

Exploring Global Motivation Among College Students in Sabah, Malaysia: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore 70 students' global motivation; they were enrolled in three private colleges in Sabah, Malaysia. The objectives were to assess (1) if any significant age, gender, and ethnic differences existed in college students' global motivation, (2) if any significant differences existed in college students' global motivation based on a hypothesized value of 3.5, and (3) the percentages of agreement on college students' global motivation. To collect data, the Global Motivation Scale was administered online; responses were then transferred onto a spreadsheet to be analyzed using SPSS 26.0. First, based on Kruskal-Wallis H test, no significant age and ethnic differences existed in college students' global motivation; based on Mann-Whitney U test, no significant gender differences existed in the construct. Based on Wilcoxon signed rank test and a hypothesized value of 3.5, seven of the items were significant at $p < 0.001$. The same test indicated that six of the items were significant at $p < 0.05$. Third, low percentages (37.2 to 68.6 percent) of college students strongly agreed/agreed on 23 of the items; only an average (70.0 to 84.3 percent) strongly agreed/agreed on five of the items. Overall results showed that college students tend to have low to average levels of global motivation. In light of the findings, several recommendations were made on ways to enhance college students' global motivation in Sabah, Malaysia.

Contribution/Originality: This research offers a valuable contribution by examining the global motivation among college students in Sabah, Malaysia. Besides narrowing the gap that exists in student motivation in the Malaysian context, it is the first quantitative study that examines college students' global motivation in the Bornean state. Therefore, it adds to the very limited evidence base on college students' overall drive for learning, which includes intrinsic (knowledge, stimulation, accomplishment) and extrinsic (identified, introjected, external) factors that help them successfully attain personal and professional goals.

1. Introduction

Motivation is the driving force behind every action that college students take, which is paramount for knowledge acquisition and preparation for the real world. Since motivation often exerts a powerful influence on academic success, it provides the emotional fuel for them to persist and remain engaged. Strong motivation equips college students with the verve to strive harder in their tertiary studies. In contrast, students with low motivation will find themselves lagging, struggling to survive in classes or even severing their academic journey. Besides accelerating skills acquisition and enhancing overall productivity, learning motivation extends beyond academic attainment as it fosters critical thinking, innovative problem-solving, and generic attributes. Moreover, highly motivated students are more proactive with their academic pursuits and persevere more in overcoming barriers to achieve their personal and intellectual goals. Lastly, a high level of motivation is particularly crucial for non-traditional students who often have to simultaneously deal with their studies, work, family responsibilities, and other personal commitments ([Excelsior University, 2023](#)).

When inundated by time-consuming research projects and other challenging or mundane tasks, many college students tend to procrastinate and find it difficult to commence any work ([University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n. d.](#)). They often struggle just to stay focused when studying or doing assignments in the dormitory, apartment, or library. One of the key differences between successful and unsuccessful students is not due to their innate ability, but their own motivational levels. Those who promptly arise to undertake unpleasant or boring tasks often assert that they can complete them despite regarding them as drudgery. Since motivating themselves to concentrate in class, complete assignments, and perform all the necessary things required to fulfil the degree requirements is extremely challenging, college students need to acquire more effective motivational strategies to self-regulate their own learning, as well as confront the factors that impact their learning.

Students can lose motivation at college because they are uncertain about a major, choose the wrong major, dislike their school, and are unable to integrate into campus life ([Ludovici, n. d.](#)). First, students who are unsure of what major to pursue often feel demotivated, and this feeling becomes worse the longer they delay their decision. They experience even more pressure where they are compelled to declare a major after taking all the general classes. Second, some students declare a major as a freshman but subsequently realize that they really dislike it. The major can be too hard, or they have chosen it not knowing what they really want. Third, some students dislike their school; they may feel that class sizes are too big or realize that there are extra requirements to graduate. Fourth, after the excitement of acceptance, some students realize that they have

a hard time fitting in. The lack of social integration often makes them feel alienated or lost in a crowd. Lastly, earning bad grades is a fast way to demotivate students, which subsequently leads to more bad grades.

