout among Chinese college students, Liu et al. (2024) reported that male students had higher burnout scores than female students, upper-grade students had higher burnout scores than lower-grade students, and students who

smoked had higher burnout scores than non-smokers during the school day. More than half of the students experienced academic burnout.

Conceptual Framework

This study examined motivational components and burnout factors among students, as displayed in Figure 1. The independent variables are the motivational components, which include value, expectancy, and affective elements. These motivational factors influence how students approach their final-year projects. The dependent variables are the burnout factors, namely emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and reduced personal accomplishment, which represent the negative outcomes students may experience due to academic stress and pressure.

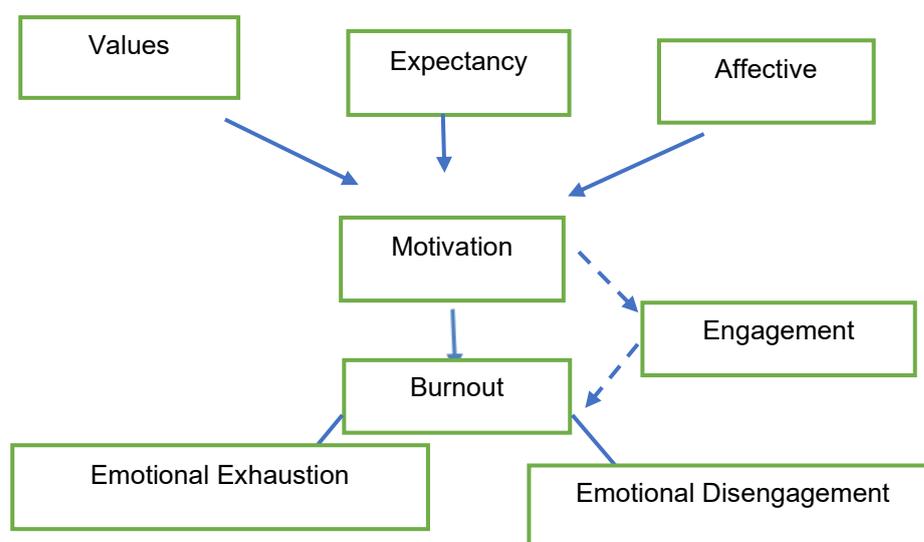


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Engagement has an indirect relationship with motivation and burnout, serving as a mediating variable in this relationship. However, engagement was not considered as one of the key variables. Therefore, in the study, motivation was assumed to have a direct relationship with the burnout factors. When students have higher levels of motivational factors, they tend to be more engaged and actively involved in their academic work, which helps to reduce the risk of burnout. In contrast, if motivation is primarily extrinsic or low, engagement tends to decrease, making students more vulnerable to burnout symptoms. Thus, motivation directly impacts burnout.

Pintrich and De Groot (1990) state that sources of motivation include value, expectancy, and affective components. Value components include learners' intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation, and their task value beliefs. Next, expectancy components refer to learners' perception of self-efficacy and their control beliefs for learning. Finally, affective components refer to learners' emotions towards the learning activities. Learners can also face burnout, such as emotional exhaustion and disengagement (Campos et.al, 2011). The current study excluded low personal accomplishment. This study also explores the relationship between motivational components and causes of burnout among learners.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a survey-based correlational design to investigate causal relationships between motivational components and burnout factors. The design allowed the investigation of the variables through the administration of questionnaires.

Setting and Sampling

The setting was Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Selangor. The subjects of the study were the entire population of interest. They were the final-year undergraduates of the Malay Language for Professional Communication Programme (LG241), totalling 85 people.

