



Original Research Report

Self-Motivation and Study Ethics as Predictors of Undergraduate Students' Academic Achievement in a Nigerian University

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Abstract: The aim of the study was to examine self-motivation and study ethics as predictors of academic achievement among undergraduates in a Nigerian University. The study employed the correlation research design in the quantitative approach. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 320 students out of which 228 students consented and participated in the study. The instrument for the study was a researcher designed questionnaire which was piloted and subjected to a test of internal consistency, using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, and the overall reliability coefficients of 0.887 was obtained. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents through online mode using Google form. The data was gathered within a period of two (2) weeks. A WhatsApp research group was created through which the google form link was shared for effective dissemination. Data was collected was analyzed using descriptive statistic of frequency and percentage to present the respondents demographic information of respondents while mean and standard deviations was used to answer research questions The study hypothesis was tested using multiple regression using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 29.0. The study findings revealed that self-motivation significantly predicted students' academic performance based on which a conclusion was reached.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Self-Motivation, Study Ethics, Undergraduates

1. Introduction

Education is aimed at transmitting knowledge- cognitive domain, skills- psychomotor domain, and attitudes/beliefs- affective domains are transmitted through a carefully designed curriculum and well-defined method(s). While the progress made in each of these domains are gauged using various methods, academic performance is usually used to gauge students' achievement in the cognitive domain (Oladele et al., 2021). The aim of university education is multifaceted, encompassing not only career preparation but also personal development, academic excellence, critical thinking, and broader contributions to society while ensuring a global perspective (Hashim, 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Academic success is a goal that every student aspires to achieve during their educational journey. It is important to note that academic performance is influenced by various factors, including teaching quality, resources, and individual differences (Ozcan, 2021). However, self-motivation and study ethics are foundational skills that can significantly enhance a student's ability to excel academically. Self-motivation refers to the internal drive and determination that push students to pursue their academic goals, while study ethics encompass the habits, strategies, and behaviors that students employ to enhance their learning process. This study delves into the relationship between self-motivation, study ethics, and academic performance, highlighting how these factors are interconnected and contribute to a student's overall success.

Motivation is regarded as a significant affective concept in education considering its relevance as a learning motivator as an underlying students' activities and engagements (Odanga, 2018). Motivation is seen as the fundamental reasons of behavior and being a state that energizes, directs, and sustain behavior and willingness to act (Nur'aini et al., 2020). Motivation is a meta concept with inherent constructs such as academic engagement, persistence with assigned task to finish, interest in assigned activities, and self-actualization (Nur'aini et al., 2020; Irvine, 2018). Self-motivation refers to a student's drive and determination to achieve their academic goals. It involves the ability to set and pursue goals, stay focused, and persist through challenges (Cengage Learning, n.d.). It was noted that self-motivated students often exhibit proactive behaviors to achieve set goals in a variety of settings (Brown, 2010). Self-motivation is a general view about oneself across various sets of specific domains driven by self-knowledge and evaluation related actualizing carefully set goals and objectives. Self-motivation is an innate quality required for achieving set goals is important considering its potentials for success in human endeavors.

Six types of self were explained to include actual self, cultural self, social self, narrative self and projected self all which provides answers to how can a self-motivate itself. In this sense, actual self can generate a self-model from my social self as a current episodic self, and another model as a third-person future episodic self; motivation then becomes the production of a narrative capable of converting one model into the other (Edwardes, 2017). There are different types of motivation which included primary or basic, secondary, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Irvine, 2018). Other types of motivation are hinged on achievement, behavioral, self-enhancement, affiliation, socialization, competence, power, attitudinal, change, incentive, fear motivation and aggression motivation (Zhao, 2012). Furthermore, three different motivation profiles were given to be “positive motivation” (started high and, subject to small blips, remained high throughout the learning. The second profile, labelled “mixed motivation” (started high, fell during the middle of the learning, and then recovered to quite a high level at the end being driven by an event in each phase which reinvigorated the student’s interest. The third profile, labelled “negative motivation” (started high and then fell steadily throughout the learning, often ending in complete disillusion with the learning exercise (Edwardes, 2017). Motivation can also be construed as intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation stems from personal interest and genuine passion for learning. Extrinsic motivation relies on external rewards and punishments. The importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining long-term academic success (Legault, 2016).

