

# Impact of Motivation and Social Support in Online Distance Learning among Freshmen

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education globally, impacting 1.6 billion learners in over 200 countries (Pokhrel, 2021). In the Philippines, education adapted through flexible learning (CHED, 2020), primarily delivered via Online Distance Learning (ODL) and Modular Distance Learning (MDL). Despite options, many students and parents favor ODL for its ability to maintain student-teacher interaction (Nolasco, 2022).

Online learning presents challenges and benefits. While it provides access to education for those in remote areas, it can also feel isolating (Goldingay & Land, 2014). Factors such as learning time, environment, and instrumental support significantly influence students' motivation and academic success (Cahyani et al., 2020; Shimamura, 2020). Moreover, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators shape engagement, with intrinsic factors like enthusiasm driving self-determined learning (Fitriyani et al., 2020).

Social support, encompassing emotional, informational, instrumental, and affirmational aspects, plays a critical role in mitigating the stressors associated with online education (Munich, 2014). By fostering motivation and alleviating barriers, such support helps learners thrive. However, the pandemic has exposed motivation challenges, particularly among first-year college students, with factors like technical difficulties, procrastination, and reliance on online sources hindering participation.

This study examines the interplay between motivation and social support in online learning among first-year college students. Guided by theories like Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2008), the research highlights how autonomy, competence, and social connections drive motivation. Social support's influence, as framed by House's (1981) theory, emphasizes how emotional, informational, instrumental, and affirmational dimensions contribute to academic success.

## Theoretical Framework

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) underpins this study, focusing on the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2008). These factors influence students' motivation, with social environments playing a pivotal role in fostering or hindering growth. SDT differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic motivation linked to personal interest and joy, and extrinsic motivation tied to rewards or external pressures.

Complementing SDT, Relationship Motivation Theory (Fowler, 2018) emphasizes the importance of social connections in learning. Feeling a sense of relatedness boosts motivation, particularly in online settings where physical interactions are limited. House's (1981) social support theory further categorizes support into emotional, informational, instrumental, and affirmational aspects, all of which shape motivation and engagement.

These frameworks collectively highlight the need for supportive environments in online distance learning to enhance motivation and address barriers.

## Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework connects demographic factors, social support dimensions, and motivation. Demographics such as sex, age, family income, and gadgets used influence students' online learning experiences. Motivation is categorized into intrinsic (personal satisfaction) and extrinsic (external rewards) forms, shaping engagement and performance.

Social support dimensions, based on House's (1981) theory, include:

1. **Emotional support:** Care and reassurance from peers, family, and educators.
2. **Informational support:** Guidance and resources to overcome challenges.
3. **Instrumental support:** Practical assistance like learning materials.
4. **Affirmational support:** Positive feedback to boost confidence.

The framework also incorporates a Social Support Intervention Program to address identified gaps, fostering a supportive learning environment and enhancing student outcomes.

## Statement of the Problem

This research investigates first-year college students' motivation and social support in online distance learning, focusing on:

1. Students' demographic profiles.
2. Levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
3. Levels of emotional, informational, instrumental, and affirmational support.
4. Differences in motivation and support across demographic groups.
5. The relationship between motivation and social support.
6. Development of a social support intervention program to enhance motivation.

## Scope and Limitations

The study is conducted in a higher education institution in Misamis Oriental during the 2023–2024 academic year, focusing on 150 first-year students. It examines intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and the dimensions of social support. The research employs a descriptive-correlational design, using surveys to assess relationships and identify strategies to improve online learning experiences.

## Significance of the Study

The findings will benefit various stakeholders:

1. **Curriculum Experts:** Informing curricular adjustments for effective online learning.
2. **Guidance Counselors:** Supporting strategies to boost student motivation.
3. **Instructors:** Providing insights on enhancing social support.
4. **School Administration:** Identifying interventions to address online learning challenges.
5. **Parents and Students:** Understanding the importance of motivation and support.
6. **Future Researchers:** Offering a foundation for further studies on motivation and support.

## Definition of Terms

Key terms such as motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, amotivation, and types of social support (emotional, informational, instrumental, affirmational) are defined to clarify their application within the study.

## Research Design

The study employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' motivation and social support in the context of online learning. Descriptive research aims to provide a clear

depiction of specific phenomena, while the correlational aspect explores associations and patterns between the variables. This approach facilitates understanding the dynamics of motivation and social support, offering insights into their potential influence on student engagement and academic outcomes in online learning settings.

### Research Locale

The research was conducted in a locally funded Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines, situated in the northern part of Mindanao. The institution, practicing online learning, provided a relevant environment to explore the study's objectives.

### Sampling Design and Respondents

A stratified random sampling method was utilized, targeting freshmen students across various programs. A sample of 181 students, exceeding the calculated 151 respondents recommended for a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, was included to ensure robust representation. These respondents were drawn from nine sections within the General Education Course 1 (Understanding the Self), distributed proportionally based on their program population. Written informed consent ensured ethical participation.

### Research Instrument

The study employed a researcher-constructed questionnaire informed by Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory. The instrument consisted of three sections:

1. **Demographic Profile:** Collected data on respondents' sex, age, college, monthly family income, place of origin, and the type of gadget used for online learning.
2. **Motivation:** Assessed intrinsic and extrinsic motivation dimensions, including Integrated, Identified, Introjected, and External Regulation.
3. **Social Support:** Evaluated emotional, informational, instrumental, and affirmation support received by students from their institutions.

