

A Study of Relationship Between Learners' Drive and Burnout

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Abstract

School burnout (or in this study, it refers to tertiary education) reflects a physical and emotional exhaustion faced by a student when he/she is juggling to balance everything (i.e. their studies, extra-curricular activities, etc.). Burnout seems to be related to students' motivation in various dimensions. This study is conducted to determine the relationship between burnout and learners' drive to learn, in terms of affective and expectancy components. The survey is using a cross-sectional way and it is a quantitative study. The data is collected via Google Form, in which it consists of five sections. 255 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies (FSPPP) in UiTM have responded to the questionnaire. It is found that students' motivation is correlated with burnout, even though it is in an odd manner (i.e. extrinsic motivation is more powerful than intrinsic). Therefore, creative teaching and learning environments, plus adaptation of new technology might be useful to ensure that students' motivational level can suppress their burnout.

Keywords: Undergraduate Students; Motivation; Burnout

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Burnout among students can be referred to as “*feeling exhausted because of study demands, having a cynical and detached attitude toward study, and feeling incompetent as a student*” (Schaufeli, et. al., 2002). Students’ motivation to study can possibly be affected by their capability to cope with their daily routines and extra-curricular activities. According to Felaza, et. al. (2020) students’ intrinsic motivation need to be focused on, as it will help the students to overcome their feeling of detachment from their studies and performance.

Xu and colleagues (2021) mentioned that Malaysian and Chinese students exhibited low levels of motivation due to burnout. Nonetheless, Chinese college students have a more apparent level of learning burnout, since they showed signs of severe depression and having a low sense of achievement. In addition, a negative relationship is discovered in the same study, in which if the students possessed more learning motivation, their level of burnout could be declined. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Kotera and Ting (2021), it is found that Malaysian students’ mental well-being would be low (as part of a burnout manifestation) when their intrinsic motivation level is low. It is due to a condition called obsessive passion whereby the students have the tendency to mix up their studies with other matters (such as family matters (Gani, 2016; cited by Kotera and Ting (2021))). When these matters go out of hand, it creates problems in other parts of their life, including their study.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The Covid-19 outbreak has tremendously impacted the education system and academic life. When the pandemic started, educational institutions were required to take strong measures by enforcing social isolation and commencing online learning. However, students in university find out that online learning has increased their stress levels due to interruption of learning, inadequate mentoring and lack of concentration at home, such as in studies by Azmi et al. (2022); von Keyserlingk et al. (2022); and Yang & Yang, (2022). At present, the pandemic seems to have subsided. As life returns to normal, the focus must be paid to the transition from online learning to face-to-face education among learners. Taking into this consideration, it is expected that learners exposed to high rates of stress disclose feelings of being overwhelmed and fatigued.

Academic interruptions and concerns about the usual high workload, colleagues’ competition, inadequate university support, insufficient supervision, financial issues, and academic dissatisfaction influence chronic stress and result in academic burnout. Maslach & Leiter (2016) indicate that burnout is a psychological syndrome that develops from long-term exposure to stress. It can impact the individual’s life associated with a lack of motivation and accomplishment. For example, in Malaysia, the former Higher Education Minister has reported that 17,613 university studies dropped out in 2021, while 5,165 students postponed their studies. Among the reasons are personal and family health problems.

Burnout was originally associated with care workers, and various studies have been undertaken to investigate it in their employment environment. However, since 2008 the study of school burnout has emerged and been used by researchers (Kiuru et al., 2009; Salmela-Aro et al., 2008). Students are exposed to stress and burnout as

they regularly travel to class. In addition, they must respond to the demands of a manager (the teacher) and fulfil standard tasks (exams and assignments) for which resources are provided. Aguayo-Estremera et al. (2023) pointed out that school burnout is a major problem for students. They find out that 9-21 per cent of students are at risk of developing burnout which may lead to poor academic performance, absenteeism and abandonment of studies. Therefore, it shows that there is a need to explore the issue of burnout among students as the school, college, or university can be considered a workplace for them.

1.3 Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore perception of learners on their learning motivation and causes of burnout. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How does motivational scale influence learners' drive to learn?
- How does the expectancy component influence learners' drive to learn?
- How does affective component influence learners' drive to learn?
- How do learners perceive their cause of burnout?
- Is there a relationship between learners' drive to learn and burnout?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Learning Motivation

Motivation orientation is a crucial element that might influence learning behaviour and strategies. The basic concept of learning motivation includes four components: the reasons why we want to learn, the strength of our desire to learn, the kind of person we are and the task, and our estimation of what it requires of us (McDonough, 2007; Shilova et al., 2020). The two main motivation orientations that researchers frequently investigate are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Wong and Wong (2021), intrinsic motivation is defined as self-directed learning ability. The authors asserted that students who are capable of self-directed learning could employ effective and flexible learning strategies effectively and flexibly to cope with various learning and assessment tasks. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to external motivations such as recognition, grades, and competition in learning, as well as social aspects and extrinsic rewards. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence on academic performance can also be supported by blended or online learning behaviour (Meng & Hu, 2022). Other factors influencing learners' motivation include lack of knowledge, diligence, unappealing subject content, students' condition and relationships with teachers and classmates (Shilova et al., 2020).