Instrument

The instrument used was a 5-point Likert-scale survey questionnaire and adapted from two studies by Campos et.al (2011) and Pintrich and De Groot (1990). The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section A asked 3 questions about the demographic profile of the respondents, regarding gender, level of education, and place of internship. Section B comprised 24 items on motivational components specifically on Value (Intrinsic Goal Orientation-4 items, Extrinsic Goal Orientation-3 items, and Task Value Beliefs-5 items), Expectancy (Students' Self-Efficacy-5 items, and Control Beliefs for Learning- 2 items), while Section C had 17 items on burnout, consisting of two components, which are Emotional Engagement (8 items) and Disengagement (9 items).

The reliability analysis of the instrument was conducted, and the results showed that the Cronbach Alpha value of the motivational factors was .833 while that of the burnout factors was .778, \leq indicating that the items for each dimension measured the intended underlying construct. For the motivational components, the dimension showed a good reliability, while the burnout factors indicated an acceptable coefficient. The study used the rules of thumb of Cronbach's alpha coefficients by Gliem and Gliem (2003): $\leq .9$ = Excellent; $\leq .8$ = Good; $\leq .7$ = Acceptable; $\leq .6$ = Questionable, $\leq .5$ = Poor; $\leq .5$ = Unacceptable.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection commenced after the approval of the Ethics Research Application. The questionnaires were administered online using Google Forms through WhatsApp. This method was conveniently carried out as the respondents were in the course of their internship. Informed consent from each student was obtained before they answered the questionnaire. The response rate was 100%.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to address the first and second research questions. Students' perceived motivational components and burnout were measured using mean scores and standard deviations. To examine causal relationships among key variables, inferential statistics were employed, specifically, Pearson correlation analysis. This analysis addressed the third research question.

Findings

Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Table 1 below provides an overview of the demographic profiles of the 85 respondents involved in this study. In terms of gender composition, females constituted the majority with 66 individuals (77.6%), while males accounted for 19 individuals (22.4%). The table also details the respondents' educational qualifications, revealing that 57 (68.2%) completed STPM, whereas 28 (31.8%) possessed a Diploma. This reflects a higher representation of STPM holders within the sample. Furthermore, the distribution of internship placements indicates that 51 respondents (60%) did their internships in government institutions, while 34 (40%) were placed in private companies.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Demographic Profiles in Frequencies and Percentages

Variables	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	19	22.4
Female	66	77.6
Level of education		
STPM	57	68.2
Diploma	28	31.8
Internship company		
Private company	34	40.0
Government	51	60.0
Total	85	100

Research Question 1: What were the Malay-Major undergraduates' perceptions of motivational components (value, expectancy, and affective) during their final-year projects?

In the context of this study, this refers to (A) value components, (B) expectancy components, and (C) affective components. To begin with, (A) value components are measured by (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation, and (iii) task value beliefs.

Table 2 displays the mean scores for intrinsic goal orientation based on four statements. The highest mean (4.4) was recorded for MIGOCQ3, which asked, "What I find most satisfying in the Final-Year Project is gaining a clear understanding of the findings from my analysis," indicating that respondents had the most satisfying experience when they gained insights from their analysis.

Table 2

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Motivation-Intrinsic Goal Orientation Component (MIGOC)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
MIGOCQ1	I am more motivated when my Final Year Project supervisor provides consistent monitoring and guidance.	4.1	.905
MIGOCQ2	I prefer course materials that spark my curiosity, even when they present a challenge to learn.	4.1	.771
MIGOCQ3	What I find most satisfying in the Final-Year Project is gaining a clear understanding of the findings from my analysis.	4.4	.824
MIGOCQ4	When given the chance, I selected a project topic that offered learning opportunities, even though it didn't promise a high grade.	3.4	1.197

The two statements, "I am more motivated when my Final-Year Project supervisor provides consistent monitoring and guidance" (MIGOCQ1) and "I prefer course materials that spark my curiosity, even when they present a challenge to learn" (MIGOCQ2), both received a mean score of 4.1, reflecting a strong preference for motivation through supervision and engaging yet challenging materials. The lowest mean score (3.4) was for the statement, "When given the chance, I selected a project topic that offered learning opportunities, even though it didn't promise a high grade" (MIGOCQ4), suggesting a relatively lower emphasis on selecting a topic purely for learning purposes over grades.