More serious issues that can demotivate students include clinical depression, thyroid conditions, anxiety issues, and discontinuing prior treatment (Ludovici, n. d.). First, many college students are twice-exceptional (2e); for example, they may be gifted and talented in a specific area but have a disability or emotional disorder. Students who are 2e may experience depression, which can adversely affect their focus, concentration, energy levels, and ultimately, motivation to succeed. Second, students with thyroid problems often exhibit the symptoms of depression characterized by lethargy, tiredness, and apathy. Third, college students with high anxiety are constantly worried about their assignments, tests, and other responsibilities. Overwhelmed by racing thoughts, fear, and other negative internal states, they are unable to lead a fulfilling campus life. Lastly, some students may have received treatment for physical or emotional issues before college enrollment; however, they may neglect their health conditions while trying to transition to college life.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Research shows that motivation plays a critical role in college students' academic performance, engagement, and general wellbeing. Motivated students who are driven to study have better chances to achieve academic success and fulfil their ambitions. Besides demonstrating healthy behaviors, they can concentrate on specific outcomes, which helps them pay undivided attention to academic work for protracted periods. Their immersion enables them to intensely focus on their studies, which contributes to improved academic performance and ultimately, achievement motivation (Garn & Stenling, 2024; Huang & Chen, 2025; Husain et al., 2025; Steinmayr et al., 2019). However, the literature reviewed in this paper indicated that empirical studies on student motivation are scarce in Sabah, Malaysia. Quantitative research on the global motivation among college students in Sabah is important because it is the core driver for academic engagement, persistence, and academic success. The intrinsic and extrinsic factors of motivation also affect them in several aspects of academic life, including overall wellbeing, self-assertiveness, and career readiness.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Researching college students' global motivation holds great significance. First, it provides valuable insight into their characteristics since it explains why they set goals, strive for achievement, or experience emotions such as empathy, compassion, altruism, or anxiety. Second, research on global motivation also increases understanding of where it originates, why it varies, what increases/decreases it, or what aspects of it that can/cannot be modified. Third, as aforementioned, very limited research is available on college students' global motivation in Sabah, Malaysia. Current findings will add new knowledge on this crucial construct that encourages educators to implement effective strategies to enhance college students' global motivation in acquiring novel knowledge and skills, besides protecting their psychosocial wellbeing and leading a meaningful campus life. Lastly, current findings will shed light on what college students can do to enhance their global motivation to become not only proactive problem-solvers, but also burgeoning professionals. The purpose of the current study was to examine students'

global motivation at three private colleges in Malaysia. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. Are there any significant age, gender, and ethnic differences in college students' global motivation?
- ii. Are there any significant differences in college students' global motivation based on a hypothesized value of 3.5?
- iii. What are the descriptive statistics on college students' global motivation and what do they imply?

2. Review of Literature

The literature review provides a scholarly survey and critical analysis of existing published works on student motivation, while introducing readers to the current state of knowledge and key theories of the construct. Further, it helps identify gaps by revealing unanswered questions on student motivation, justifying the current research. Besides showing familiarity with the construct, it explains how the current research extends and differs from previous studies. Lastly, this literature review covers the impact of motivation on academic achievement, educational outcomes, students' psychosocial aspects, and English learning.

2.1. Impact on Academic Achievement and Higher Educational Outcomes

In an earlier study, [Lin, McKeachie, and Kim \(2003\)](#) examined the impact of motivation on the academic performance of college students. Findings showed that students with high intrinsic and average extrinsic motivation tend to get better marks than those with low or high extrinsic motivation. Findings imply that, although extrinsic motivation is often perceived as incompatible with learning, a moderate amount of it, combined with intrinsic values, can favorably impact academic achievement amongst college students. Further, [Próspero and Vohra-Gupta \(2007\)](#), who investigated the impact of motivation and academic integration on academic achievement among college students, found that both variables tend to contribute significantly to academic achievement. Specifically, academic integration tends to significantly contribute to higher grade point averages, while intrinsic motivation is significantly related to better grades. The impact of motivation on academic performance among university students was also studied by [Afzal et al. \(2010\)](#). Findings showed that 34 percent of the students' academic performance tends to be significantly related to intrinsic motivation. [Findings](#) imply that exploratory students are more motivated to seek new experiences, knowledge, or possibilities, while altruistic ones are more motivated to prioritize others over self-interest.

The relationship between motivational orientation and academic achievement among college students was examined by [Guiffreda et al. \(2013\)](#). Findings revealed that students tend to be motivated to attend college (1) to fulfil their intrinsic motivation needs for autonomy and competence, which was significantly related to persistence and GPA, (2) to contribute to the community in the future and (3) to establish peer relationships despite their lower GPAs. These findings implied that colleges need to develop programs to better engage faculty with students since favorable faculty-student relationships can enhance student motivation to persevere at college, while establishing positive peer relationships. On the other hand, [Edgar et al. \(2019\)](#) examined the impact of learning motivation on university transition success among undergraduate students. Findings showed that self-assurance is the primary aspect of motivation that influences students' transition

experience; students with higher self-assurance before transition tend to perform significantly better in the first year compared to those with lower self-assurance.

In their study, [Steinmayr et al. \(2019\)](#) examined the impact of achievement motivation on the academic achievement among high school students in relation to self-concept, task values, goals, and achievement motives. Findings indicated that self-concept, motives, task values, and achievement motives tend to explain a significant amount of variance in students' academic performance, with self-concept acting as the most powerful predictor. Lastly, achievement motives and self-concept were found to be closely related, with students who believe in their ability to succeed showing greater hope for success.

