

Perception of academic background and learning motivation of students in higher education: Analysis in the context of english language learning

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara persepsi mahasiswa terhadap latar belakang akademiknya dan motivasi belajar pada jenjang pendidikan tinggi, terutama dalam konteks belajar bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Banyak penelitian yang menemukan bahwa latar belakang akademik sering diandaikan sebagai prediktor keberhasilan akademik pada tingkat lanjutan. Namun, temuan empiris menunjukkan bahwa faktor-faktor psikologis seperti persepsi diri, motivasi intrinsik, serta faktor lingkungan belajar memiliki peran yang tidak kalah signifikan. Artikel ini menerapkan kajian dinamika hubungan tersebut dengan menyoroti perbedaan

mahasiswa yang memiliki latar belakang akademik linier dan non-linier, serta menerapkan teori motivasi dan self-efficacy. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa persepsi positif terhadap kesiapan akademik cenderung memperkuat motivasi belajar, meskipun korelasinya tidak selalu signifikan secara kuat. Implikasi dari hasil penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya intervensi pedagogis, penguatan regulasi diri, serta dukungan akademik bagi mahasiswa dengan latar belakang.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the relationship between students' perceptions of their academic background and their motivation to learn in higher education, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. Many studies have found that academic background is often assumed to be a predictor of academic success at the advanced level. However, empirical findings indicate that psychological factors such as self-perception, intrinsic motivation, and learning environment factors play an equally significant role. This article applies a study of the dynamics of this relationship by highlighting the differences between students with linear and non-linear academic backgrounds, and applying theories of motivation and self-efficacy. The results indicate that positive perceptions of academic readiness tend to strengthen learning motivation, although the correlation is not always strongly significant. The implications of this research emphasize the importance of pedagogical interventions, strengthening self-regulation, and academic support for students with different backgrounds.

Introduction

The academic achievement of students in higher educational institutions is not only influenced by cognitive factors but also by other associated factors. The academic background of the students is often considered to be an early predictor of the



preparedness of the students for advanced academic knowledge. Students with a linear academic background are often considered to have acquired more knowledge compared to those with a non-linear background. But the assumption is not supported by the facts.

In terms of learning English as a foreign language, there are different challenges, especially from the side of the students and lecturers. Limited vocabulary, motivation, and academic preparedness of students are some of the challenges that affect student performance in reading classes (Budianto et al., 2025). This proves that preparedness in academics is not only based on the major but also depends on the students' perception of themselves.

Similarly, the study done by (Yuniar, 2021) revealed the existence of differences in the correlation between students with English Language Education background and non-English Language Education background and their learning motivation. It was revealed that students with linear educational background have a positive correlation between academic perception and learning motivation, but for non-linear students, the correlation does not have the same direction. These facts support the idea that self-perception is important in the development of learning motivation.

The recent developments in the growth of higher education have also been accompanied by the growth of academic mobility and the diversity of the backgrounds of the students. For instance, postgraduate studies are no longer dominated only by graduates of their respective fields of study, but also include students from other fields of study. This is a new dynamic in the process of learning. Lecturers are challenged to respond to the diversity of the initial abilities of the students.

Additionally, academic demands in higher education require critical, analytical, and reflective thinking skills. Students are not only expected to understand the concepts, but they are also expected to integrate their prior knowledge with new concepts. In this case, academic background is a psychological factor that may affect one's self-confidence and willingness to confront complex academic issues. Academic anxiety may result from a negative perception, while a positive perception may enhance one's self-confidence.

Discussion

The theory of self-efficacy, advanced by (Bandura, 1997), implies that the perception that an individual has about their capabilities affects their attitude towards learning. When students perceive that they are sufficiently equipped in their background, they are likely to show more confidence in their learning. Conversely, their negative perception about their background could affect their learning and participation in class.

This is mediated by various factors, which include social support, learning strategy, and self-regulation. In EFL learning, adaptive learning strategy has been found to enhance student engagement, especially those from non-linear backgrounds. "Learning motivation is composed of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and this is discussed in the Self-Determination Theory of Deci (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the case of

higher education, intrinsic motivation is a major aspect to be considered, as students have to be more independent in their learning."