Table 3 below presents the summary of mean scores and standard deviation for extrinsic goal orientation based on three statements. The highest mean scores, both at 4.8, were recorded for "Improving my overall grade point average is my top priority at the moment, which is why securing a good grade in this Final Year Project is my main focus" (MEGOCQ2) and "Excelling in my studies is important to me as it allows me to demonstrate my capabilities to my family, friends, and others" (MEGOCQ3).

Table 3

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Motivation- Extrinsic Goal Orientation Component (MEGOC)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
MEGOCQ1	Achieving a good grade is what brings me the greatest satisfaction at this moment.	4.7	.538
MEGOCQ2	Improving my overall grade point average is my top priority at the moment, which is why securing a good grade in this Final Year Project is my main focus.	4.8	.458
MEGOCQ3	Excelling in my studies is important to me as it allows me to demonstrate my capabilities to my family, friends, and others.	4.8	.549

These findings indicate a strong emphasis among respondents on achieving high grades and demonstrating their capabilities to others. Similarly, the statement "Achieving a good grade is what brings me the greatest satisfaction at this moment" (MEGOCQ1) also received a high mean score of 4.7, further emphasising the significant role of external rewards and recognition in motivating respondents during their Final Year Project.

Table 4 highlights the mean scores for task value beliefs based on five statements. The highest mean score of 4.7 was recorded for "I need to have a clear grasp of the subject matter in my Final Year Project" (MCTVBQ5), emphasizing respondents' recognition of the importance of mastering the subject matter. This is followed by "Understanding the requirements of my Final Year Project is crucial to me" (MCTVBQ2), which scored a mean of 4.6, indicating a strong focus on meeting project requirements.

Table 4

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Motivational Component -Task Value Beliefs (MCTVB)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
MCTVBQ1	I think I can apply the knowledge and skills acquired from my previous courses to my Final Year Project.	4.3	.808
MCTVBQ2	Understanding the requirements of my Final-Year Project is crucial to me.	4.6	.531
MCTVBQ3	I think the course briefing was helpful to gain a better understanding of the Final Year Project process.	4.4	.732
MCTVBQ4	I like the subject matter and research topic of my Final Year Project.	4.3	.793
MCTVBQ5	I need to have a clear grasp of the subject matter in my Final-Year Project.	4.7	.497

The statement "I think the course briefing was helpful to gain a better understanding of the Final Year Project process" (MCTVBQ3) received a mean of 4.4, highlighting the perceived value of course briefings. Two statements, "I think I can apply the knowledge and skills acquired from my previous courses to my Final Year Project" (MCTVBQ1) and "I like the subject matter and research topic of my Final-Year Project" (MCTVBQ4), both scored a mean of 4.3, reflecting respondents' appreciation of the relevance of their prior learning and interest in their project topics.

Table 5 reports the mean scores for students' perception of self-efficacy based on five statements. Three statements, "I believe that I will achieve an excellent grade for my Final Year Project" (MCSPSEQ1), "I'm confident in my ability to comprehend the briefing provided by the Resource Person for the Final Year Project" (MCSPSEQ2), and "I'm confident in my ability to successfully execute my Final Year Project to a high standard" (MCSPSEQ3), all received a mean score of 4.3, reflecting a high level of confidence among respondents regarding their ability to perform well.