Self-motivation is a multi-dimensional construct for academic success. Therefore, the onus is on individuals in charting their course for ensuring that set goals are achieved (Aloysius, 2012; Panisoara et al., 2015). Also, self-motivation brings about high achievement which in turns leads to satisfied (Moneva et al., 2020). Self-motivation can be high where people do not require the use of external incentives to prompt them towards achieving their goals as they are self-driven while the reverse is the case for those with low self-motivation (Aloysius, 2012). The role of well-defined goals in fostering self-motivation is pivotal to academic success. Goal setting The SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound) criteria for goal setting with real-life examples of students achieving academic success through goal setting (Eatough, 2022; Ghazzawi, 2007; Sides & Cuevas, 2020). As such, goal setting can drive study ethics which has to do with what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong. Study ethics, in this context, implies the ethical principles and values that guide a student's approach to studying and academic work (Chaloner, 2007; Hudig et al., 2023; Nwizu, 2018; Shinkle et al., 2019). This may encompass aspects like academic honesty, integrity, time management,

and a commitment to learning and studying among others. Some factors that drive study ethics are appropriate time Management which is important for academic success, effective study techniques, and self-discipline (Joseph et al., 2010; Sabarmah, 2020). Self-motivated students are more likely to develop and maintain strong study ethics (Edgar et al., 2019; Steinmayr et al., 2019) while effective study ethics can boost self-confidence and motivation for achieving academic success through the tangible result (Edgar et al., 2019; Saeed & Zyngier, 2012).

A major role of university education is human capital development which is increasingly driven by technological advances in the 21st century for developing and sustaining a skilled workforce through training in the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains of learning (Hoque, 2016; Khidzir et al., 2016; OECD, 2012). An academic revolution in higher education is driving teaching and learning for career relevance with academic engagement and performance as a major yardstick while highlighting some drawbacks (Altbach et al., 2010; Shuib, 2010). Interacting meaningfully with technology for learning also requires optimal self-motivation (Haleem et al., 2022; Puspitarini, 2019; Steinmayr et al., 2019). Academic performance typically refers to a student's success in their educational endeavors, which can be measured through various means, including grades, test scores, and overall achievement in coursework. Academic performance is usually informed by learning outcome, also known as learning objective. A learning outcome is a specific statement that describes the ideal capabilities of a learner after completing a course, program, or educational experience. Learning outcomes are regarded as a blueprint for curriculum development, instructional design, and assessment. In the university, academic performance or achievements is measured in terms of student's Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) which are calculated based on tests and examinations per semester/session as the case may be (Islam & Tasnim, 2021; Tadese et al., 2022). Considering that the interplay between the three domains of learning (Hoque, 2016), all hands must be on deck to ensure optimal functioning for ensuring academic success.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The theory rest on basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT is a theory of human behavior that hinges on self-directed motivation with some social directions in predicting performance (Barber & Njus, 2007). Also, conditions that foster meeting innate psychological needs are major tenets of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT also distinguishes between

different types of motivation, including intrinsic motivation (doing something for the inherent satisfaction it brings), extrinsic motivation (doing something for external rewards or to avoid punishment), and amotivation (lack of motivation). While Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination theory has been widely applied in various fields, this study applies SDT in examining self-motivation and study ethics as they impact on students' academic performance in higher institutions of learning. Page | 5

1.2. Statement of Problem

The lack of motivation to learn was identified as a chief culprit in achieving set educational objectives (Odanga, 2018). As such, extensive research has been carried out as the basis of establishing mediating factors some of which are psychological, social and cultural (Yilmaz et al., 2017). However, the intricacies that study ethics bring is sparsely considered. These factors are strong indicators of study ethics which suggest a direction of research (Joseph et al., 2010). Moreover, based on the findings it might be possible to better judge which kind of motivation and study ethics profiles should especially be fostered in higher education students to improve achievement. Specifically, this study aims to:

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this research is to investigate whether self- motivational and study ethics can significantly predict academic achievement of University Undergraduates as an identified gap in literature. Specific purpose is to:

- (a) Assess the level of self-motivation of university undergraduates;
- (b) Assess the study ethics profile of university undergraduates;
- (c) Assess the academic performance of university undergraduates; and
- (d) Examine if self-motivation and study ethics significantly predicts student academic performance.