On the other hand, [Hudig et al. \(2020\)](#) examined the impact of self-transcendent, self-oriented, and extrinsic motivation on the academic performance of first-year university students. Findings revealed that a high-impact mindset tends to make students strive for better grades, a purposeful career, and a meaningful social life. In contrast, a low-impact mindset tends to make students display a surface-level perspective on attending university, often prioritizing immediate social benefits, societal conformity, or misguided assumptions about career security. Additionally, a social-impact mindset tends to equip students with a strong, self-transcendent sense of purpose to create positive societal and environmental change rather than just personal achievement. Lastly, a self-impact mindset tends to make students focus on personal gain, career advancement, and self-interest, besides exhibiting self-centered and, at times, argumentative, behaviors in academic or professional settings.

Factors of motivation among pre-service teachers and 30 faculty members were studied by [Reash and Larwin \(2021\)](#). Findings showed that care tends to be a multidimensional construct that links motivation among college students and faculty members, implying a positive impact on educational outcomes and success. Additionally, findings also indicated that faculty members tend to rate the usefulness of coursework significantly higher than pre-service teachers. These findings imply that, while the coursework is designed to prepare pre-service teachers for their professional careers, it is not adequately aligned with their expectations, indicating that teacher preparation programs should demonstrate a clearer link to the real world.

The relationships among undergraduate students' motivation, academic functioning, and motivation regulation were analyzed by [Garn and Stenling \(2024\)](#). Findings revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation tend to be significantly and positively related to motivation regulation, with a stronger relationship between extrinsic motivation and motivation regulation. Further, motivation regulation was found to be significantly and positively related to study time. Findings imply that students with higher motivation regulation can better handle challenges, leading to better performance. Higher motivation regulation also enables them to switch from extrinsic (rewards) to intrinsic (interest) motivation or manage anxieties, supporting sustained academic effort. In brief, regulation motivation can boost academic drive, which improves intellectual performance; this, in turn, reinforces positive self-efficacy and further enhances regulation and motivation, thus creating a feedback loop that is crucial for navigating the demands of higher education.

Additionally, [Husain et al. \(2025\)](#) explored the link between student motivation and academic exhaustion in relation to well-being and academic achievement. Findings revealed that extrinsic motivation, including grades and social recognition, tends to be

significantly related to academic exhaustion. While displaying intrinsic motivation for course materials and challenging tasks, students also tend to intensely focus on getting good marks and social approval. These findings imply that universities need to strive to increase students' intrinsic motivation, while reducing the over-emphasis of extrinsic rewards (good grades or social acceptance) to help prevent academic exhaustion.

The effect of academic motivation on academic procrastination in relation to academic performance among undergraduate students was investigated by [Wei and Mohd Noordin \(2025\)](#). Findings of their study revealed that the undergraduate students tend to exhibit a moderate level of academic procrastination. These findings imply that students with high intrinsic motivation and low procrastination tend to attain high academic performance. In contrast, students with moderate levels of both motivation and procrastination typically demonstrate average academic outcomes. Besides, students with low intrinsic motivation and high levels of procrastination are often linked to high procrastination and low performance. Students who display high motivation, on the other hand, are consistently and positively linked to higher levels of academic performance.

The interrelationships among academic writing performance, learning motivation, metacognitive strategies, and anxiety disorders among college students were studied by [Xu et al. \(2025\)](#). Findings showed that learning motivation and metacognitive strategies tend to significantly mediate the association between academic writing performance and anxiety disorders, with learning motivation and metacognitive strategies being negatively related to anxiety disorders. Findings imply that students who are motivated and practice positive thinking (with less anxiety) perform better in academic writing. Conversely, anxiety tends to undermine their motivation and strategy use, which in turn, worsens their writing performance. Hence, motivation and metacognitive strategies can have a chain-mediating effect, where anxiety affects motivation, which in turn, impacts metacognition, and ultimately, impacts academic writing.

The impact of learning motivation on low-income college students' academic performance was explored by [Huang and Chen \(2025\)](#). Findings revealed that intrinsic motivation tends to be significantly and positively linked to academic achievement in relation to effectual learning techniques and reduced emotional/mental pressure. Findings imply that low-income students' motivation can be affected by (1) socioeconomic status whereby they often have to strive against the odds, (2) cultural clash whereby they often experience individualistic university values that conflict with their own communal cultures, (3) financial strain that impedes cognitive function and motivation, and (4) the lack of parental/family support and inadequate institutional resources.

