

A Correlational Study of Blended Learning Academic Motivation Levels and Grade Point Average Levels in EFL Class

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly accepted that motivation is essential for achieving learning goals. Motivation is the drive that evokes learners to do learning tasks proficiently. However, investigating academic motivation in blended learning context needs more in-depth research. Accordingly, the present research is concerned with investigating the correlation of blended learning academic motivation levels and EFL students' Grade Point Average levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study recruited 76 fourth-year EFL students and 82 first-year EFL students who were studying at the Faculty of Education, October 6 University. Both descriptive and correctional research methods were used in the current study. The study participants responded to a 14-item Academic Motivation Scale ((AMS)), which was developed in light of self-determination theory (SDT) principles to measure the participants' blended learning academic motivation levels. The EFL formal exam result of the first term of the academic year 2020/2021 was used to identify EFL students' Grade Point Average (GPA). Results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL first-grade and fourth-grade students on the Academic Motivation Scale favoring EFL fourth graders' mean scores. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL male and female students on the Academic Motivation Scale favoring females' mean scores. Moreover, there is a positive correlation relationship between academic motivation levels and EFL students' Grade Point Average (GPA).

Key words: Academic motivation, blended learning, e-learning, regular learning, EFL students.

1-Introduction

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 is a turning point in education worldwide. As a reaction to the pandemic, regular face-to-face education was suspended to avoid the spread of the Coronavirus. Regardless of its consequences, schools and universities have chosen e-learning to keep education surviving. Students' low motivation is one of the nagging challenges of e-learning. Students' online academic motivation is linked to specific technological, academic, and personal matters. Recently, several universities have shifted from e-learning to blended learning that integrates e-learning and face-to-face learning to enhance the quality of learning outcomes and to sustain students' learning motivation.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been declared by World Health Organization in March 2020. As a result, face-to-face learning approaches have been shifted to online digital platforms. The online instruction was adopted by many education institutions including universities. While some previous studies revealed some advantages of online learning others showed disadvantages. On one hand, online learning was helpful for students since they could access digital amusing learning materials with no time and place restrictions (Simamora, 2020). Furthermore, virtual communication provides more chances of sharing information and experience. Online learning develops computer skills, enthusiasm and motivation (Rochman & Pertiwi (2020). On the other hand, online learning has some disadvantages. Some students claimed that online learning was behind some health problems like fatigue and headache because they spend much time looking at computer screens or

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phones screens to carry out the assignments. Others stated they are facing money hardship to credit their cell phone account or home Internet bill (Simamora, 2020). Such advantages and disadvantages are closely associated with students' motivation that affects their success in learning during the pandemic.

Motivation is essential for achieving learning ILOs. It is the driving force that evokes learners to do learning tasks. That is to say that motivation is the core of the learning process (Siska, 2015). According to Siska, highly motivated learners may learn better than those who are less motivated. While motivated learners are eager to learn, demotivated learners are not. According to Daggol (2020), motivation is a central concern of teachers, students and researchers. It represents the backbone of the learning process. Learning cannot be completed without motivation. backbone of learning process. Learning cannot be completed without motivation.

Due to its significant effect on learning, academic motivation attracts the attention of many EFL researchers. Academic motivation allows learners to learn and achieve high academic success. Ghaleb, Ghaith, and Akour (2015) mention that students with positive academic motivation are willing to learn, enjoy learning tasks and think that studying has meaning. Usher and Morris (2012), academic motivation is the drive of behaviors related to academic performance and achievement. Research reports that academic motivation has distinct effects on academic ILOs. For instance, strong academic motivation is correlated to higher scores of learning effort self-regularity, self-efficacy, confidence in

academic success, and academic achievement (Sivrikaya, 2019). Statistically speaking, academic motivation represents 10% of academic achievement of university students (Kirkagac & Oz, 2017).

On the contrary, poor academic motivation is associated with poor achievement, high dropout percentages, and study difficulties (Gnambs & Hanfstingl, 2016). Tasgin and Coskun (2018) argue that academic motivation is significantly related to positive attitudes towards learning. In addition, Malkoc and Mutlu state that academic motivation is negatively related to academic delay. Psychologically, Turan (2019) mentions that low academic motivation is positively related to career stress among college students. Moreover, the value of academic motivation is not restricted to students. Academic motivation affects teachers' positive outcomes, academic self-efficacy and positive teaching attitudes (Titrek, Cetin, Kaymak & Kasikci, 2018).

Based on literature review and related studies academic motivation is central to learning. During the Covid-19 pandemic, universities have massively adopted blended learning. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, research investigating the correlation of blended learning academic motivation levels and EFL students' Grade Point Average levels during the Covid-19 pandemic is rare.