The questionnaire underwent pilot testing with at least 30 students outside the main study group, ensuring its validity and reliability. Content validation by three experts and internal consistency measurement using Cronbach's Alpha (targeting a threshold of  $\geq 0.90$ ) confirmed its robustness.

### Data Gathering Procedures

Data were collected exclusively online using Google Forms. A letter of approval from the researcher and graduate school dean was submitted to the school administrator, ensuring institutional support. The questionnaire link was distributed via collaboration with social science and psychology teachers, accompanied by follow-up communications to maximize participation. Quantitative data were supplemented with interviews to provide deeper insights into the findings.

### Statistical Treatment

Various statistical tools were employed to analyze the data:

1. **Demographic Analysis:** Frequency count and percentage distribution assessed demographic characteristics.
2. **Motivation and Social Support Levels:** The mean value formula evaluated intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and social support dimensions.
3. **Comparative Analysis:** ANOVA and Mann-Whitney U tests identified significant differences in motivation and social support across demographic groups. Post-Hoc Tukey tests further explored these differences where applicable.
4. **Correlation Analysis:** Spearman's Rho and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation determined the relationships between motivation and social support. These statistical treatments provided a comprehensive analysis to address the research objectives and inform recommendations for enhancing student motivation and support in online learning.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to strict ethical standards. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, in compliance with the Code of Ethics for Counselors and the Counseling Profession in the Philippines. The study prioritized students' comfort and safety by not requiring disclosure of sensitive personal experiences, fostering a respectful research environment.

## **Summary**

### **1. Student Profiles**

The study focused on 181 university freshmen, with 66% being female and 34% male. Most students were aged 17-24, and 52% were enrolled in Business Administration, while 48% were in Public Administration. A majority (79%) came from low-income backgrounds (below PHP 10,957) and lived in rural areas. Regarding gadgets, 87% used smartphones for online learning.

### **2. Student Motivation Levels**

The study examined intrinsic motivation (internal drives like curiosity), extrinsic motivation (external incentives such as academic goals), and amotivation (lack of motivation). Findings showed high motivation levels, particularly in extrinsic motivation, where students understood the benefits of online learning. The study also found that despite some students facing amotivation, they did not completely disengage from the online learning experience.

### **3. Social Support Levels**

Social support, categorized as emotional, informational, instrumental, and affirmational, was assessed. Students reported high levels of informational support, with emotional, instrumental, and affirmational support at moderate levels. These support systems were crucial for helping students overcome challenges in their online learning journey.

### **4. Demographic Differences in Motivation**

The study found no significant difference in motivation based on age, sex, place of origin, or gadget type, suggesting that these factors did not significantly affect student motivation in online learning.

### **5. Demographic Differences in Social Support**

However, significant differences were observed in social support levels based on college program and income. Public Administration students reported higher levels of support compared to Business Administration students, while those from lower-income backgrounds received more support than those in higher income categories.

### **6. Relationship Between Motivation and Social Support**

A moderate positive correlation was found between motivation and social support, indicating that higher social support led to increased student motivation to engage in online learning.

### **7. Social Support Intervention Program**

The study suggested that effective distance learning requires training for both students and instructors to utilize online tools and platforms effectively. It recommended creating supportive learning environments to help students succeed in online education.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study confirms that both motivation and social support are key factors in the success of students in online distance learning. The levels of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic, were found to be high among the

students. The findings also support Self-Determination Theory (SDT), emphasizing the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering motivation. The study highlights the importance of a supportive learning environment, where emotional, informational, and affirmational support can enhance students' intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, differences in social support levels based on college program and income indicate that external factors significantly shape students' learning experiences. The research reinforces the significance of creating a supportive, well-structured environment that nurtures motivation through social support, ultimately improving student engagement and persistence in online education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations were made to improve online learning experiences:

### 1. Curriculum Experts:

Curriculum designers should focus on courses that not only deliver content but also integrate emotional and informational support. Interactive elements like discussion forums, peer mentoring, and collaborative projects should be included to foster a sense of community and engagement.

### 2. Guidance Counselors:

Counselors should emphasize emotional and affirmational support through tailored counseling sessions, workshops on time management, and study techniques. They can guide students in coping with online learning challenges.

### 3. Instructors:

Instructors should offer personalized feedback, create opportunities for interaction, and ensure regular check-ins. Using technology effectively to facilitate both academic and emotional support can help bridge the isolation often felt in online learning environments.

### 4. School Administration:

Administrators should ensure that social support structures are accessible to all students, especially those from lower-income backgrounds. Initiatives like peer mentoring programs and online community-building should be implemented to ensure equitable support across student demographics.

### 5. Parents:

Parents should engage with their children's academic progress and provide a supportive home environment. Encouraging regular communication about their online learning experiences and helping students balance academics with personal life can boost motivation.

### 6. Students:

Students should actively seek social support from peers, instructors, and family members. Engaging in group activities, seeking feedback, and utilizing available resources will help them stay motivated and perform better academically.

### 7. Future Researchers:

Future research could investigate the specific impact of different types of social support (emotional, informational, instrumental, affirmational) on motivation across various online learning contexts. Further studies should explore the long-term effects of sustained social support and the role of digital platforms in facilitating student motivation.

## CONCLUSION SUMMARY

This study demonstrates that motivation and social support are crucial to the success of online learning. Social support systems significantly enhance student motivation, particularly in emotionally challenging online environments. By creating supportive, engaging, and interactive learning environments, educational institutions can improve student success and retention in online distance learning programs.

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