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A Descriptive Analysis of Students' Learning Motivation in Higher Education

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Nurjayanti*, Susilawati[ab]
[1]Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Indragiri, Indonesia
[2]Institut Agama Islam Ar-Risalah, Indonesia
Corresponding author: jayantiratma8@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

Understanding student motivation is essential for promoting engagement, persistence, and academic success. Motivation influences how students approach learning tasks, manage challenges, and sustain their efforts over time. This study employed a quantitative descriptive method, utilizing a survey with an 18-item online questionnaire on a five-point Likert Scale as the primary data collection instrument. The respondents were 169 higher education students in Rengat town, selected using simple random sampling. Data were analyzed descriptively, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. The main findings indicated that most of the students' overall motivation was categorized into "good". Sub-factors rated as "excellent" included students' passion and desire to succeed, students' encouragement and need for learning, students' hopes and aspirations for the future, and students' appreciation in learning. Sub-factors categorized as "good" were students' interesting activities in learning and students' conducive learning environment. The study found that most higher education students demonstrated good motivation, with several key motivational sub-factors showing excellent levels. This research offers valuable insights for educators aiming to enhance student engagement and academic success in higher education.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Learning Motivation.*

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation is widely recognized as a fundamental and one of important factors in the learning process, consistently impacting students' engagement, effort, persistence, and ultimately, their academic achievement (Agusina et al., 2021). It serves as the driving force that initiates, directs, and sustains goal-directed actions, prompting individuals to embrace certain tasks while avoiding others (Yilmaz, 2017). The concept of motivation is complex and has been a central focus of research across various scientific disciplines, including psychology and education, leading to the development of a wealth of theories and constructs (Alkaabi, 2017). Within educational contexts, student motivation is considered one of the most essential factors for teaching and learning effectiveness (Leitão, 2021).

Numerous theoretical perspectives have sought to explain human motivation. Historically, these include psychodynamic (focusing on biological factors and unconscious drives), behaviorist (emphasizing rewards and punishments, though now less favored in education), and humanistic approaches (focusing on growth and self-fulfillment). However, the cognitive perspective has come to dominate motivation research in psychology and education, viewing the mind as processing information and making decisions (Alkaabi, 2017). The Self-Determination Theory, for instance, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation, categorizing it into intrinsic motivation (engagement due to internal interests, joy, and excitement) and various extrinsic motivation layers (performing an action with an anticipation of an outcome other than the learning itself), as well as amotivation or lack of intention to engage. It is a broad framework for understanding factors

that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation, autonomous extrinsic motivation, and psychological wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Another relevant theory is the Goal-Orientation Theory, which suggests that student motivation varies based on learning objectives (Nayir 2017). It categorizes learners into: 1) Mastery Goal Orientation. Individuals focused on self-development and acquiring new knowledge and skills, characteristic of intrinsic motivation; 2) Performance-Approach Goal Orientation. Individuals who compare themselves to others and desire to appear more intelligent and successful; 3) Performance-Avoidance Goal Orientation. Individuals who try to hide failures and are afraid of making mistakes. Moreover, the indicators of learning motivation according to Uno are, there is an eagerness and desire to succeed, there is encouragement and need in learning, there are hopes and ambitions for the future, there is appreciation in learning, there are interesting activities in learning, and the existence of a conducive learning environment (Novita & Rusdi, 2021).

Studies consistently show that higher motivation levels correlate with greater success in learning, particularly in subjects like English, which is often a compulsory foreign language from primary to tertiary levels in countries like Indonesia (Purnama et al., 2019). Another research result showed that motivation has a direct effect on learning behaviour, and also directly affect learning achievement. Motivation and learning behaviour jointly affect the learning achievement of the higher education students (Tokan & Imakulata, 2019). The results of the random effect model proved that motivation has a positive effect on student achievement (Orhan, 2017). The other result revealed that both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation have a positive relationship with learning outcomes within a blended learning environment, both of which are conducive to improving students' English linguistic competence and facilitating their psychological development of English learning (Peng & Fu, 2021). Not only that, motivation variables were also more strongly correlated with both e-teaching materials and e-assessments key aspects relative to others such as e-discussion, and e-grade checking and feedback on higher education students' in learning (Elsharief & Mohamed, 2021).