2.2 Burnout among Learners

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress and overload. It is a common problem among learners, especially students in high-pressure academic settings such as universities and colleges. Anbar and Eker (2008) have highlighted that burnout is a prevalent condition that can affect the performance of individuals in various professions. Among these professions, teaching has been identified as one of the jobs most exposed to burnout due to the significant number of individuals that teachers need to connect with, including students, colleagues, parents, and the local community. Furthermore, Maslach and

Schaufel (1993) have identified four factors that contribute to burnout, including engagement with service recipients, individuals, work environments, and societies. Maslach et al. (2001) have further explained that burnout can be caused by two main factors, namely the condition factor and the individual factor. The condition factor is influenced by job characteristics, job description, and job attitude, while the individual factor is influenced by personality traits such as resilience. Individuals with low resistance are more susceptible to burnout. Additionally, Brock and Grady (2002) have noted that burnout is associated with various physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual conditions.

2.3 Past Studies on Learning Motivation

Many studies have been done to investigate the learning motivation among students. A concept paper by Filgona, Sakiyo, Gwany & Okoronka (2020) highlighted the types of motivation that were divided in two which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The intrinsic motivation is more influential rather than extrinsic motivation as the learner is not being influenced by outside factors. As the intrinsic came from the inside of the people by fostering a good motivation driven in themselves by enjoying the feeling in any situation. Besides this study also states about the dimension of student's motivation which are competence, control interest and relatedness. This dimension is important to determine the motivation level of the learners. The conclusion of this study is that learning motivation has the potential to affect the learners to learn and a good learning environment will enhance the learner's academic achievement.

Moreover, a study by Syamsuddin (2021) agrees that social and emotional dynamic intelligence is required to develop a positive learning environment to influence learner motivation. This is essential for the learner to develop a sense of responsibility and create a good feeling in handling any situation. This study was concerned on the issues of teacher and students where both have their own parts to develop learning motivations.

2.4 Past Studies on Burnout among Learners

Many studies have been done to investigate the issue of burnout among learners. For example, Vale et al. (2021) reported that there was a prevalence of 31.1 per cent of medical students with three-dimensional burnout (emotional exhaustion, cynicism and academic efficacy), 37 percent of two-dimensional burnout (emotional exhaustion and cynicism), while 44.8 percent of one-dimensional burnout (emotional exhaustion). Furthermore, the situation has affected their daily hours of sleep in which 54 percent of them slept between 3 to 6 hours per night and at least 8 per cent used regular sleep medications. In addition, 90 percent of students claimed that they do not feel they receive enough emotional support from the faculty at their universities. Meanwhile, a study by Andrade et al. (2023) shows that being single affected all burnout domains among graduate students across universities in Hungary and other European countries who participated in the survey. They also found high academic burnout levels among those with university dropout intentions, who were dissatisfied with the university dealing with the pandemic and did not feel supported by the university.

Various factors may lead to learners, especially in university. Many past studies have investigated these factors, such as learners' expectations and motivation. For example, the study by Salgado & Au-Yong-Oliveira, (2021) investigates academic burnout among Portuguese public universities. They found that 29 per cent of university students show signs of burnout. Among the variables that have a significant relationship with burnout is the professional situation; participation in extracurricular activities; the practice and frequency of physical exercise; the choice and expectations regarding the course; the uncertainty about the professional future, and students' ability to withstand the pressure of their study cycle. Furthermore, students also have started taking with the reason for alleviating symptoms of emotional exhaustion and improving school performance. On the other hand, factors such as academic involvement, intrinsic motivation, coping strategies and social support, emotional intelligence, and resilience seem to protect students from experiencing burnout.

Next, the study by Felaza et al. (2020) among undergraduate medical program students at the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Indonesia, has aimed to seek a correlation between motivations, components of burnout and academic performance. They discovered that motivation is correlated with a burnout on one of its components of perception of personal accomplishment. Students with less intrinsic and more extrinsic (controlled) motivation tend to have lower perceptions of accomplishment. This phenomenon was found in Pre-Clinical Year 2, Clinical Year 1, and Clinical Year 2 students. Their findings were supported by Zhang et al. (2013), who showed that students with high intrinsic motivation did not experience burnout, while those with high extrinsic motivation tended to experience burnout.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework of the study. The concept of this study is based on the assumption that motivation among learners can help reduce their burnout. According to Pintrich & De Groot (1990), three main factors influence learners' drive to learn. The factors are (a) motivational scales such as (i) intrinsic goal orientation, (ii) extrinsic goal orientation and (iii) task value belief. The next factor is (b) expectancy components which includes (i) students' perception of self-efficacy, and (ii) control beliefs for learning. The last factor is the affective component. According to Campos, et.al. (2011), there are two causes of burnout among students. The first factor is exhaustion and the next factor is disengagement.

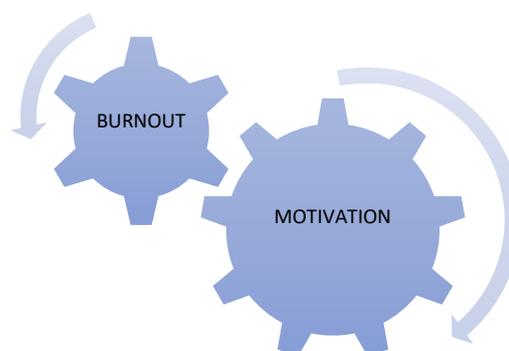


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework of the Study

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 255 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Pintrich & De Groot (1990) on learners' motivation as well as Campos, et. al. (2011) on learners' burnout to reveal the variables in table 1 below. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile. Section B has 24 items on motivation. Section C has 16 items on learners' burnout.