Context of the Research

Egyptian universities suspended study, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, as a first course of action. Then after, the study

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was resumed via e-learning where no campus attendance was required. Because of some shortcomings resulted from e-learning sudden shift, a decision was taken to put blended learning in action as a mode of study. October 6 University followed the same actions. In lectures and sessions offered using blended learning, students' participations are better than regular face-to-face lectures. Moreover, female students seem more active than male students. More importantly, highly active students gained better GPA than those who were less active during online lectures. These practical observations stimulated the researcher to carry out a research to measure EFL students' academic motivation of blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Exploring the correlation of academic motivation levels and GPA scores was taken into consideration within the research scope.

Research Problem

Despite the fact that blended learning was adopted by almost all Egyptian universities, investigating the correlation of blended learning academic motivation levels and EFL students' Grade Point Average levels during the Covid-19 pandemic is marginalized.

Research Questions

1. How can EFL students' study level affect their academic motivation?
2. To what extent does EFL students' gender affect their academic motivation?
3. What is the effect of academic motivation levels on EFL students' Grade Point Average (GPA)?

Research Aims

The current study aims to:

1. Investigate the effect of EFL students' study level on their academic motivation.
2. Estimate the effect of EFL students' gender on their academic motivation.
3. Find out the correlation of EFL students' academic motivation levels to their GPA.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no statistically significant difference between EFL first-grade and fourth-grade participants' mean scores on the Academic Motivation Scale ((AMS)).
2. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL female participants and male participants on the Academic Motivation Scale ((AMS)).
3. There is a statistically significant correlation between academic motivation levels and EFL participants' Grade Point Average (GPA).

Research Significance

This study is comprehensively exploring two important educational topics in academic motivation and blended learning. The relationship between academic motivation and blended learning needs more investigation, specifically during the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, the correlation between EFL students' academic motivation levels and their GPA in blended learning has not been explored. Both university professors, policymakers, and

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students may utilize the findings of the study for developing the teaching and learning process in emergency times. Policymakers may use the key findings of the study for preparing a roadmap regarding the beneficial use of online/blended teaching and learning models in any future similar emergency situations. In addition, the research overview will highlight new paradigms which will be useful for future research tackling different but associated variables.

2-Literature Review

2-1. Blended learning

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic renewed the interest in the utilization of online and digital learning at crisis time. Although there are many positive aspects of e-learning, it is not free of drawbacks. E-learning lacks direct communication and real interaction (Diab & Elgahsh, 2020). The concept of blended learning is relatively one of the recent educational concepts. Researchers describe blended learning as a blend of traditional learning and e-learning. It is an effective blend of different methods of learning strategies, teaching techniques, and delivery approaches (Saboowala & Manghirmalani-Mishra, 2020). This type of learning does not establish the necessary social relationships among learners. In addition, some practical courses cannot be delivered completely online. Cortez (2020) states that these drawbacks lead to a huge gap that prevents achieving effective intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Therefore, blended learning has been adopted to combine regular face-to-face instruction with aspects of online instruction. In other words, coupling face-to-face instruction techniques to online

communication technologies that enable students to learn at home is called blended learning.

Blended learning attempts to provide learners with the advantages of both face-to-face and online learning experiences. According to Saboowala and Manghirmalani-Mishra (2020), blended learning is not restricted to the insertion of technology in learning and teaching, it is rather a redesign of instruction including the role of each of the learner and teacher. Diab and Elgahsh (2020) mention that blended learning aims at taking full advantage of the regular learning and e-learning. Akhtar, Saidalvi and Hassan (2019) confirm that blended learning provides effective opportunities for connecting educational materials to each other and merging educational material items together to become one interrelated unit. The characteristics of the social presence of the teacher and student in e-learning situation are subject to many changes (Richardson, Maeda, Lv, & Caskurlu, 2017).

2-2. Academic Motivation

Motivation has two major types namely; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Whereas intrinsic motivation refers to one's readiness to accept any challenge without the expectation of any reward, extrinsic motivation is a self-made drive that is driven by external issues. Nevertheless, the motivation drives vary according to age, action importance, and expected reward. Solak (2012) defines motivation as a driving force that guides individuals to achieve the goals that are already appointed. Vibulphol (2016) defines motivation as a process that boosts, greases, and fuels the engine to keep it running. Without motivation, learners cannot not start

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learning at all. In light of these definitions, it could be claimed that motivation is concerned with why people decide to do something.