2.2. Impact on Motivation and Other Psychosocial Variables

In their quantitative study, [Chen et al. \(2023\)](#) examined the links among academic motivation, life satisfaction, social support, and learning burnout among university students. Findings showed that academic motivation tends to be significantly and positively predicted by life satisfaction, while partially mediating the impact of life satisfaction on learning burnout. Additionally, social support tends to moderate the effect of academic motivation on learning exhaustion. Findings imply that supportive environments reduce stress and improve the mood among students, thus enhancing their intrinsic motivation. Academic motivation, on the other hand, acts as a bridge, translating life satisfaction into active learning behaviors. In essence, when students feel connected

and supported, not only are they more intrinsically driven to learn, but they also find academic tasks more satisfying and are less likely to feel overwhelmed or experience learning exhaustion.

On the other hand, [Tackett et al. \(2023\)](#) explored the academic motivation, self-efficacy, and self-esteem among undergraduate students. Findings demonstrated that education and nursing majors tend to be significantly related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, while psychology majors tend to be significantly related to intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy. These findings imply that education and nursing majors tend to be driven by both internal and external motivation, probably because their degree requires them to get hands-on experience, while psychology majors may be mostly theory-based with little practical experience in some institutions.

In their investigation, [Sánchez-Bolívar et al. \(2023\)](#) examined the motivation and social skills among 292 university students. Findings showed that students' motivation levels tend to be significantly influenced by sociability, communication, optimistic/pessimistic thinking, empathy, and self-confidence, thus highlighting the relationship between learning motivation and social competence. Moreover, students exposed to different cultures and languages tend to display a more open and diverse perspective, resulting in higher levels of intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, students involved in novel and exciting activities tend to experience a greater sense of personal fulfilment, thus increasing their intrinsic motivation, with cultural enrichment as a motivational factor.

The impact of motivation on the happiness of Gen Z university students was investigated by [Fauzi et al. \(2024\)](#). Findings revealed a significant association between happiness and self-efficacy, active learning, and achievement goals. Findings imply that happiness often boosts learning motivation because happy students find joy and curiosity in learning, which in turn promotes active participation, question-asking, and critical thinking. Moreover, happy students are more likely to persist through difficulties, viewing challenges as rewarding rather than discouraging. Additionally, motivation often boosts happiness because it drives students to develop competence, leading to feelings of accomplishment and control. It also provides a sense of purpose and meaning of life, which drives students to gain intrinsic satisfaction through goal attainment and self-actualization.

2.3. Impact on Malaysian Students' English Learning

[Zubairi and Sarudin \(2009\)](#), who examined Malaysian university students' motivation to learn a foreign language, revealed that students tend to be highly motivated to learn a foreign language because it is useful for their future career, while making them more knowledgeable. [Thang and Jaafar \(2011\)](#), who examined Malaysian secondary students' motivation in learning English, indicated that science students tend to be more intrinsically motivated to learn English. Besides, students with high and average proficiency tend to score significantly higher in intrinsic motivation than those with low proficiency.

Additionally, [Isa et al. \(2018\)](#) investigated the motivation of Malaysian secondary school students to learn English. Findings revealed that students' motivation to learn English tends to be related to proficiency level, self-improvement, and external rewards. Further, [Subramaniam et al. \(2019\)](#), who examined the relationship between motivation and English communication among Malaysian pre-university students, found a significant and

positive relationship between the two variables. Lastly, [Khairulzaim and Tan \(2023\)](#), who studied the relationship between undergraduate students' motivation and academic achievement, disclosed that a significant relationship tends to exist between the two variables.

Overall, the above studies imply that the key extrinsic motivators of learning English include (1) academic success, whereby students desire to pass the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) and get good grades, (2) career prospects, whereby students desire to obtain better job opportunities and professional advancement, and (3) further studies, whereby students need English proficiency to succeed in higher education. On the other hand, major intrinsic motivators for learning English include (1) self-development, whereby students need English proficiency for personal growth and confidence in using the language, (2) cultural interest, whereby students desire to use English to connect with other cultures and English speakers, (3) and enjoyment, whereby students require English to enjoy language activities, such as role-playing, singing, and watching films.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design, Approach, and Location

This study adopted a quantitative approach that included a descriptive survey and inferential statistics. A questionnaire was administered as a research instrument to collect data on college students' global motivation. This approach is advantageous because it allows the current and direct use of data, besides saving time, cost, and energy. It also provides a relevant sample in accordance with the central limit theorem, which stipulates that a minimum sample of 30 is sufficient to yield results representative of the college student population in the Kota Kinabalu area. Kota Kinabalu was chosen as the research location because a majority of the private colleges in Sabah are located in this city, which makes data collection more convenient, cost-effective, and time-efficient.