Table 1 - Distribution of Items in the Survey

Section	Construct	Variable	No of Items	Total Items
B	Motivational Scale	(i) Intrinsic Goal Orientation	4	12
		(ii) Extrinsic Goal Orientation	3	
		(iii) Task Value Beliefs	5	
	Expectancy Component	(i) Students' Perception of Self- Efficacy	5	7
		(ii) Control Beliefs for Learning	2	
C	Affective Components			5
D	Burnout-Exhaustion			8
E	Burnout-Disengagement			8
Total No of Items				40

Table 2 - Reliability of Survey

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.886	40

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of 0.886, thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Findings for Motivational Components

This section presents data to answer RQ 1 (how does motivational scale influence learners' drive to learn?). In the context of this study, learners' drive is measured by three value components (intrinsic goal orientation, extrinsic goal orientation and task value belief).

VALUE COMPONENT

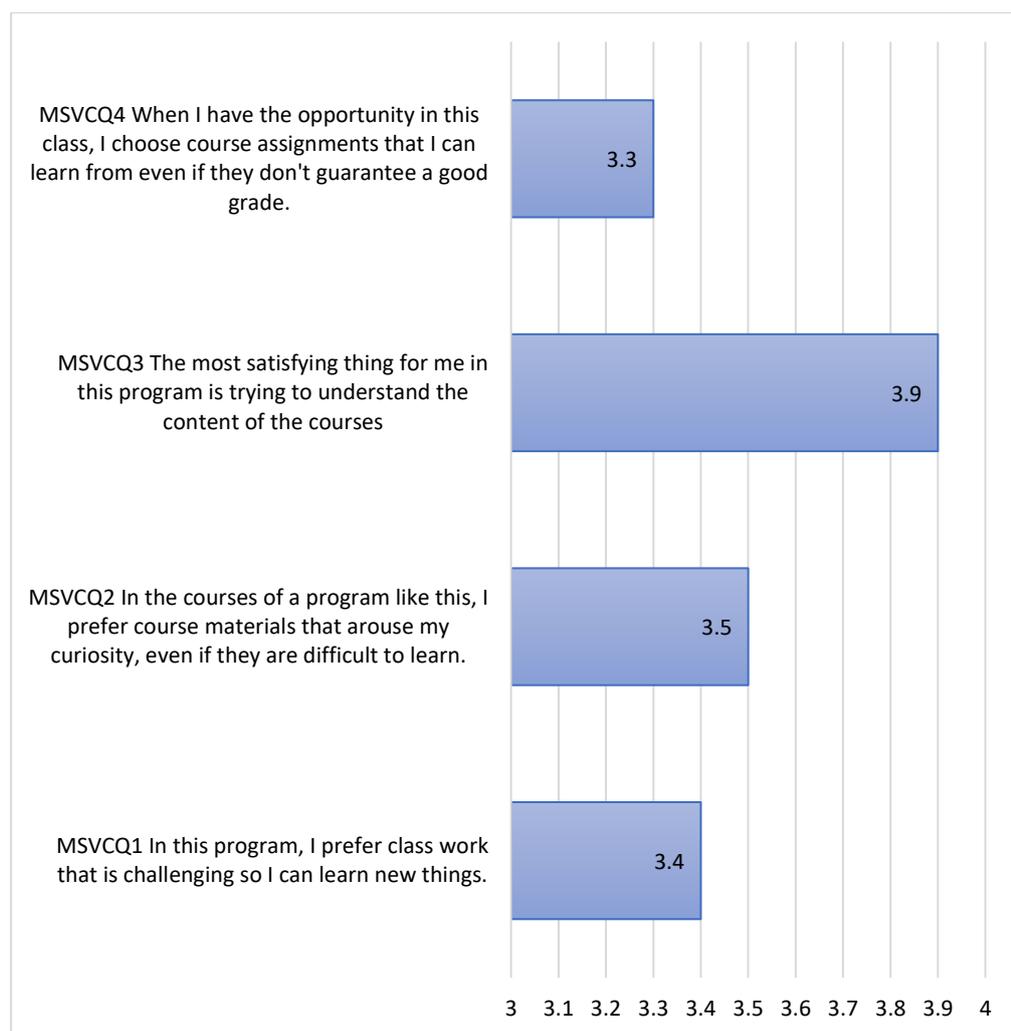
(i) Intrinsic Goal Orientation (4 Items)

Figure 4 - Mean for Intrinsic Goal Orientation

Figure 4 shows the mean value for intrinsic goal orientation. The respondents' intrinsic value is at a moderate level. The highest mean value is 3.9 when the respondents indicate that they feel satisfied when they are trying to understand the course content. The second highest mean value shows that the respondents prefer course materials that can increase their curiosity level (3.5). The respondents also mostly agreed that they prefer classwork that is more challenging and requires them to learn new things (3.4). The respondents also prefer to select course assignments that they can learn from despite not guaranteeing a good mark (3.3). Overall, the students have an intrinsic goal orientation based on their willingness to learn the course materials, although the course materials are quite new and may be difficult to learn.