According to Liu and Chen (2015), motivation is a core component along with language aptitude in deciding the success of learning foreign or second languages. Wang (2015) argue that there is a strong correlation between EFL language motivation and language learning success. Positive academic motivation is essential for achieving mastery in foreign/second language. Hussain, Salam and Farid (2020) mention that research on linguistic motivation highlighted many factors that motivational level affects positively or negatively language learners. Learners lacking motivation of English learning, they are subject to face dissatisfaction while learning EFL/ESL.

Along with intrinsic motivation, learners achieve learning tasks because these tasks are logically interesting and enjoyable. For example, students having strong intrinsic motivation have their own integral pleasure and interest for learning foreign languages. Task achievement causes spontaneous satisfaction. Ryan & Deci (2017) argue that many creative and productive achievements are accomplished when learners are motivated by an internal interest in the task.

However, not all tasks are pleasing to be intrinsically motivating. Hence, extrinsic motivation focuses on achieving or doing the learning activities that lead to external reward or material gain. Simply, extrinsic motivation is after the end product. The current research approaches motivation from educational standpoint

rather than psychological outlook. Accordingly, motivation refers to EFL learners' focused engagement in class learning activities, participations, and tasks to acquire language concepts or and skills. Such engagement results from the academic motivation that has four different graded levels; high, moderate, low, and frustrated. In this respect, academic motivation is the heart of learners' success. Oz (2015) states that academic motivation enhances learners' inner desire to do learning tasks.

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is distinct because it distinguishes types and subtypes of motivation. The value of these types is confirmed by serious research based on the SDT showing that different types of motives predict success, persistence, and emotions in diverse achievements (Elliot, Dweck, Yeager, 2017). Markova, Glazkova, and Zaborova (2017) state that student motivation predicts the effectiveness of online education. Richardson et al. (2017) mention that university students suffer from a sense of isolation, which decreases learning pleasure during online education.

2-3. Related Studies

Ibrahim and Nat (2019) attempted to identify the factors responsible for motivating university instructors to integrate the blended learning approach into their courses. Two types of motivational factors, namely, extrinsic and intrinsic were used to design a motivation model based on the cause-effect relationship between them. Survey data were collected from 362 university instructors in Turkey. The results showed that both extrinsic and

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intrinsic motivational factors have a significant impact on the instructors' motivation to apply the blended learning approach.

Fuertes, Fernandez, Mata, Gomez, and Pascual (2020) investigated the relationship between personality and academic motivation in Education degrees student. The study explored variables; sex, age and type of educational studies. As a correlational research, the quantitative methodology was used. The sample recruited students selected from the Faculty of Education of Leon's University. To collect the data, participants were asked to respond to a learning and motivation strategies questionnaire and a personality questionnaire. The results showed there was a significant relationship between personality facets and motivation variables. Female scores were higher than the males' on the learning motivation strategies questionnaire. The study findings of Ryan and Deci (2020) showed that there was a dynamic link between teacher and student motivation types and psychological need satisfactions in learning contexts. A questionnaire was to estimate the participants' motivation types.

The purpose of the study of Gustiani (2020) was to explore the motivation of the students at English Department toward online learning in the Covid-19 pandemic time. Results revealed that students' motivation in online learning was intrinsically and extrinsically affected. A snowball sampling procedure was used where there were eight students took part in individual interviews and fourteen students were interviewed using focus group. Findings

revealed that the students' motivation of online learning was intrinsically affected.

Agah, Kaniuka and Chitiga (2020) explored Vroom's Expectancy Theory of motivation in higher education among faculty members. scholarly activity and academic rank. The researchers applied Vroom's Expectancy theory of motivation to investigate the relationship between academic research productions and motivation. The data was collected via a survey involved 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty. Results suggested that there was a significant difference in the number of academic productions of the faculty members of all ranks and tenure status.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The total study participants were 158 students. The participants were 76 fourth-year EFL students and 82 first-year EFL students studying at the Faculty of Education, October 6 University. While the first-year EFL students were 18 years old, the fourth-year students were 22 years old. Students' age average was 20 years old.

Table 1. Participants of the study according to gender and grade.

Gender		Grade			
Male	Female	Total	1 st Year	4 th Year	Total
75	83	158	61	97	158

3.2. Instrument

For data collection, 14-item Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was developed to measure EFL participants' blended

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learning academic motivation levels. A Likert-five-options scale (Totally Disagree 1; Disagree 2; Neutral 3; Agree 4; and Totally Agree 5) was used. The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) was developed in light of the provisions of Self-Determination Theory (Vallerand, Pelletier & Koestner, 2008). However, the (AMS) is an Egyptian version in terms of its quality and quantity. It was estimated by EFL and educational psychology experts who approved its content validity. The result of test-retest procedure proves that the reliability coefficient of the scale was $r = 0.83$. As for EFL participants' GPA, the formal exam results were used as a criterion to interpret the participants' academic achievement.