Table 5

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Motivational Component-Students' of Perception of Self-Efficacy (MCSPSE)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
MCSPSEQ1	I believe that I will achieve an excellent grade for my Final Year Project.	4.3	.888
MCSPSEQ2	I'm confident in my ability to comprehend the briefing provided by the Resource Person for the Final Year Project.	4.3	.699
MCSPSEQ3	I'm confident in my ability to successfully execute my Final Year Project to a high standard.	4.3	.780
MCSPSEQ4	I'm certain I can excel in the skills covered in the earlier courses.	4.1	.842
MCSPSEQ5	Given the challenges of the Final Year Project, I plan to put in dedicated effort right from the start.	4.2	.910

The statement "Given the challenges of the Final Year Project, I plan to put in dedicated effort right from the start" (MCSPSEQ5) recorded a mean of 4.2, highlighting respondents' willingness to put in the necessary effort. Meanwhile, "I'm certain I can excel in the skills covered in the previous courses" (MCSPSEQ4) received the lowest mean score of 4.1, suggesting slightly lower confidence in mastering previously taught skills. Overall, the results demonstrate a generally positive perception of self-efficacy among respondents concerning their Final Year Project.

Table 6 displays the mean scores for control beliefs regarding learning across two statements. Both statements, "If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to do well for my Final Year Project" (MCCBLQ1) and "If I try hard enough, then I will finish my Final Year Project well" (MCCBLQ2), each received a mean score of 4.6. This suggests that respondents strongly believe in their ability to achieve success in their Final Year Project by employing effective study strategies and putting in consistent effort, reflecting a strong sense of personal control over their learning outcomes.

Table 6

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Motivational Component - Control Beliefs for Learning (MCCBL)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
MCCBLQ1	If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able do well for my Final Year Project.	4.6	.561
MCCBLQ2	If I try hard enough, then I will finish my Final Year Project well.	4.6	.528

Table 7 presents the mean scores and standard deviation for the affective component, which includes five statements related to emotional responses during the Final Year Project process. The highest mean score of 3.8 was recorded for "When I write my Final Year Project report, I worry about the chapters that I can't write" (MCAQ2), indicating a moderate level of anxiety regarding writing difficulties.

Table 7

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Motivational Component - Affective (MCA)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
MCAQ1	When I search for my Final Year Project materials, I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.	3.2	1.353
MCAQ2	When I write my Final Year Project report, I worry about the chapters that I can't write	3.8	1.166
MCAQ3	As I write my Final Year Project report, I worry about failing.	3.7	1.143
MCAQ4	I do not have an uneasy, upset feeling when I collect the data	2.9	1.095
MCAQ5	I do not feel my heart beating fast when my supervisor wants to read my draft.	2.6	1.357

A similar concern is reflected in the statement "As I write my Final Year Project report, I worry about failing"(MCAQ3) with a mean score of 3.7. The statement "When I search for my Final Year Project materials, I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students" (MCAQ1) received a mean score of 3.2, suggesting some level of comparison anxiety. On the other hand, the statements "I do not have an uneasy, upset feeling when I collect the data" (MCAQ4) and "I do not feel my heart beating fast when my supervisor wants to read my draft" (MCAQ5) had lower mean scores of 2.9 and 2.6, respectively, indicating that respondents generally did not experience intense negative emotions in these situations. These results suggest that while some students experience anxiety and worry during their final-year project, others seem to manage these emotions more effectively.

Research Question 2: What were the Malay-Major undergraduates' perceptions of burnout (emotional exhaustion and disengagement) during their final-year projects?

This section presents data to answer the second research question. In the context of this study, two sources of burnout are (i) emotional exhaustion and (ii) emotional disengagement. Table 8 presents the mean scores and standard deviation for the emotional exhaustion factor based on eight statements.

The highest mean score of 4.0 was recorded for "There are days when I feel tired before the day begins," (BEEQ1), indicating a significant level of fatigue at the start of some days. The statement "After writing a chapter, I tend to need more time than in the past to relax and feel better" (BEEQ2) followed closely with a mean score of 3.8, reflecting the need for more recovery time after completing a chapter. In contrast, "I can handle the pressure of my Final Year Project and my internship very well" (BEEQ3) received a lower mean score of 3.2, suggesting that respondents feel some difficulty in managing the pressure from both commitments. Additionally, "During data analysis, I often feel emotionally drained" (BEEQ4) and "After finishing my report, I usually feel worn out and weary" (BEEQ7) both had mean scores of 3.4 and 3.2, respectively, indicating emotional and physical exhaustion at certain stages of the process.