(ii) *Extrinsic Goal Orientation (3 Items)*

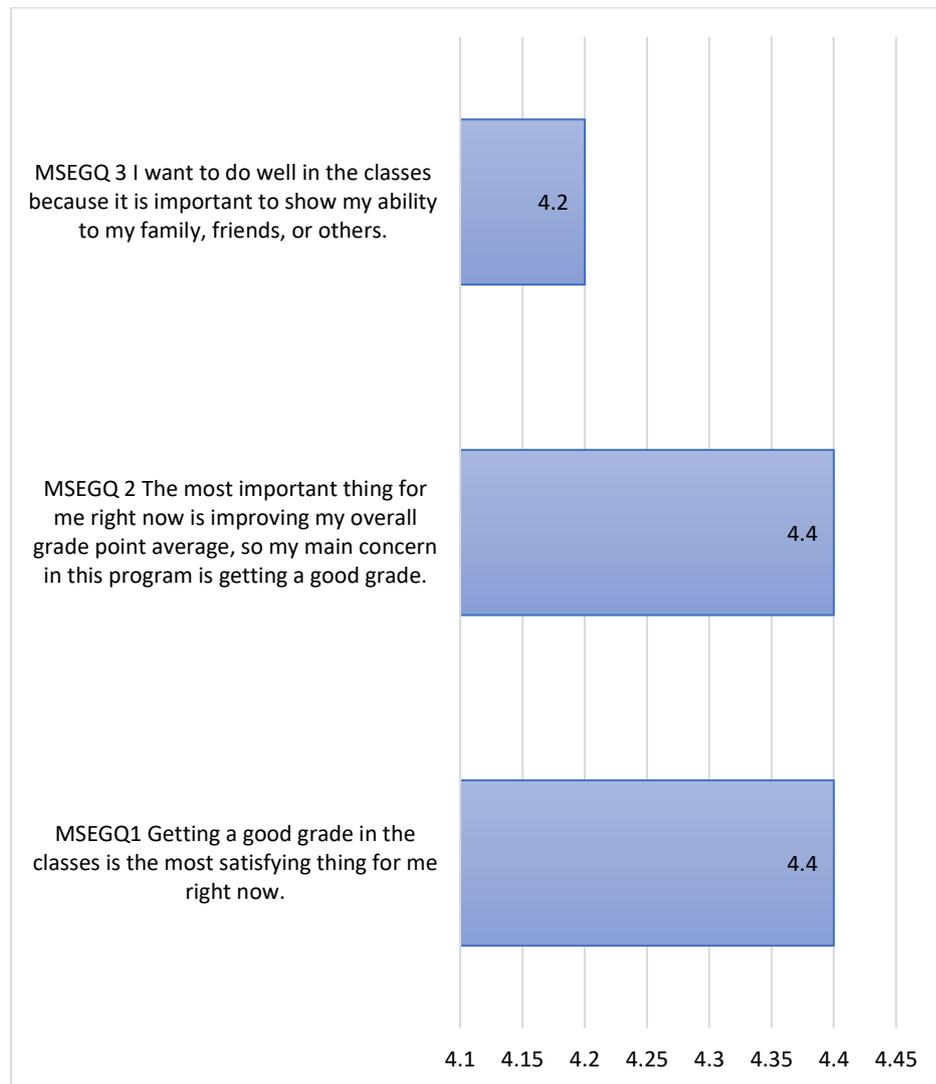


Figure 5 - Mean for Extrinsic Goal orientation

The results in Figure 5 present extrinsic goal orientation among the respondents. Most of the respondents strongly agreed that getting a good grade was one of the factors that contributed to their motivation. Even so, the respondents mostly agreed that they needed to improve their overall grade point average. Besides a good grade, the respondents strongly agree that they are doing well in the classes because of their family, friends, or others. The results indicate that peer pressure from family and friends can increase their motivation level. Overall, the extrinsic goal orientation provides a better mean value as compared to the intrinsic goal orientation.

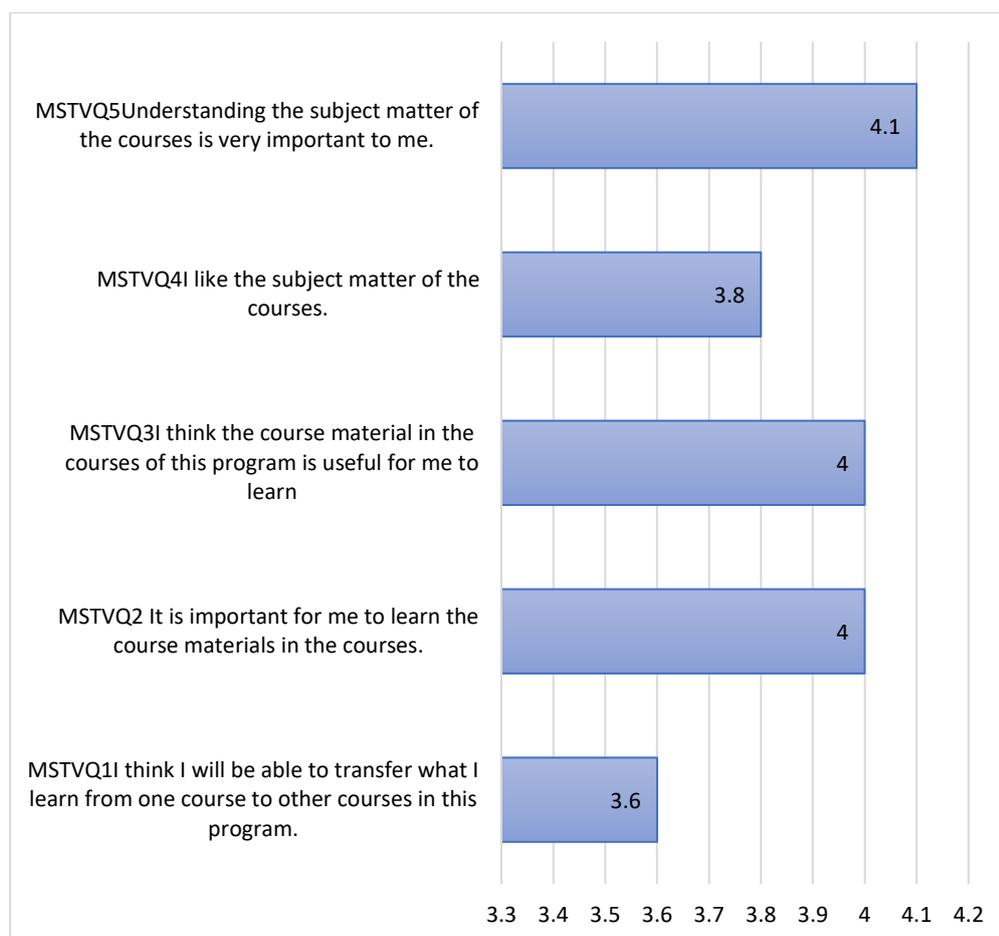
(iii) Task Value Beliefs (5 Items)