3.3. Design

The current research is a correlational descriptive study aiming at investigating the correlation of blended learning academic motivation levels and EFL students' Grade Point Average levels during the Covid-19 pandemic. A questionnaire-based survey was used as a research method.

3.4. Procedure

The aim of the research and the (AMS) was explained to the EFL students during campus-based face-to-face lectures. EFL students' questions were answered. Students were informed that their participation is in voluntary and confidentiality is concerned. After the final exam of the 1st term of the academic year 2020, the (AMS) was sent to all the students' academic account on Microsoft365, Forms. The total number of the registered students (1st and 4th year) was 243. However, only 158 EFL students

correctly responded to the scale (65%). After that, the data was collected, registered, coded, and analyzed using the SPSS software.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2. Differences between First and Fourth Graders' Mean Scores on the (AMS)

Study Level	n.	Mean	SD	t	p
First	61	1.77	0.69266	16.773	<
Fourth	97	3.45	0.55940		0.0001

Table 2 shows that the mean scores of EFL fourth-graders (M=3.45) is higher than the mean scores of EFL first-graders (M=1.77) on the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). Furthermore, the t-value is 16.773 and the p-value is less than 0.0001 confirming that the difference between the mean scores of the EFL first-graders and fourth-graders on the (AMS) is statistically significant. Accordingly, the first research null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was stated as follows: There is a statistically significant difference between EFL first-grade and fourth-grade participants' mean scores on the (AMS) favoring fourth-graders' mean scores.

To the researcher's best knowledge, no previous research explored the academic motivation levels in light of EFL students' study levels (first, second, third, and fourth year). Possibly, the EFL fourth-graders have the academic, technical, exam, and personal experience that enabled them to gain higher mean scores on the (AMS). On the contrary, the EFL first-graders are not familiar with

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blended learning, university study, university exam), and online technological communication facilities.

Table 3. Differences between Male and Female Participants' Mean Scores on the (AMS)

Study Level	n.	Mean	SD	t	p
Male	75	2.11	0.96665	10.644	<0.0001
Female	83	3.44	0.56725		

Table 3 reveals that the mean scores of EFL female participants (M=3.44) is higher than the mean scores of EFL male participants (M=2.11) on the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS). Furthermore, the t-value is 10.644 and the p-value is less than 0.0001 assuring that the difference between the mean scores of the EFL female participants and male participants on the MAS is statistically significant. Accordingly, the second research null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was stated as follows: There is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the EFL female participants and male participants on the (MAS) favoring females' mean scores.

This central finding is consistent with the findings of Bugler, McGeown, and Clair-Thompson (2015) in which girls significantly gained higher academic motivation than that gained by boys. Other studies do not go in line with the finding that favors females' mean scores on the ((AMS)). The study of Malinauskas and Pozeriene (2020) did not reveal significant differences between male and female students in terms of academic motivation. Moreover, Ramos and Habig (2019) state that gender has no significant effect on

academic motivation. Perhaps, the EFL female participants' high mean scores may be due to females' frequent interaction with technology that may have a positive influence on their motivation to apply blended learning.

Table 4. Pearson correlation coefficient between academic motivation levels and EFL participants' GPA.

	Participates' GPA	Significance
Participates' GPA	-	**.
Academic Motivation Levels	0.942**	Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4 reveals that Pearson correlation coefficient confirms that there is a positive correlation ($r= 0.942$) between EFL participants' academic motivation level (high, moderate, low, and frustrated) and their formal GPA (A: excellent, B: very good, C: good, D: pass, and F: failed).

Table 5. Cramer effect of academic motivation levels on EFL participants' GPA.

	Participates' GPA	Effect
Academic Motivation Levels	Cramer's V= .923	Cramer's V= 0.923 Required Effective value 0.300

Table 5 shows that Cramer's V equals .923 while the required value is 0.300. This confirms that there is an effective correlation between EFL participants' academic motivation level (high,

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moderate, low, and frustrated) and their formal GPA (A: excellent, B: very good, C: good, D: pass, and F: failed).