3.2. Sample and Justification

Seventy college students ($n = 70$) from three private colleges in Kota Kinabalu constituted the sample. The sample size could generate meaningful data because the central limit theorem (CLT) states that 30 or more subjects are adequate in providing statistical power for educational survey studies ([Roscoe, 1975](#); [RUBIKTOP, 2023](#)). Besides, the CLT ascertains that, with 30 or more subjects, sampling distributions will reach normality. From the current sample, reliable data could be derived, with relatively high confidence in the statistical results. In brief, the current sample ensured enough power to identify modest effects in the statistical tests employed in the research.

Respondents come from pluralistic communities and have good proficiency in English and the Malay Language. About 47.1 percent are male students, while 52.9 percent are female students. Age-wise, 64.3 percent are 18-20, 17.1 percent are 21-23, 10 percent are 24-26, and finally, 8.6 percent are above 26. Ethnicity-wise, 58.6 percent are Kadazandusuns, 10 percent are Malays, and 31.4 percent are of other ethnicities (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents ($n = 70$)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	33	47.1

	Female	37	52.9
Age	18-20	45	64.3
	21-23	12	17.1
	24-26	7	10.0
	Above 26	6	8.6
Ethnicity	Kadazandusun	41	58.6
	Malay	7	10.0
	Others	22	31.4

3.3. Instrument

A self-administered survey was used as the main source of primary data for the study. The Global Motivation Scale (GMS-28), designed by [Guay, Mageau, and Vallerand \(2003\)](#), was used to collect data. It consists of 28 Likert-scale items, ranging from 5 = Strongly agree to 1 = Strongly disagree. [Cessarea, Purwono, and Kumalasari \(2023\)](#) conducted psychometric testing on the GMS-28 on 383 participants aged 18-25 years. Findings revealed that the scale has reliability coefficients that ranged from 0.70 to 0.81. Further, confirmatory factor analysis showed that all aspects have acceptable model fit and all the items significantly measure the GMS-28 dimensions, implying that the scale is suitable for use for international studies. To determine its suitability for the current study, it was pilot tested on 25 college students. SPSS 26.0 was used to analyze data; results yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89. The full score is 140 (high = 126-140, average = 98-125, low = less than 98).

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

After being assured of anonymity, strict confidentiality of responses, and the voluntary nature of the study, college students were asked to complete the motivation scale on Google Forms. Data were transferred onto a spreadsheet and subsequently analyzed using SPSS 26.0. First, Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in students' global motivation in relation to ethnicity and age, while Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if there were any significant differences in terms of gender. Lastly, percentages of agreement for strongly agree/agree on each item were collapsed to provide an overall impression on college students' global motivation.

4. Findings

First, Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed no significant differences in college students' global motivation by way of age and ethnicity, while Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant differences in terms of gender (see [Table 2](#)).

Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U Results

Fixed Variables	Non-parametric Test	p-value
Gender	The Mann-Whitney U Test	0.320
Age	The Kruskal-Wallis H Test	0.214
Ethnicity	The Kruskal-Wallis H Test	0.758

Second, Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed that seven of the items were significant at $p < 0.001$ based on a hypothesized value of 3.5. The same test revealed that six of the items were significant at $p < 0.05$ (see [Table 3](#)).

Table 3: The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results (Hypothesized Value = 3.5)

Item	p-value
I do things in order to feel pleasant emotions	0.003*
I do things because I do not want to disappoint certain people	0.075
I do things to help myself become the person I aim to be	< 0.001***
I do things because I like making interesting discoveries	< 0.001***
I do things because I would beat myself up for not doing them	0.282
I do things because of the pleasure I feel as I become more and more skilled	< 0.001***
I do things although I do not see the benefit in what I am doing	0.466
I do things because of the sense of well-being I feel while I am doing them	0.025*
I do things because I want to be viewed more positively by certain people	0.010*
I do things because I chose them as means to attain my objectives	0.007*
I do things for the pleasure of acquiring new knowledge	0.001*
I do things because otherwise I would feel guilty for not doing them	0.398
I do things for the pleasure I feel mastering what I am doing	0.001*
I do things although it does not make a difference whether I do them or not	0.660
I do things for the pleasant sensations I feel while I am doing them	0.081
I do things in order to show others what I am capable of	0.111
I do things because I chose them in order to attain what I desire	0.003*
I do things for the pleasure of learning new, interesting things	< 0.001***
I do things because I force myself to do them	0.463
I do things because of the satisfaction I feel in trying to excel in what I do	0.065
I do things even though I do not have a good reason for doing them	0.895
I do things for the enjoyable feelings I experience	< 0.001***
I do things in order to attain prestige	0.250
I do things because I choose to invest myself in what is important to me	< 0.001***
I do things for the pleasure of learning different interesting facts	< 0.001***
I do things because I would feel bad if I do not perform them	0.878
I do things because of the pleasure I feel outdoing myself	0.296
I do things even though I believe they are not worth the trouble	0.387

*** $p < 0.001$; * $p < 0.05$

Descriptive statistics revealed that low percentages (37.2 to 68.6 percent) of college students strongly agreed/agreed on 23 of the items; only five items received average (70.0 to 84.3 percent) proportions of agreement. Overall results showed that college students tend to have low to average levels of global motivation (see [Table 4](#)).