Table 8

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Burnout – Emotional Exhaustion Factor (BEE)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
BEEQ1	There are days when I feel tired before the day begins	3.2	1.353
BEEQ2	After writing a chapter, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.	3.8	1.166
BEEQ3	I can handle the pressure of my Final Year Project and my internship very well.	3.7	1.143
BEEQ4	During data analysis, I often feel emotionally drained.	2.9	1.095
BEEQ5	After finishing my report, I have enough energy for my leisure activities.	2.6	1.357
BEEQ6	After finishing my report, I usually feel energised.	3.3	1.151
BEEQ7	After finishing my report, I usually feel worn out and weary.	3.2	1.133
BEEQ8	I can manage to finish the chapters in my report well.	3.6	.955

Interestingly, statements like "After finishing my report, I have enough energy for my leisure activities" (BEEQ5) and "After finishing my report, I usually feel energised" (BEEQ6) recorded lower mean scores of 3.3, suggesting that respondents generally felt drained after completing their reports. Finally, "I can manage to finish the chapters in my report well" (BEEQ8) had a mean score of 3.6, showing confidence in completing report chapters despite exhaustion. These results suggest that while students experience varying levels of fatigue throughout the process, exhaustion appears to be a recurring concern during their Final Year Project journey.

Table 9 presents the mean scores for disengagement based on nine statements. The highest mean score of 3.9 was recorded for "Sometimes I feel stressed because I have to complete my Final Year Project and internship report simultaneously,"(BEDQ9), reflecting significant stress from managing both commitments. The statements "I always find new and interesting aspects in my Final Year Project" (BEDQ1) and "I find my Final Year Project to be positively challenging" (BEDQ4) both received a mean score of 3.8, indicating that respondents found certain aspects of the project engaging and challenging.

Table 9

Summary of the Mean Scores and Standard Deviation (SD) for Burnout – Emotional Disengagement Factor (BED)

Item	Statement	Mean	SD
BEDQ1	I always find new and interesting aspects in my Final Year Project	3.8	.866
BEDQ2	It happens more and more often that I talk about my Final Year Project in a negative way	2.6	1.200
BEDQ3	Lately, I tend to think less when it comes to writing to report of my Final Year Project.	3.1	1.248
BEDQ4	I find my Final Year Project to be positively challenging.	3.8	.852
BEDQ5	Over time, I can become disconnected from this type of routine.	2.8	1.112
BEDQ6	Final Year Project is the only thing that I can imagine myself doing now.	2.8	.960
BEDQ7	I feel more and more engaged in my Final Year Project.	3.6	1.043
BEDQ8	Sometimes I feel sickened by my Final Year Project.	3.5	1.269
BEDQ9	Sometimes, I feel stressed because I have to complete my Final Year Project and internship report simultaneously.	3.9	1.280

However, there was a noticeable difference in engagement in statements like "I tend to think less when it comes to writing the report of my Final Year Project" (BEDQ3) received a mean score of 3.1, and "Over time, I can become disconnected from this type of routine" (BEDQ5) recorded a mean score of 2.8. Additionally, the statement "Final Year Project is the only thing that I can imagine myself doing now" (BEDQ6) also had a mean score of 2.8, indicating that respondents sometimes felt consumed by the project to the point of mental detachment from other activities. The statement "I feel more and more engaged in my Final Year Project" (BEDQ7) received a mean score of 3.6, showing that despite occasional disengagement, some respondents continued to feel engaged in their work. Lastly, "Sometimes I feel sickened by my Final Year Project" (BEDQ8) recorded a mean score of 3.5, and there was also a tendency for students to talk about their projects negatively (BEDQ2), with 2.6, reflecting moments of frustration or fatigue. These results indicate a mix of engagement and disengagement throughout the Final Year Project process, with students experiencing both interest and fatigue at various stages.