1.4. Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

- (a) How self-motivated are university undergraduates to learn?
- (b) What is the profile of university undergraduates' study ethics?
- (c) What is the academic performance of university undergraduates as measured using their CGPA?

1.5. Study Hypotheses

HO: Self-motivation and study ethics do not significantly predict students' academic performance in higher institutions of learning.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design for the Study

The study employed the correlation research design in the quantitative approach. This type of design is appropriate for establishing relationship and determining the strength of such relationships. It helps to understand the complex relationships between two or more variables. It helps to establish the extent to which self - motivation and study ethics predicts the academic performance in the higher institution of learning. The method is appropriate for the study since it enables the research to determine the extent to which the study variables predict students' academic performance.

2.1.1. Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the institution's ethics committee at University of Ilorin. The author ensured that participants were fully informed of the purpose and action-based approach of the research. Also, the data collection process was explained fully to the study participants. The researcher obtained informed consent from all parties involved in the research prior to implementing the research project and voluntary participation in the conducted surveys was ensured. The findings of this study are non-identity specific while also ensuring institutional non-disclosure.

2.2. Area of the Study

This study was carried out with students in a Nigerian public university offering regular programmes in North-Central Nigeria.

2.3. Population and Sample

The study population were students enrolled in the Faculty of Education, while the target population were students in the final year. The sample of the study was drawn purposively to include students who have had enough stay and established CGPA in the university.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure

The instrument for the study was a researcher designed questionnaire which was piloted to establish validity and reliability. The responses from the items were subjected to a test of internal consistency, using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, and the reliability coefficients of 0.852 (study

motivation) and 0.902 (study ethics) were obtained through which the instrument was judges reliable. The validated questionnaire was administered to the respondents through online mode using Google form. Considering that the survey was deployed using online form, a WhatsApp research group was created through which the google form link was shared for effective dissemination. After adding the participants to the research group, information on the research was shared on the group and all questions were addressed. A research assistant who was conversant with the study population group was recruited to facilitate the WhatsApp Group creation and adding research participants who consent to participate in the study. Going by this procedure, three hundred and twenty respondents were recruited and added to the group.

2.5. Data Collection Technique

The online survey link was shared on the created WhatsApp group. Periodic follow-ups were done by the researcher and assistant to ensure proper sensitization for engagement. The data collection period lasted for 3 weeks. Two hundred and sixty-one responses were received of which two hundred and twenty-eight were retrieved as valid responses. This connotes a collation rate of 87.4% based on which the analysis was carried out.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

Data was collected was analyzed using descriptive statistic of frequency and percentage to present the respondents demographic information of respondents while mean and standard deviations was used to answer research questions The study hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance with multiple regression statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 29.0.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Participants' Demographics

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	85	37.3
Female	143	62.7
Total	228	100.0

Results in Table 1 shows that 228 students participated in the study out of which 85 (37.3%) were

males while 143 (62.7%) were females. This shows that there were more female respondents than male respondents.

Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Departments

Departments	Frequency	Percent (%)
Counselor Education	22	9.6
Arts Education	32	14.0
Social Sciences Education	52	22.8
Educational Technology	29	12.7
Human Kinetics Education	5	2.2
Science Education	33	14.5
Adult and Primary Education	18	7.9
Health Promotion and Environmental Health	20	8.8
Educational Management	17	7.5
Total	228	100.0

Results in Table 2 shows that out of 228 students that participated in the study 22(9.6%) were from Counselor Education. 32(14.0%) were from Arts Education, 52(22.8%) were from Social Sciences Education, 29(12.7) were from Educational Technology, 5(2.2%) were from Human Kinetics Education, 33(14.5%) were from Science Education, 18(7.9%) were from Adult and Primary Education, 20(8.8%) were from Health Promotion and Environmental Health, and 17(7.5%) were from Educational Management. This shows that most of the respondents were from Social Sciences Education.