Figure 6 - Mean for Task Value Beliefs

The above figure shows the mean score for task value beliefs pertaining to motivational components. From the results most of the respondents believe that it is important for them to understand the subject with the highest mean at 4.1. Meanwhile, the least mean for task value beliefs is at 3.6 where the respondent believes that the knowledge and skills acquired in one course within this program will be transferable to other courses.

4.2 Findings for Expectancy Components

This section presents data to answer RQ 2 (how does expectancy component influence learners' drive to learn?). Expectancy components can be categorised into students' perception of self-efficacy and control beliefs for learning.

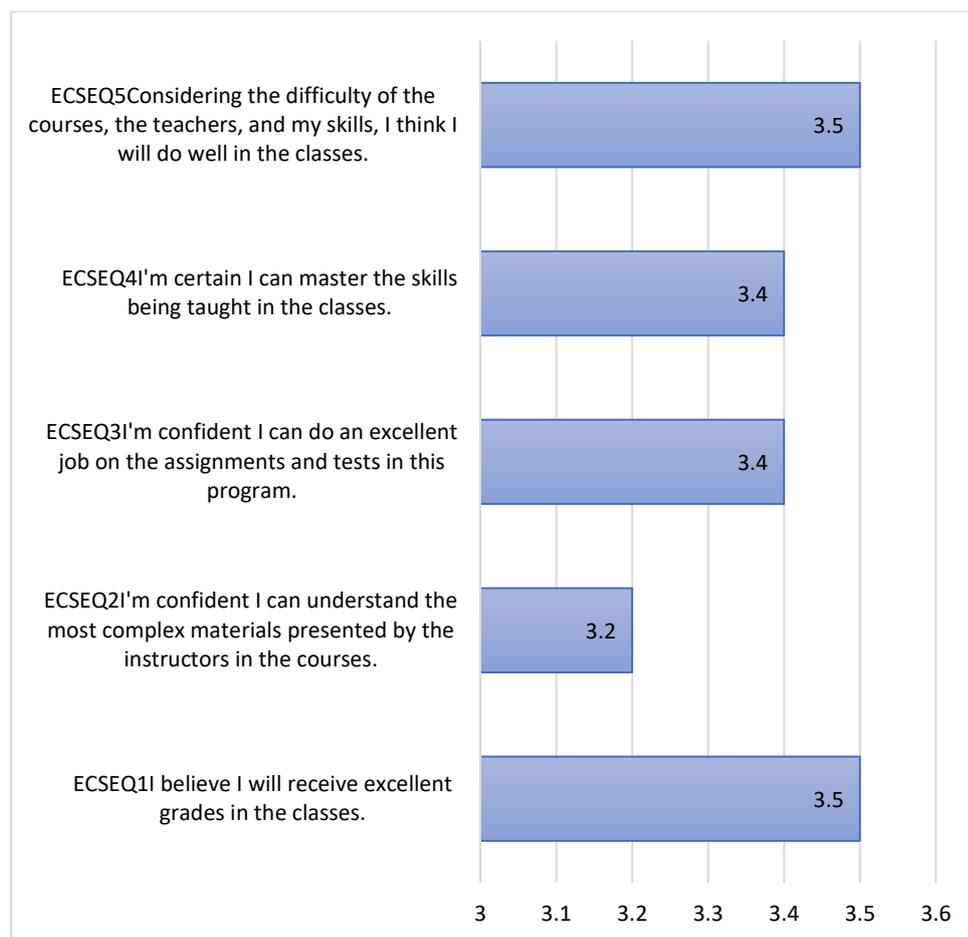
(i) *Students' Perception of Self-Efficacy (5 Items)*

Figure 7 - Mean for Students' Perception of Self-Efficacy

The above table shows the mean score for students' perception of self-efficacy. According to Muslim (2015) had categories the range of level based on the Mean value indicator, whether it is high (3.68-5.0), moderate (2.34-3.67) or low (1.0-2.33), it shows that the results scored a moderate mean for all five items. It is in between 3.2 to 3.5. Respondents have high belief in themselves to achieve outstanding grades in the class based on their level of difficulty of the courses, the quality of the teachers, and their own skills, with the highest mean at 3.6. In addition, the respondents also perceived their own abilities to successfully complete a task, test and they have capabilities to perform well and succeed in this course. All of these two items scored 3.4. While the lowest mean score of 3.2 indicates the respondent's ability to comprehend the most intricate course material presented by the instructors in the class.