Research Question 3: Are there significant relationships between motivational components and burnout factors of the Malay-Major undergraduates?

This section addresses the last research question of the study. Pearson's correlation was used to determine if there was a significant relationship between the motivational components and burnout factors among the respondents. Tables 10 and 11 show reporting of the correlation matrices between the Motivational Components (Value, Expectancy, and Affective) and Burnout factors (Emotional Exhaustion and Disengagement).

Table 10

Correlation matrix between the Burnout Factor - Emotional Exhaustion, and Motivational Components - Value, Expectancy, and Affective Components

Variables	Emotional Exhaustion	Value	Expectancy	Affective
Burnout factor:				
Emotional Exhaustion		.243**	.297**	.310**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.025	.006	.004
N=	85			

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

Statistically, the correlation analysis yielded a significant weak positive relationship between the emotional exhaustion factor and value component ($r = .243$; $p = .025$) at the 0.05 level of significance. It was also found that there were moderate positive relationships, notably between emotional exhaustion and expectancy component ($r = .297$; $p = .006$) and between emotional exhaustion and the affective component of motivation ($r = .310$; $p = .004$) at the 0.01 level of significance. The first analysis indicates that the emotional exhaustion factor tends to increase slightly as the value component, comprising Intrinsic Goal Orientation, Extrinsic Goal Orientation, and Task Value Beliefs, increases. The second and third analyses indicate that higher emotional exhaustion is modestly associated with greater expectancy (e.g., belief in one's ability to succeed) and greater affective domain. These findings suggest that although

the respondents were experiencing burnout, they still perceived the task assigned to them as valuable and believed in their ability to perform the task, but to a limited extent.

Another burnout factor that was also studied in relation to motivational components was disengagement. Table 11 exhibits the correlation matrix results between the Burnout Factor - Disengagement and Motivational Components - Value, Expectancy, and Affective Components. The results revealed a weak negative relationship between Disengagement and Expectancy. Interestingly, the results between Disengagement and Affective Component indicated a positive relationship, but with a weak magnitude.

Table 11

Correlation matrix between the Burnout Factor - Disengagement, and Motivational Components - Value, Expectancy, and Affective Components

Variables	Disengagement	Value	Expectancy	Affective
Burnout factor-				
Disengagement		-.082	-.281**	.257**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.457	.009	.018
N=	85			

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

However, there was no significant relationship between the burnout factor and Value ($r=-.082$; $p=.457$) as the p-value was greater than the .05 significance level. The analyses yielded two contrasting relationships between Disengagement and the other two motivational components. It was found that Disengagement was poorly correlated with Expectancy, where $r=-.281$ and $p=.009$, in a negative manner, but the Affective component recorded the opposite correlation coefficient ($r=.257$; $p=.018$) at the .05 level of significance. These indicate two directions: (1) as disengagement increases, individuals' expectancy (i.e., their belief in their ability to succeed) tends to decrease, and (2) as disengagement increases, affective responses (e.g., emotional reactions or feelings toward the task) also increase.

Discussion

Perceived Motivational Components among Final Year Malay-Major Undergraduates

The study unleashed many interesting yet significant findings. Regarding the value components, it revealed that students derived significant intrinsic satisfaction from their final year projects, particularly through the process of understanding and interpreting their findings. This corroborates a study by Talib Al Shuaili (2025), which reported that intrinsic motivation strongly predicts academic achievement and fosters deeper learning attitudes. On the same note, Pranitasari (2022) emphasized that self-efficacy and the need for achievement assumed a critical role in thesis completion. These suggest that fostering the value components, such as intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, should be a priority in academic settings, especially in independent tasks like final year projects. This has practical implications for how educators design curricula, mentor students, and structure assessments. It was also found that extrinsic motivation, such as the desire to demonstrate competence to family and peers, was also prominent. This reflects findings from Sari et al. (2021), who reported that social validation and external recognition significantly influence students' motivation to

complete undergraduate theses. These insights underscore the importance of social reinforcement in academic persistence. Regarding the emphasis on subject matter understanding, students valued intellectual clarity and relevance, which aligns with what Ryan and Deci (2000) articulated before: intrinsic motivation increases when learners perceive tasks as meaningful and aligned with personal interests.