Table 6. Chi-squared test of academic motivation levels and EFL participants' GPA

Academic Motivation Levels	GPA						Total
	A	B	C	D	F		
Frustrated	Count	0	0	0	23	0	23
	%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%	0.0%	100%
Low	Count	0	0	25	3	4	32
	%	0.0%	0.0%	78.1%	9.4%	12.5%	100%
Moderate	Count	2	50	4	0	0	56
	%	3.6%	89.3%	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
High	Count	47	0	0	0	0	47
	%	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
Total	Count	49	50	29	26	4	158
	%	31.0%	31.6%	18.4%	16.5%	2.5%	100%

Correlation significant=404.05 and Chi-squared =0.000

Table 6 displays that correlation significant equals 404.05 and Chi-squared equals 0.000. These values confirm that there is a high correlation between EFL participants' academic motivation level (high, moderate, low, and frustrated) and their formal GPA (A: excellent, B: very good, C: good, D: pass, and F: failed). The three tables (4, 5, and 6) afford the evidence to accept the third research

hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation between academic motivation levels and EFL participants' Grade Point Average (GPA). This finding goes in line with the study of Kırkagac and Oz (2017) who confirm that there are statistically significant relationships among academic achievement and all academic motivation drives.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study is concerned with measuring EFL students' academic motivation of blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study participants comprised 76 fourth-year EFL students and 82 first-year EFL students who were studying EFL at the Faculty of Education, October 6 University. The study participants were asked to respond to the 14-item Academic Motivation Scale ((AMS)), which was developed to measure the participants' blended learning academic motivation levels. The study findings revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between EFL first-grade and fourth-year students' mean scores of the academic motivation favoring EFL fourth graders' mean scores. Further, there is a statistically significant difference between EFL male and female students' mean scores of the academic motivation favoring female students' mean scores. Moreover, there is a positive correlation relationship between academic motivation levels and EFL students' Grade Point Average (GPA).

In light of these findings, policy makers have to reconsider blended learning through increasing the online component to be 60% instead of 50%. Similarly, the face-to-face portion should be

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decreased to be 40% instead of 50% to prevent COVID-19infection chances at the university campus. The key findings of the study help policy makers in preparing a roadmap regarding the beneficial use of online/blended teaching learning models by the teachers and learners in any future similar emergency situations. University professors have to pay more attention to the academic motivation level during online lectures since high academic motivation level is positively correlated to students' GPA.

Moreover, EFL fourth year students of high academic motivation level could be appointed as peer coaches to guide first, second, and third graders. Coupling academic motivation to blended learning could increase instruction effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic. EFL students' academic motivation levels could be used as an academic achievement predictor since academic motivation levels are highly correlated to EFL students' Grade Point Average (GPA).

Like many other studies, this research work has its own limitations. The first challenge was related the data collection. The participants were busy. Thus, there was a delay in responding to the online questionnaires. Three reminders were sent to respond to the scale on time. The incomplete and two-response-item questionnaires/scale versions were excluded. The study findings could be a real contribution to the current pedagogical research, however recruiting the study participants from one university hinders the generalizability of these findings. In other words, the results were limited to college students.

Finally, offering an overview on academic motivation opens new paradigms for future discussion and research tackling different associated variables. Further research is needed to investigate academic achievement in relation to other students and pupils in Secondary, Preparatory, and Primary schools. Flexible blended learning effectiveness needs to be estimated. A peer coaching program for developing EFL students' academic motivation levels of tertiary, and secondary school is required

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**A Correlational Study of Blended Learning Academic Motivation
Levels and Grade Point Average Levels in EFL Class**

Appendix: A

Academic Motivation Scale ((AMS))

Student Online Version

Dear participant,

This scale is developed to measure your academic motivation level in relation to blended learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Read each item carefully and mark the option that fits you well from 1 to 5. Please do not leave an unmarked item.

Response Scale				
Totally Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

No.	Items	Response Scale				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	It is my pleasure to learn new things using blended learning.	<input type="radio"/>				
2	It is my pleasure to discover new things via blended learning.	<input type="radio"/>				
3	Blended learning appeals me.	<input type="radio"/>				
4	I am interested in the topics related to blended learning.	<input type="radio"/>				
5	Blended learning makes my lessons easier.	<input type="radio"/>				
6	Blended learning makes tests easier.	<input type="radio"/>				
7	Blended learning helps me in achieving academic challenging.	<input type="radio"/>				
8	Blended learning meets my personal satisfaction.	<input type="radio"/>				
9	Blended learning is fun.	<input type="radio"/>				
10	Blended learning prepares me for my future career.	<input type="radio"/>				
11	My university helps me succeed in my studies.	<input type="radio"/>				
12	Blended learning is effective during COVID-19 pandemic.	<input type="radio"/>				
13	Blended learning has a positive effect on social life.	<input type="radio"/>				
14	Online Communications make up for personal social distancing.	<input type="radio"/>				

Good Luck!!!