Despite the acknowledged importance of motivation, the actual enthusiasm and engagement of students in the learning process can sometimes be low (Pranawengtias, 2022). While previous research has explored the correlation between student motivation and achievement, some studies note that the specific nuances and types of motivation most frequently employed by students at tertiary levels remain underexplored (Agusina et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is a recognized need to identify the dominant motivational factors that influence students' learning, particularly in higher education settings. Research has also highlighted that the relationship between student motivation and class engagement levels requires further investigation, especially considering demographic variables such as gender, school type and how motivation may fluctuate across different grade levels (Nayir, 2017). While cooperative learning has demonstrated benefits in increasing student motivation, its efficacy has been predominantly studied in Western educational contexts, indicating a gap in understanding its successful implementation and influence on student learning motivation in other regions, such as Vietnamese higher education. Moreover, observations in English as a foreign language classrooms reveal that despite generally high reported motivation, learning outcomes may not always align, and a significant proportion of students may still exhibit a lack of motivation, suggesting that current teaching strategies, often controlling, may not adequately nurture intrinsic drive (Vibulphol, 2016). Lastly, a comprehensive and simultaneous meta-analytic test of the full Self-Determination Theory sequence is needed to advance understanding of how different autonomy-support providers impact student motivation, as previous research shows teachers' support predicts motivation more strongly. Additionally, there are mixed findings on the effects of specific game elements on student motivation, indicating a need for clearer understanding of their individual impacts. The emergence of new technologies also introduces new student motivations, such as academic content creation, information seeking, novelty, and convenience, which warrant further exploration (Jishnu et al., 2023).

Against this backdrop, the present research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of students' learning motivation within higher education. Drawing on insights from existing literature, this study aims to describe students' learning motivation by exploring various perspectives and factors that shape it. Specifically, it intends to explore how is student's higher education learning motivation and their specific sub-factors. By addressing these objectives, this research aims to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive description of student learning motivation, offering valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance student engagement and academic success in higher education.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the level of learning motivation among higher education students in a regional context. A quantitative descriptive approach is appropriate for identifying trends, summarizing characteristics, and providing a statistical profile of a population based on numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It involves a survey with a questionnaire, the approach focuses on describing or analyzing the study's results without aiming for broader conclusions. This method involves techniques for searching, classifying, and analyzing natural phenomena. The primary goal is to identify specific sub-factors of motivation related to the research question.

A quantitative descriptive method is considered appropriate for studies aiming to describe or analyze results and understand the underlying phenomena, rather than to generalize widely. It helps in studying the causes of human behavior and its changes over time to understand motivation. Such a study seeks to uncover motivations and gain a comprehensive understanding of influencing factors.

The respondents of the study were 169 students of higher education in Rengat town, Indragiri Hulu Regency, Riau Province. Simple random sampling was used in determining the sample, where the sample was selected based on the researchers' objectives and the research problem.

A questionnaire was used as a primary data collection instrument. For instance, the study used an online questionnaire with 18 items for data collection. The questionnaire items were presented with close-ended choices, using a five-point Likert Scale. Data were collected through an online questionnaire consisting of 18 items designed to measure students' motivation in learning. The items were grouped into six sub-factors. (1) Passion and desire to succeed, (2) Encouragement and need for learning, (3) Hopes and aspirations for the future, (4) Appreciation in learning, (5) Interesting activities in learning, and (6) Conducive learning environment. Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Data collected from questionnaires are typically analyzed descriptively. This involves processing data using percentages and descriptive explanations. Statistical procedures, such as calculating the mean and standard deviation for different factors or statements, are used to summarize the responses. The analysis aims to recap the students' responses and display findings. The results allow for conclusions about levels of motivation, such as whether students are highly motivated or exhibit good motivation or categorized into poor motivation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Data Presentation of Students' Motivation

The data of this research are the scores of students' motivation. The scores from the students' motivation results are analyzed using quantitative data analysis for the findings. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are included. Frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations of the variables are presented in the descriptive statistical analyses. The data on students' motivation are obtained from students' scores in answering the questionnaires given. The descriptions of the data are as follows :

Passion and desire to succeed

The data of the students' passion and desire to succeed are obtained from students scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 100 and the lowest score is 70 and mean score is 94.74. It was indicated that most of the students' passion and desire to succeed were categorized into excellent. 87.24% students' passion and desire to succeed were in excellent category, 11.73% were in good category, and 1.02% were in fair category.

Table 1. Passion and desire to succeed

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	171	87.24%
Good	80-89	23	11.73%
Fair	70-79	2	1.02%
Poor	60-69	0	0%
Fail	0-59	0	0%

Encouragement and need for learning

The data of the students' encouragement and need for learning are obtained from students scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 100 and the lowest score is 60 and mean score is 91.63. It was indicated that most of the students' encouragement and need for learning were categorized into excellent. 76.53% students' encouragement and need for learning were in excellent category, 20.91% were in good category, 1.53% were in poor category and 1.02% were in fair category.

Table 2. Encouragement and need for learning

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	150	76.53%
Good	80-89	41	20.91%
Fair	70-79	2	1.02%
Poor	60-69	3	1.53%
Fail	0-59	0	0%

Hopes and aspirations for the future

The data of the students' hopes and aspirations for the future are obtained from students scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 100 and the lowest score is 60 and mean score is 91.78. It was indicated that most of the students' hopes and aspirations for the future were categorized into excellent. 75% students' hopes and aspirations for the future were in excellent category, 22.44% were in good category, 2.04% were in fair category and 0.51% were in poor category.