Next is the significant finding related to the Expectancy component. The study showed high levels of self-efficacy among the final year undergraduates, which were reflected in their confidence regarding expected grades, comprehension of project briefings, and overall performance. This supports Bandura's (1977) theory that self-efficacy influences effort, persistence, and resilience. Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017) and Zhang et al. (2024) highlighted that students with higher emotional regulation skills experienced lower burnout and maintained stronger academic engagement over time. Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017) demonstrated that expectancy-value beliefs mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. Their study found that students with strong self-efficacy and positive expectations of success tend to perform better and experience greater satisfaction. Likewise, Meng and Zhang (2023) confirmed that academic self-efficacy enhances engagement and performance, acting as a buffer against burnout and dropout risks. Finally, the findings indicate that students strongly believed in the effectiveness of study methods and the value of hard work in completing their final-year projects. This reflects a high level of academic commitment and preparedness, consistent with the expectancy component of Pintrich and De Groot's framework. Students' belief in their ability to succeed aligns with Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, which posits that confidence in one's capabilities enhances persistence and performance.

Despite this confidence, the affective component shows that students went through a mix of emotions during their final year projects. Some reported experiencing significant stress and anxiety, particularly during critical phases of their projects. This is corroborated by Mujidin et al. (2023), who found that final-year students often face psychological strain due to prolonged research demands, supervisor interactions, and deadline pressures. Similarly, Olson et al. (2025) observed that emotional exhaustion and cynicism are common among students juggling multiple academic responsibilities, with burnout often eroding engagement.

Perceived Burnout Factors among Final Year Malay-Major Undergraduates

In terms of emotional disengagement, it was found that many students found their projects intellectually stimulating and positively challenging. However, for some they expressed negative sentiments, particularly during the writing phase. This corroborates Knowles and Dixon's (2015), who argue that emotional and cognitive engagement can fluctuate during final-year projects, and that students may disengage when tasks become repetitive or lack perceived relevance. Finally, the highest stress levels were reported when students had to complete both their final-year project and internship report simultaneously. This finding underscores the need for institutional support and scheduling flexibility, as overlapping deadlines can exacerbate emotional exhaustion and reduce academic efficacy.

Finally, the study found that emotional exhaustion was linked to all three types of motivation. Even when participants felt tired or burned out, they still saw their tasks as important, believed they could succeed, and had emotional reactions to the work—though

these feelings were not very strong. On the other hand, disengagement showed mixed results. It wasn't related to how valuable the task felt, but it was linked to lower confidence in success. Interestingly, people who felt disengaged still had emotional responses to the task, which might reflect frustration or lingering interest. Overall, the findings suggest that burnout doesn't completely erase motivation, but disengagement can weaken a person's belief in their ability to do well.

Relationships between Motivational Components and Burnout Factors

This study found statistically significant positive correlations between emotional exhaustion and three motivational components, which are value, expectancy, and affective domain, among Malay-major undergraduates working on their final year projects. These findings demonstrate how motivation and burnout can coexist in high-pressure academic contexts. A weak positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and the value component suggests that those who emphasize their academic tasks, whether through intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic recognition, or perceived task relevance, may also experience slightly higher emotional strain. This aligns with findings by Rustam et al. (2023), who observed that students deeply invested in their final projects often face heightened stress due to the emotional weight of expectations and the desire to produce meaningful work. Ryan and Deci (2000) mentioned this causal association before; while intrinsic motivation enhances engagement, it can also intensify emotional exhaustion, especially when students feel personally accountable for their outcomes.