Table 4: Percentages of Agreement on Global Motivation Items

I do things ...	1	2	3	4	5	4+5 (Collapsed)
to feel pleasant emotions	1.4%	1.4%	32.9%	44.3%	20.0%	64.3%
because I do not want to disappoint certain people	4.3%	5.7%	28.6%	42.9%	18.6%	61.5%
to help myself become the person I aim to be	0.0%	1.4%	17.1%	40.0%	41.4%	81.4%
because I like making interesting discoveries	0.0%	4.3%	27.1%	42.9%	25.7%	68.6%
because I would beat myself up for not doing them	7.1%	12.9%	37.1%	25.7%	17.1%	42.8%
because of the pleasure I feel as I become more and more skilled	1.4%	5.7%	22.9%	41.4%	28.6%	70.0%

although I do not see the benefit in what I am doing	5.7%	15.7%	31.4%	30.0%	17.1%	47.1%
because of the sense of well-being I feel while I am doing them	2.9%	0.0%	38.6%	38.6%	20.0%	58.6%
because I want to be viewed more positively by certain people	0.0%	8.6%	30.0%	32.9%	28.6%	61.5%
because I chose them as means to attain my objectives	0.0%	4.3%	32.9%	42.9%	20.0%	62.9%
for the pleasure of acquiring new knowledge	0.0%	1.4%	34.3%	38.6%	25.7%	64.3%
because otherwise I would feel guilty for not doing them	8.6%	8.6%	37.1%	31.4%	14.3%	45.7%
for the pleasure I feel mastering what I am doing	0.0%	1.4%	34.3%	38.6%	25.7%	64.3%
although it does not make a difference whether I do them or not	4.3%	8.6%	44.3%	24.3%	18.6%	42.9%
for the pleasant sensations I feel while I am doing them	1.4%	2.9%	41.4%	32.9%	21.4%	54.3%
in order to show others what I am capable of	2.9%	10.0%	30.0%	30.0%	27.1%	57.1%
because I chose them in order to attain what I desire	0.0%	2.9%	35.7%	35.7%	25.7%	61.4%
for the pleasure of learning new, interesting things	0.0%	4.3%	11.4%	51.4%	32.9%	84.3%
because I force myself to do them	4.3%	5.7%	35.7%	40.0%	14.3%	54.3%
because of the satisfaction I feel in trying to excel in what I do	2.9%	2.9%	34.3%	45.7%	14.3%	60.0%
even though I do not have a good reason for doing them	5.7%	5.7%	41.4%	31.4%	15.7%	47.1%
for the enjoyable feelings I experience	1.4%	2.9%	15.7%	51.4%	28.6%	80.0%
in order to attain prestige	5.7%	1.4%	55.7%	22.9%	14.3%	37.2%
because I choose to invest myself in what is important to me	0.0%	0.0%	21.4%	44.3%	34.3%	78.6%
for the pleasure of learning different interesting facts	0.0%	1.4%	30.0%	38.6%	30.0%	68.6%
because I would feel bad if I do not perform them	4.3%	4.3%	45.7%	27.1%	18.6%	45.7%
because of the pleasure I feel outdoing myself	2.9%	2.9%	41.4%	37.1%	15.7%	52.8%
even though I believe they are not worth the trouble	2.9%	7.1%	48.6%	28.6%	12.9%	41.5%

Strongly disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly agree = 5

5. Implications and Recommendations

5.1. Implications

Current findings indicated that the college students in the study tend to demonstrate low to low average levels of global motivation, which were supported by previous research. [Azar and Tanggaraju \(2020\)](#) maintained that English learning in Malaysia tends to be adversely affected by students' lack of motivation. [Ying et al. \(2021\)](#) found that low academic motivation among Malaysian undergraduates tends to be related to external factors beyond their control; for example, the pandemic has resulted in an abrupt change in delivery that has affected students' academic performance in several aspects, including mental health and stress levels. Additionally, [Govindarajoo, Selvarajoo, and Ali \(2022\)](#)

discovered that low motivation tends to be one of the factors that adversely affects Malaysian students' academic achievement, implying that educators need to adopt innovative teaching and learning strategies to increase students' learning motivation. Lastly, [Osman et al. \(2023\)](#) found that students from B40 families underachieve in Malaysian education due to the lack of motivation; even when they get into university, some terminate their studies or are expelled. These findings suggest that university students need to increase their grit through self-regulated learning and find ways to be more motivated in their academic pursuit.