Table 3. Hopes and aspirations for the future

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	147	75%
Good	80-89	44	22.44%
Fair	70-79	4	2.04%
Poor	60-69	1	0.51%
Fail	0-59	0	0%

Appreciation in learning

The data of the students' appreciation in learning are obtained from students scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 100 and the lowest score is 60 and mean score is 88.62. It was indicated that most of the students' appreciation in learning were categorized into excellent. 61.22% students' appreciation in learning were in excellent category, 52.71% were in good category, 2.04% were in fair category and 1.02% were in poor category.

Table 4. Appreciation in learning

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	120	61.22%
Good	80-89	70	35.71%
Fair	70-79	4	2.04%
Poor	60-69	2	1.02%
Fail	0-59	0	0%

Interesting activities in learning

The data of the students' interesting activities in learning are obtained from students scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 100 and the lowest score is 50 and mean score is 80.45. It was indicated that most of the students' interesting activities in learning were categorized into good. 45.91% students' interesting activities in learning were in good

category, 28.57% were in excellent category, 17.34% were in fair category, 7.65% were in poor category, and 0.51% were in fail category.

Table 5. Interesting activities in learning

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	56	28.57%
Good	80-89	90	45.91%
Fair	70-79	34	17.34%
Poor	60-69	15	7.65%
Fail	0-59	1	0.51%

Conducive learning environment that enables students to study well

The data of the students' conducive learning environment are obtained from students' scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 100 and the lowest score is 30 and mean score is 78.26. It was indicated that most of the students' conducive learning environment were categorized into good. 37.75% students' conducive learning environment were in good category, 29.59% were in excellent category, 16.32% were in fair category, 12.24% were in poor category, and 4.08% were in fail category.

Table 6. Conducive learning environment

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	58	29.59%
Good	80-89	74	37.75%
Fair	70-79	32	16.32%
Poor	60-69	24	12.24%
Fail	0-59	8	4.08%

Students' Motivation

The data of the students' motivation are obtained from students scores based on the questionaire. The highest score is 93 and the lowest score is 50. Mean score is 81.78 and standar deviation is 8.01. Students' passion and desire to succeed, students' encouragement and need for learning, students' hopes and aspirations for the future and students' appreciation in learning were categorized into excellent. Students' interesting activities in learning, students' conducive learning environment were categorized into good. The descriptions of the data are as follows:

Table 7. Students' Motivation

Classification	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	90-100	40	20.41%
Good	80-89	101	51.53%
Fair	70-79	39	19.9%
Poor	60-69	14	7.14%
Fail	0-59	2	1.02%

Based on the table 7, it was indicated that most of the students' motivation were categorized into good.

From a theoretical perspective, these results align closely with self-determination theory (SDT), which place that intrinsic motivation is fostered when three basic psychological needs are met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The high ratings in future aspirations and personal drive to succeed suggest that many students are intrinsically motivated, pursuing learning not only for grades or external rewards but for self-fulfillment and personal growth. Furthermore, students' appreciation of learning and need for learning reflect a deeper internalization of educational goals, showing how extrinsic motivators may become self-regulated and aligned with personal values. According to self-determination theory, this transformation from controlled to autonomous motivation is critical for constructive social development, personal well-being, and sustained academic engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

When viewed through the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, students' strong passion and desire to succeed and aspirations for the futur may correspond with the higher-level needs of esteem and self-actualization. The pursuit of meaningful goals, respect from others, and the desire to fulfill one's potential often drive students to maintain academic

motivation, particularly in higher education where future careers are at stake. The theory has been very influential in development studies (Rojas et al, 2023).

The findings also partially resonate with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which categorizes motivational drivers into two groups: motivators or intrinsic factors and hygiene factors or extrinsic conditions (Alshmemri, 2017). In this study, motivators such as passion and aspirations were rated higher than hygiene-related factors like the learning environment or activity variety. This suggests that students derive more motivation from internal satisfaction and long-term goals than from external conditions, though supportive environments remain important.

Moreover, the "good" ratings in interesting activities and learning environment indicate that extrinsic elements still play a role in supporting and maintaining motivation. According to Herzberg, while hygiene factors do not necessarily lead to high motivation, their absence can cause dissatisfaction. Thus, higher education institution should strive to maintain conducive, engaging, and interactive learning spaces as a foundation for intrinsic motivators to flourish.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that students' motivation is largely driven by internal factors grounded in personal aspirations and values, while external factors provide essential support. These insights reinforce the relevance of motivation theories in understanding and improving learning behavior in regional higher education settings.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of the data analysis, it can be concluded that most of students' motivation were categorized into good. Most of students' passion and desire to succeed, students' encouragement and need for learning, students' hopes and aspirations for the future and students' appreciation in learning were categorized into excellent. Most of students' interesting activities in learning and students' conducive learning environment were categorized into good. By building on these findings, further research is needed to be conducted. To enhance generalizability, expand the findings, and deepen understanding, future research should be conducted across multiple regions and incorporate diverse methodological approaches.

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