Recent studies showed that students who have a positive perception in academics tend to display good self-regulation and higher persistence in doing assignments (Setiawan et al., 2023). Moreover, the application of interactive and collaborative learning strategies has a profound effect in engaging students.

The results of the study revealed that the relationship between academic background and learning motivation is not a straightforward cause-and-effect relationship. Although academic background gives students an initial foundation in the form of conceptual knowledge and previous learning experiences, the sustainability of academic performance in higher education is also subject to various psychological and contextual factors. Students with linear academic backgrounds are more likely to exhibit high self-confidence levels in the early stages of their academic career, especially with regard to the understanding of basic terms and concepts.

On the other hand, students from non-linear backgrounds tend to experience a longer adaptation period. Doubts about their ability are common, particularly when they encounter lectures based on English literature. However, in some cases, non-linear students tend to possess compensatory motivation. This group of students makes greater efforts to bridge the gap through the use of references, class discussions, and the internet. This phenomenon proves that the perception of ability is a key factor in mediating the relationship between objective background and learning motivation.

In terms of institutional support, the different academic backgrounds of non-linear students could be thought of as a potential rather than a barrier. Non-linear students may have different inter-disciplinary perspectives, which can be beneficial in classroom discussions. Hence, lecturers need to be supportive in providing different learning strategies, which include collaborative learning, conceptual scaffolding, and the use of authentic materials. The matriculation program could be another bridge in providing academic mentoring.(Budianto & Yuniar, 2023)

In general, this analysis verifies that, indeed, academic background is just one of the factors in the learning environment of higher education. The role of self-perception, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, learning strategies, and environmental support, among others, is dynamic, and their interaction determines academic experience. The linear perspective of academic background, which this approach might emphasize, might lead us to overlook the adaptability of highly motivated and highly effective learners.

Moreover, the inclusion of learning technology offers an opportunity for addressing the gap in terms of preparation for learning. Learning technology offers an opportunity for the student to access additional information on their own, and the learning process becomes more autonomous and individualized. The student has the freedom to adjust the learning pace according to their own requirements without feeling socially different. Hence, the role of technology becomes an empowering role.

Conceptually, the above discussion points to the following understanding: academic background is a starting point variable which influences the interaction of other variables in the learning ecosystem. Self-perception, intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, social support, and the quality of learning strategies are closely linked in the construction of the academic experience. Thus, a comprehensive and holistic approach is necessary in the analysis of learning success in higher education.

Finally, it is also important to point out that diversity of backgrounds is not a structural impediment per se. That is, with appropriate support, students from different backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed. The present discussion, as a matter of fact, highlights the necessity of a paradigm shift from a model where only linear readiness is of primary concern, towards a model where motivation and self-perception are of primary concern in terms of developing the quality of learning.

Conclusion

The present study reveals that there is a connection between academic background and student motivation for learning, but this connection is not absolute. The perception of being adequately prepared for academic work plays a crucial role in determining the motivation, engagement, and coping capacity of a student to overcome academic obstacles. Students with linear academic background are characterized by higher initial self-confidence, whereas non-linear students possess a potential for developing compensatory motivation through intensified efforts. In terms of learning the English language, academic readiness includes not only knowledge mastery but also linguistic and psychological readiness. A learning environment, learning strategies, and institutional support, such as matriculation, have been found to be involved in building student self-efficacy and motivation.

The assumption here is that there is a need for a diverse academic policy that will be inclusive to all. Lecturers are expected to apply a pedagogic approach that will encourage active participation, reflection, and self-regulation. Academic success, therefore, is no longer considered to be a result of background suitability, but rather a process that is influenced by a combination of self-perception, motivation, and the quality of the experience. In the end, it is the responsibility of higher education to create a "learning ecosystem" where all students, regardless of their academic background, are enabled to learn. In addition to enhancing academic success, it promotes independence and "learning resilience."

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