[Hamzah et al. \(2022\)](#) reiterated that many young adult learners in Malaysia tend to demonstrate disinterest in attending school due to several factors, including punitive teachers, toxic friends, heavy homework, and even boring canteen food. Besides that, [Hong \(2023\)](#) found that nearly half of the SPM leavers from 2021 were not motivated to pursue higher education, an alarming figure that might reflect a major weakness of the Malaysian education system, which could affect the country's socioeconomic development in the long run. Lastly, [Espanola and Ouano \(2024\)](#) noted that Malaysian tertiary students' motivation loss and behavioral disengagement are often associated with negative social agents, including instructors' rigidity and negligence, peers' indifference and selfishness, and family members' burdensome attributes, which often lead to psychological frustrations amongst tertiary students who are already experiencing difficulties in their academic work, family obligations, and peer expectations.

5.2. Recommendations

5.2.1. Study Methods, Self-care, and Metacognition

To increase students' chances of academic success and well-being, higher institutions of learning can offer a course in study methods to enhance their motivation and self-efficacy ([University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n. d.](#)). First, college students need to focus on effort over ability by believing that they can and compelling themselves to accomplish challenging tasks with enthusiasm. Second, they should set goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (SMART) to keep themselves focused; for example, they need to eliminate distracting things, such as phone applications, television, Netflix, or junk food, besides creating a designated study space. Third, they should pace themselves by chunking their assignments into small segments of 30 to 60 minutes with small breaks in between. Fourth, they should set priorities by starting early in the morning and handling the most unpleasant tasks first, which will make them feel better throughout the rest of the day. Lastly, they should consider the location in which they concentrate best and where they will be most motivated to start work and persist. Some students focus better in the library, while others prefer the silence and seclusion of a study carrel at the library.

Additionally, students can adopt some self-care strategies to improve their motivation. Self-care includes getting enough sleep and creating a routine and healthy habits by incorporating rest, exercise, and study time into their daily schedule and strictly adhering to it. Most importantly, they should also drink enough water as their body needs it to function and improve energy. Apart from that, they should try to consume healthy foods regularly since they need the stamina to promptly complete academic tasks ([University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n. d.](#)).

Moreover, students can adopt some metacognitive strategies to motivate themselves. First, they can reflect on things that make them feel contented, fulfilling, or enthusiastic about, while trying to align with productive actions. Allocating time on activities that bring them joy and gratification is highly motivating. Further, besides rewarding themselves for accomplishing difficult tasks, students can identify strategies that hold them accountable, for instance, by procuring a new planner, seeing an academic coach, or seeking peer tutoring. Second, students need to combat their fear of failure by reminding themselves that their self-worth does not entirely depend on their performance ability because it should also include personal development, social success, and overall progress. Third, students can compose a note to their future self to remind themselves of their goals and peruse it when they find themselves feeling unmotivated. They can also soliloquize their aspirations and ambitions, while uttering uplifting and reassuring words to themselves; for example, by complimenting themselves and reinforcing themselves that they can achieve success ([University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n. d.](#)).

5.2.2. Reflection, Positivity, Consequences, Long-term Goals, and Accountability

To motivate themselves, students can practice reflection, remain positive and optimistic, and consider the consequences of their actions ([University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, n. d.](#)). First, when they have a task to accomplish, students can reflect before, during, and after it by examining their perceptions of the task, what they should do to complete it, and how they feel after they have done it. Second, it is suggested that they remain positive, instead of complaining or procrastinating when they attempt to fulfill goals. They can write the problems or obstacles down and get back to them as soon as they have obtained the resources and support to resolve them. Third, they can anticipate the desired consequences of doing academic work. While procrastinating on a particular task can be compelling, visualizing the reward for goal accomplishment can be a more powerful motivator. Fourth, students can act as optimistic thinkers by reminding themselves of their long-term goals during times when they feel discouraged. For example, they can remind themselves how a particular task or step gets them closer to their goal by sticking a sketch/photo of their future destination on the wall. To avoid feeling immobilized, they can picture themselves in a desired situation or location. Lastly, students can also adopt accountability strategies to increase their motivation. They can set visual reminders and alarms on their phone and laptop to remind and encourage themselves of their goal, for instance, by installing a motivational quote in relation to their ambition on their mobile phone or laptop. Lastly, students can share their goals with a dependable friend who helps keep them accountable with their progress.