(ii) Control Beliefs for Learning (2 Items)

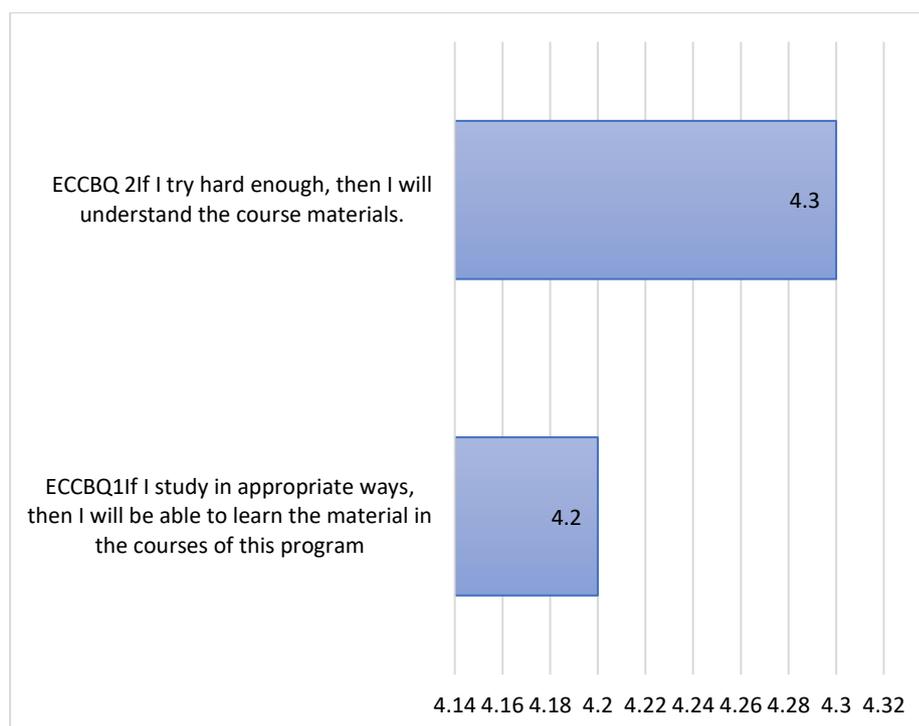


Figure 8 - Mean for Control Beliefs for Learning

From the table above, it shows the results of control beliefs for learning. Statement on if the student studies in an appropriate way, then their ability to learn the material of the program was in higher mean value which is 4.2. This result also shows the same weighted mean value with the statement of if the student tries hard then they will understand the course materials (Mean = 4.3). So, it can be concluded that the students agreed in having a control towards themselves then they are able to understand the courses.

4.3 Findings for Affective Components

This section presents data to answer RQ 3 (How do affective components influence learners' drive to learn?). There are five questions asked and they are analysed reversed method.

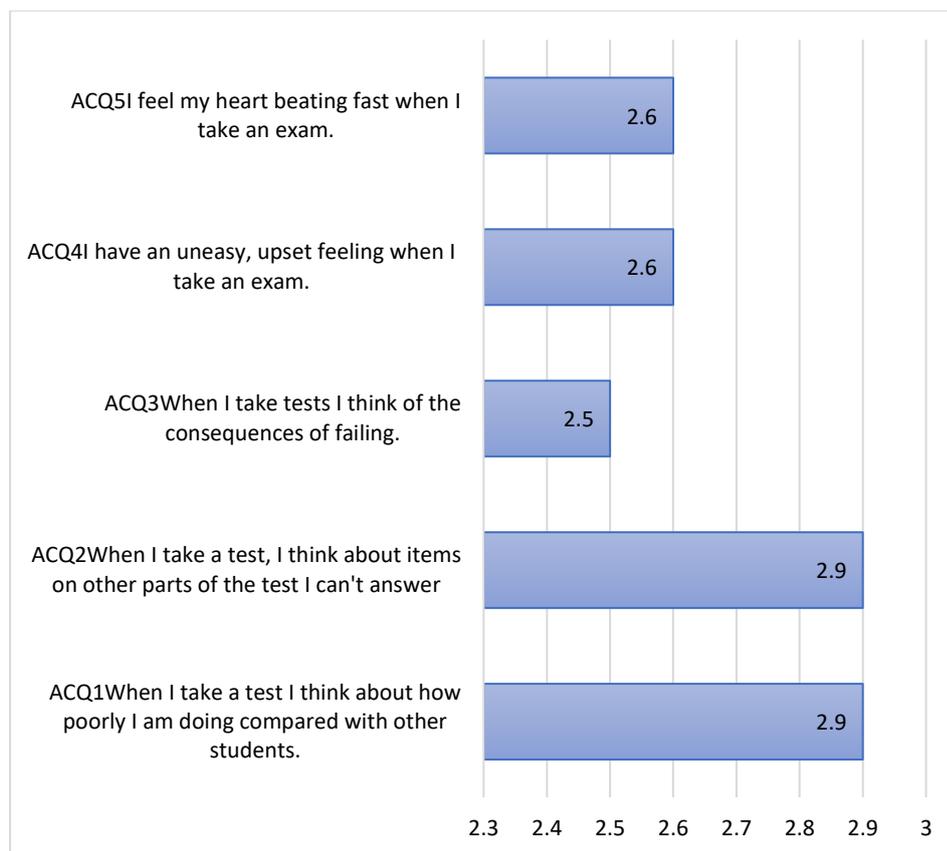


Figure 9 - Mean for Affective Component

This result was referred to as the affective component that influences the learners to learn. From the table, it shows all statements have lower mean value where the range is 2.5 until 2.9. Students disagree that if they take the test or exam they are not confident and feel upset after that. It proves where the mean value of the statement of when I take the test I think how poorly I am doing with other students and when I take the test, I think about items on the test that I can't answer is 2.9. Moreover students disagreed on the upset feeling after taking the exam and the heart beating fast when they took the exam (Mean value = 2.6). From this result also, show lowest value on the statement of if the students take the test and they think about consequences of failing which 2.5 value. From here, the students were not being influenced to learn by the affective components.