3.2. Answering Research Questions

Research Question One: How self-motivated are university undergraduates to learn?

Responses were originally collected as SD: 1, D: 2, A: 3 and SA: 4 with eleven items having minimum and maximum values of 25 and 44 respectively was recoded to 25-31: 1 for low motivation, 32-38:2 as moderate motivation and 39-44: 3 as high motivation. The resulting data was analysed using frequency/percentage statistics as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Students' Self-Motivation Profiles

Self-Motivation	Frequency	Percent (%)
Low	18	7.9
Moderate	107	46.9
High	103	45.2
Total	228	100.0

As shown in Table 3, 18(7.9%) of the students has low self-motivation, 107(46.9%) of the students were moderately self-motivated while 103(45.2%) of the students were highly self-motivated to learn. This showed that most of the students who participated in the study were moderately self-motivated. This finding connotes that students were around the mid-lined with motivation themselves for enhancing academic outcomes by improving on themselves, when need be, seek help when they encounter challenges, attend classes even if they don't feel like, participate in group activities and move out of their will to making sure they do the necessary things that will help them to get to the top in school and achieve a high academic result (Nur'aini et al., 2020). This finding is strengthened by the role of self-motivation in doing well in class fueled by their personal drive for success academically (Panisoara et al., 2015). Therefore, students who are highly motivated will go beyond their limits and ensure that nothing stops them from achieving a high academic performance.

Research Question Two: What is the profile of university undergraduates study ethics?

Responses were originally collected as SD: 1, D: 2, A: 3 and SA: 4 with seventeen items having minimum and maximum values of 39 and 68 respectively was recoded to 39-53: 1 for students with no study ethics and 53-68: 2 for students with study ethics. The resulting data was analysed using frequency/percentage statistics as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Students' Study Ethics Profiles

Self-Ethics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Ethical with studying	67	29.4
Non-Ethical with studying	161	70.6
Total	228	100.0

As shown in Table 4, 67(29.4%) of the students exhibited no study ethics while 161(70.6%) of the students exhibited study ethics. This showed that most of the students who participated in the study

had no study ethics. The second finding of this study showed that majority of the respondents has no study ethics. This means that university undergraduates in Kwara state often exhibit no study ethics when it comes to studying. This may not be entirely unconnected to the average level of motivation revealed by the study. This assertion is based on the fact that study ethics require high levels of goal setting and ethical principles and values that guide a student's approach to studying and academic work (Hudig et al., 2023; Nwizu, 2018; Shinkle et al., 2019). Study ethics encompass disciplined and principled approaches, such as time management, academic honesty, and adherence to guidelines, that students employ to shape their study routines punctuality in class, focusing when the lecturer is lecturing, taking notes when necessary, listening actively, participating in class activities, doing assignments and submitting at due time, collaborating with colleagues during group work (Joseph et al., 2010; Sabarmah, 2020). However, the findings of this study deviates from a related study which revealed a relationship between study ethics and self-motivation (Odanga, 2018). In this context, the consistency and rationality inherent in ethics are crucial for academic success.

Research Questions Three: What is the academic performance of university undergraduates as measured using their CGPA?

Responses on the role of students' CGPA were analyzed using mean and standard deviation as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Academic Performance of University Undergraduates Using Their CGPA

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CGPA	1.00	5.00	3.68	0.61

As shown in Table 5, with a mean CGPA of 3.68 and standard deviation of 0.61 (both approximated to two decimal places). This result connotes that student had an above average academic performance. The third finding revealed that the respondents had an above average academic performance in the study university in Kwara State. The top management of any university is concerned about the performance of their student usually gauged by students CGPA to show their usefulness, preparedness and relevance for the workforce (Islam & Tasnim, 2021). While the finding of this study deviates from a study which revealed poor graduation rates resulting from poor performance (Tadese et al., 2022); this finding is important as universities need to continue to prove their relevance to the society.

3.3. Test of Research Hypothesis

One research hypothesis was tested for the study at 0.05 level of statistical significance.