5.2.3. Online Intervention

[Wang et al. \(2025\)](#) discovered that first-year college students' autonomous motivation can be enhanced through an online intervention program grounded on the self-determination theory. First, autonomy support can be provided by training instructors to use noncontrolling, informational language to acknowledge students' feelings. Second, to promote needs satisfaction, students can be offered activities that satisfy autonomy (choice), competence (mastery), and relatedness (connection). Third, student-centered training (direct intervention) can be implemented to promote self-regulated learning, goal setting, and mindfulness. College students can use digital tools to acquire skills such as planning, monitoring, and self-assessment. Further, they can implement structured personal goal-setting with specific plans to improve motivation. They can also practice mindfulness to boost competencies and manage stress. Lastly, the curriculum and

environment design can be characterized by relevance, choice and collaboration, and feedback to enhance students' motivation. Students' learning can be connected to their personal values and real-world societal impact. In addition, they can receive autonomy-supportive tasks, self-paced learning, group work, and peer tutoring. Lastly, informative feedback, video feedback, and assessment exemplars can be provided to build competence.

5.2.4. Journaling, Goal-listing, and Constant Renewal

[Ludovici \(n. d.\)](#) suggested that people can increase their motivation through journaling, goal-listing, and constant renewal. First, college students can practice journaling by keeping a diary with a daily record of feelings, thoughts, actions, or other things that have occurred. Further, they can deliberately explore their inner selves by asking what is crucial to them, what they would like to achieve in the foreseeable future, and how they would like to live their life. This self-reflection process can generate deeper awareness into their own attitudes or actions, which acts as a driving force to modify undesirable habits. Second, college students can make a list of important goals for their future and milestones to achieve them; this enables them to find the positive aspects of life underlying their motivation. Asking what they would like to do when they complete their degree or what they would like their life to look like five years later can inspire them to take the necessary steps to reach their goals, while helping them solidify the reality that the present student life has a deep connection to their future. Third, college students need to constantly renew their motivation by reinforcing their motivation regularly. For example, through daily journaling, goal planning, and exploring what they can achieve after graduation, they will be motivated to establish a progressive and dynamic mindset that makes all the present drudgery worthwhile.

5.2.5. Motivation and Self-discipline

To gain academic success, college students need both motivation and self-discipline ([Ludovici, n. d.](#)). While motivation sparks their desire to start a goal, self-discipline enables students to persist, consistently working toward it even when their motivation fades. Motivation gives them the reason to persevere, while discipline provides the structure to modify bad habits, manage distractions, and endure challenges. Self-discipline allows students to drag themselves out of bed even though they are still tired or force themselves to go to the gym even though they are not really keen on exercising. Furthermore, self-discipline compels students to observe their work routines or to get themselves to the library when they are not thrilled about it or when their motivation is low. Self-discipline enables students to avoid distractions, decline invitations, or tell friends that they will see them later. With strong self-discipline, students do not care much about thoughts, feelings, or temporary mood states, but they only focus on goal attainment. To sum up, students can become more productive by cultivating and strengthening self-discipline. The more they eliminate distractions, say "no" to fun activities, or trek off alone to the library, the more they are building and strengthening their self-discipline.

5.2.6. Motivation Regulation Strategies

According to [Schmitz and Wiese \(2006\)](#), motivation regulation provides the groundwork for improved academic functioning, which can lead to enhanced student achievement and retention. It is the deliberate process that allows students to manage their own drive to

start, sustain, or intensify their efforts on tasks. Acting as a key part of self-regulated learning, it allows them to overcome waning interest and improve achievement by using specific cognitive and behavioral strategies. Students can monitor their motivational state (for example, perceived value or success expectancy) and apply techniques to maintain their focus and persistence, especially when the tasks get difficult, while helping them bridge the gaps between knowing what to do and actually doing it. College students who monitor and manage their motivation are more likely to engage in daily study behaviors. Motivation regulation skills can be integrated into course content or taught in an academic skills class. Also, motivation regulation resources can be provided to incoming first-year students during orientation sessions. Motivation regulation is especially applicable when college students focus on learning outcomes, such as getting good grades. Therefore, motivation regulation interventions are more relevant in situations that stimulate high levels of extrinsic motivation. Motivation regulation strategies which are beneficial to college students include (1) value enhancement whereby they can remind themselves the real reasons why the tasks are important, (2) self-talk whereby they can use positive or realistic internal dialogue to manage feelings, (3) goal setting whereby they can break large tasks into smaller, manageable steps, (4) environmental control whereby they can change their study space to reduce distractions, and (5) reward systems whereby they can plan small rewards for completing milestones.

6. Final Thought

While the current study yielded some useful findings on college students' motivation, its generalizability was limited by some constraints. First, although respondents are all college students, there are obvious differences in their global motivation; thus, greater diversity in the sample is needed to yield more reliable and valid data on their global motivation that might be influenced by different social and geographic locations, institutional requirements, and practices. Therefore, future research can investigate specific factors that influence global motivation, such as socioeconomic status, course of study, and other psychosocial variables.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study has strictly adhered to all ethical procedures involving the use of human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents who were informed of their anonymity, with their responses kept strictly private and confidential. They were also informed that the study was at low risk and that they could stop participating at any time without any repercussions.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this study.

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