4.4 Findings for Burnout

This section presents data to answer RQ 4 (how do learners perceive their cause of burnout?).

BURNOUT (EXHAUSTION)

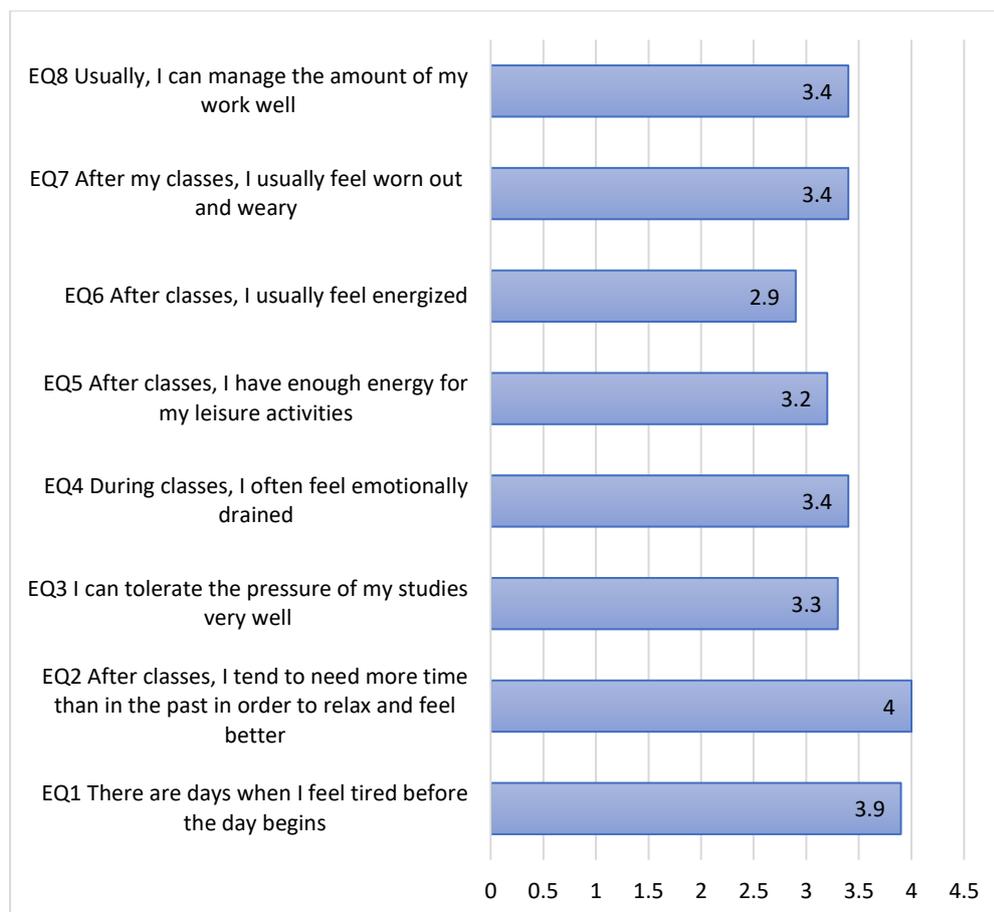


Figure 10 - Mean for Exhaustion

Figure 10 shows the overall mean score for the learner in perceiving the exhaustion. The medium level of the mean score (Hamzah, 2016) is 2.9 whereby the learners feel energized after attending their classes. Most of the learners showed a high level of mean after they attended the classes. In detail, the analysis shows that the learners have enough energy for leisure activities (3.2), could tolerate the pressure in their studies very well (3.3) and manage the amount of their work well (3.4). Surprisingly the learners showed a high level of mean which is 3.4 that they often feel worn out and weary after the classes and feel emotionally drained during the classes. The learners also showed that they feel tired before the day begins on certain days (3.9) and tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better after their classes (4.0).

BURNOUT (DISENGAGEMENT)