H₀: Self-motivation and study ethics do not significantly predict students' academic performance in higher institutions of learning.

To test study hypothesis, it was subjected to multiple regression inferential statistical analysis as shown in Table 6.

Results of Multiple Regression Analysis on relationship between the dependent (academic performance) and independent variables (self-motivation and study ethics) is shown on Table 6.

Table 6a: Model Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.163 ^a	.027	.018	.60786

a. Predictors: (Constant), Study Ethics, Self-Motivation

b. Dependent Variable: CGPA

Table 6b: Regression Analysis of Relationship among the dependent and independent variables

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1 Regression	2.267	2	1.134	3.068	.048 ^b	Reject
Residual	83.137	225	.369			
Total	85.404	227				

a. Dependent Variable: CGPA

b. Predictors: (Constant), Study Ethics, Self-Motivation

As shown on Table 6a and b, the multiple regression yielded a multiple correlation (R) of 0.163 among study ethics, self-motivation and academic performance with an 2.7% conservative estimation of the percentage of variable explained and an F ratio of 3.068 and p-value of 0.48 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. Furthermore, the unstandardized regression with (B), standardized regression weight (Beta) and Estimated Standard Error B as well as T score and significance indices of the variables are shown on Table 7.

Table 7: Regression Coefficients for Independent (Self-Motivation and Study Ethics) and Dependent Variables (CGPA)

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		t	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients			
(Constant)	2.881	.372			7.752	<.001
Self-motivation	.030	.015	.208		2.050	.042
Study Ethics	-.006	.009	-.067		-.664	.508

The Unstandardized Regression Weights in Table 7 range from 0.03 to -0.01 and the Standardized regression weights range from 0.21 to -0.07 while T score range from 2.05 to -0.66 and significant level from 0.04 to 0.51. Thus, it is observed that only the independent variables of self-motivation have a significant value (0.04) less than 0.05 while study ethics has a non-significant value (0.51) greater than 0.05. As such while the null hypothesis stating that self-motivation and study ethics do not significantly predict students' academic performance measured by their CGPA, is rejected and stated as "self-motivation and study ethics significantly predict students' academic performance". However, only the variable of self-motivation accounts for this prediction of students' academic performance.

The findings from the hypothesis tested for this study implies that self-motivation and study ethics significantly predicts academic performance with only the variable of self-motivation accounting for the prediction of students' academic performance. This result is in line with that of (Deci & Ryan, 2008) self-determination theory which suggest that students who are well motivated, meaning they engage in learning for the inherent satisfaction it brings, tend to perform better academically. When students are driven by their own interests and curiosity, they are more likely to actively engage in learning, persist through challenges, and achieve higher levels of mastery (Nur'aini et al., 2020; Singh & Manjaly, 2022). This goes in line with the Scholars who argue that when students do not possess Self- motivation, they may exhibit decreased engagement with academic material. Students who lack self- motivation may struggle to stay focused, manage their time effectively and engaged in productive studying habits for enhancing academic outcomes (Joseph et al., 2010; Steinmayr et al., 2019). This implies that personal aspirations foster self-reliance and an understanding of the importance of studies, prompting students to invest the necessary effort to succeed. A major limitation is in the use of one faculty in the study university and this could form a direction for further research. Furthermore, the

enduring relevance of self-motivation and study ethics in the ever-evolving educational landscape. The potential for further research is to refine the understanding of these predictors and their impact on academic performance in other levels of study and geographical locations.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that self-motivation plays pivotal roles in determining a student's academic performance. Recognizing and harnessing the power of this predictor can empower students to excel academically, providing them with the tools they need to achieve their educational goals and beyond. This study contributes to the understanding of the complex relationship between personal motivation, ethical study practices, and academic achievement, ultimately providing insights that can inform educational policies and practices.

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Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

The author conceptualized, designed, and oversaw the manuscript write up and developed the instrument for the study, supervised the data collection and carried out the data analysis as well as tidying up the citations/referencing using Endnote 20 with the APA Referencing Style option.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and/or analyzed in this article can be obtained from the author on reasonable request. Further inquiries can be directed to the author.

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