Besides that, moderate positive correlations between emotional exhaustion and both the expectancy component and the affective component indicate that those who believe in their ability to succeed and who are emotionally engaged with their tasks are also more likely to report the increased levels of emotional fatigue. This is in line with Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, emphasizing confidence in one's capabilities can drive persistence, however, this may also lead to stress when academic pressure becomes pressing.

Interestingly, although students report burnout symptoms, they still perceive their projects as valuable and believe in their ability to complete them, although they have limited emotional reserves. A study by Carranza Esteban et al. (2023) mirrors the finding; they found that while academic self-efficacy positively predicts research motivation, emotional exhaustion does not significantly reduce motivation levels, suggesting that students may remain driven despite feeling overwhelmed. Additionally, Zhang et al. (2024) highlighted that students with higher emotional regulation skills experienced lower burnout and maintained stronger academic engagement over time. This suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing emotional awareness and coping strategies could help students manage the emotional toll of final year projects more effectively.

The analysis of emotional disengagement revealed two contrasting yet significant relationships with motivational components, which are expectancy and the affective components, while showing no significant association with the value component. A moderate negative correlation between disengagement and expectancy suggests that students who feel emotionally disconnected from their final year projects tend to have lower confidence in their ability to succeed. This finding aligns with Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, which posits that belief in one's capabilities is essential for sustained engagement and effort. When

students lose confidence in their academic abilities, they are more likely to withdraw cognitively and emotionally from their tasks. A weak positive correlation was found between disengagement and the affective component, indicating that students who feel more emotionally reactive—whether through stress, anxiety, or frustration also report higher levels of disengagement. This may reflect a maladaptive emotional response, where heightened emotional arousal does not translate into productive engagement but instead contributes to withdrawal. Liu et al. (2024) demonstrated that while emotional engagement can enhance learning outcomes, unmanaged emotional intensity may lead to burnout and disengagement, especially in high-pressure academic environments.

These findings highlight the complex interplay between motivation and emotional disengagement. While strong expectancy beliefs may protect against disengagement, heightened emotional responses can exacerbate it. The absence of a significant link with task value suggests that emotional and cognitive factors may outweigh perceived importance in determining students' sustained engagement.

Conclusions and Implications

The study mainly investigated the causal relationships between motivational components (that is, expectancy, value, and affective domains) and burnout factors (emotional exhaustion and disengagement) among Malay-major undergraduates undertaking final year projects. The findings discovered that emotional exhaustion was positively correlated with all three motivational components, suggesting that the undergraduates who were moderately motivated, particularly those who acknowledge the value of their work and believe in their ability to succeed, may also experience increased emotional pressure. In contrast, disengagement showed a negative relationship with expectancy, indicating that the undergraduates lacking confidence in their academic abilities have the tendency to be emotionally withdrawn from their projects. Notably, disengagement was positively correlated with affective responses, suggesting that strong emotional responses may contribute to withdrawal, and this can happen even when motivation is present. There was no significant relationship found between disengagement and the value component. This suggests that although they perceived the FYP as vital, it may not be sufficient to sustain emotional engagement. Thus, the study has successfully answered the research questions.

The results of this study hold significant implications for educational institutions, educators, and policymakers. By emphasizing the vital role of value, expectancy, and affective components in shaping learners' motivation, this study underscores the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance these motivational factors. Educational institutions can develop programs and strategies to foster intrinsic and extrinsic goals, task value beliefs, self-efficacy perceptions, and control beliefs for learning, thereby cultivating a more motivated and engaged student body. Moreover, the identification of exhaustion and disengagement as primary burnout factors highlights the importance of addressing these issues to prevent students from losing interest in their academic pursuits, especially in completing final-year projects. Institutions should consider implementing support systems, such as counseling services, stress management workshops, and academic mentoring, to help students manage academic pressure and maintain their motivation. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate deeper into the interaction between motivational components and burnout factors among final-year students. They might examine additional variables, such as peer

support, the academic environment, and coping mechanisms, in influencing motivation and reducing burnout.

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