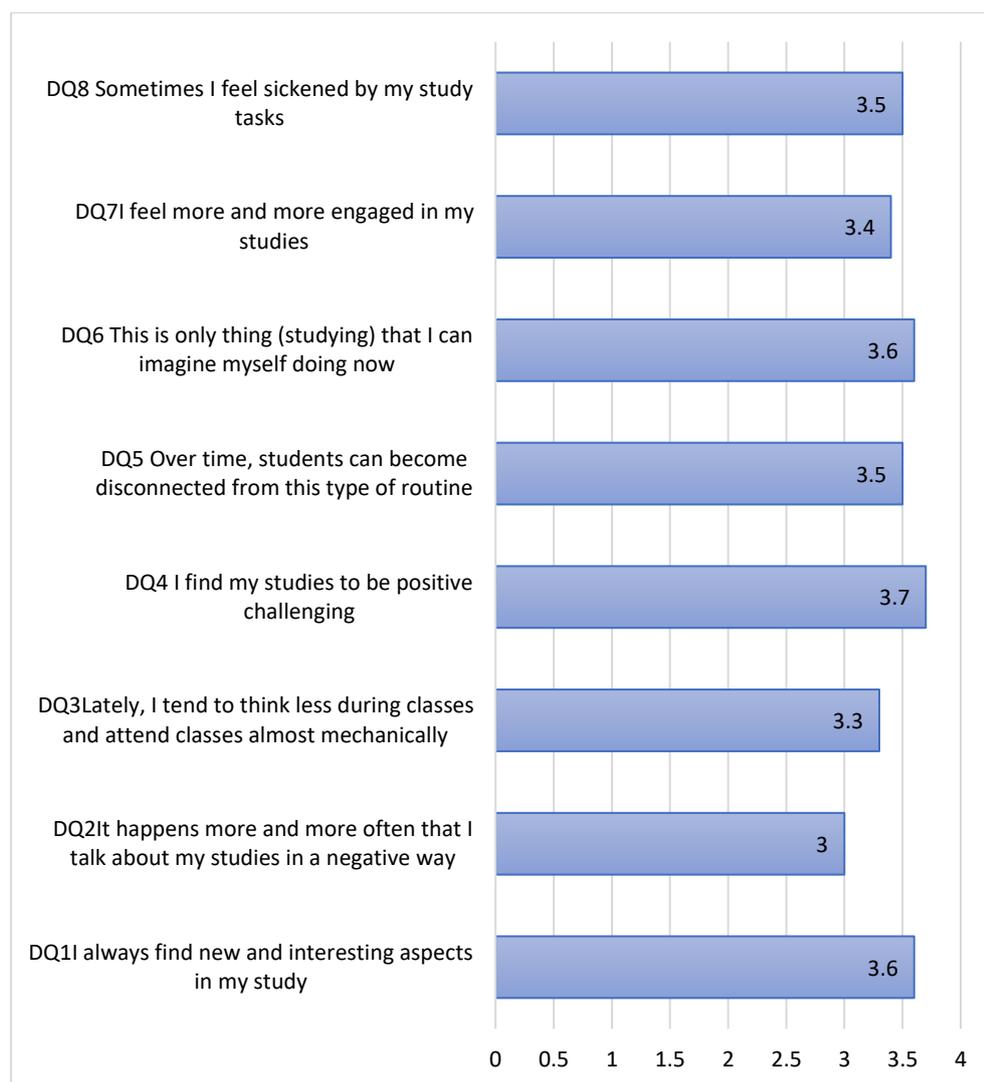


Figure 11 - Mean for Disengagement

Figure 11 above shows the result of disengagement as a cause of student burnout. Based on the mean value, learners found their studies to be positively challenging, with 3.7 scores of the mean value. However, they feel that they find new and interesting aspects in their study and cannot imagine doing things other than studying now. Students also feel sickened by their study tasks and become disconnected from this routine, with a score mean value of 3.5. Furthermore, students tend to think less during class and attend classes almost mechanically. Learners also feel that they usually or often talk about their studies in negative ways.

4.5 Findings for Relationship between Learners' Drive and Burnout

This section presents data to answer RQ 5 (is there a relationship between learners' drive to learn and burnout?). In order to determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between learners' drive and burnout, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in Table 3.

Table 3 – Correlation for Learners' Drive and Burnout

		Learners' Drive	Burnout
Learners' Drive	Pearson Correlation	1	.468*

**Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 3 – Correlation for Learners' Drive and Burnout

Table 3 shows there is an association between learners' drive and burnout. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderate significant association between learners' drive and burnout ($r=.468^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a moderate positive relationship between learners' drive and burnout.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings and Discussions

Based on the RQ1, it is found that extrinsic motivation is more powerful than intrinsic motivation among the students (as the mean score for the former is higher than the latter). In addition, for their task value, the students viewed that they need to have good understanding for the courses they enrolled. It shows the undergraduates in FSPPP seem to be concerned about their achievement among friends and families rather than fulfilling their own goals for self-satisfaction.

The expectancy component is divided into two categories: self-efficacy and learners' control belief in learning. As to answer RQ2 (in which it refers to this component), it is found that the students have moderate level self-efficacy and high score for their control belief. This result is slightly different from a study conducted by Charkhabi, Azizi Abarghuei and Hayati (2013), in which they found that students with high self-efficacy would try to find a solution and use a plan to overcome any hurdles in their studies.

RQ3 represents the influence of affective components on the learners' drive to learn. The result in this study indicates that the affective components do not affect the students' motivation, since the mean score earned is low. In a study, affective components have been divided into two parts: positive and negative affect. Bikar et. al. (2018) explained that positive affect bring students to attend classes and put in a lot of effort to achieve their goals, while negative affect provide destructive energy and lead to poor performance. Here, FSPPP undergraduate students seemed 'undisturbed' with affective components and just went along with the flow of their studies.

In this study also, FSPPP undergraduate students had moderately viewed their cause of burnout (RQ4) and confirmed that there was a correlation between students' motivation to learn and burnout (though it was not really strong) (refer to RQ5). These findings are supported by Felaza et. al. (2020) and Ghanizadeh and Jahedizadeh (2017) stated that students with lower intrinsic motivation and more extrinsic motivation tend to face a higher level of burnout.

5.2 Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

As for this study, it is very crucial to look into the matter in an in-depth manner. Students' level of motivation is one of the most important to be taken into consideration by the institution, as they are part of achieving the university's goals and objectives. Paying attention to students' different motivational styles (Chang et. al., 2016) might help the institution (via the lecturers) to develop a suitable learning environment and creatively develop a new way for teaching and learning activities. Moreover, there is also a need to re-route from focusing on extrinsic motivation into keeping more attention to students' self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment. The adaptation of new technology in teaching and learning might help them to see that intrinsic motivation can help students to control their stress and achieve their goals successfully (Zalts et. al., 2021).

Finally, as for the future research, it is suggested to cover a larger area of study, as this study is focused only in one Faculty in a university. Moreover, it is also important to explore more about the same matter at the postgraduate level, as there might be a difference in perception. Interviews might be helpful to verify the reasons for the students' burnout and their current motivation level.

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