

Investigating the Influence of Value in Learners' Motivation to Learn

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ABSTRACT

Motivation among the learners is one of the most critical issues when it comes to engagement in academic activities, perseverance and performance. Based on the ERG Theory by Alderfer, the paper will examine the relationship between three essential motivational dimensions, which include value, expectancy, and affective dimensions against the background of Malaysian undergraduate language learners. The quantitative research design was adopted and a structured questionnaire was administered to 220 undergraduates. Results have shown that the value element of learning motivation serves as a primary driver of learning motivation, which has a strong influence on expectancy beliefs as well as on affective experiences. Extrinsic goal orientation, positive task-value beliefs, and moderate intrinsic orientation were high, moderate, and high respectively. The measures pertaining to expectations were also high in self-efficacy and moderate in affective measures displayed moderate levels of test anxiety. The results confirm previous findings that value, persistence, and emotional involvement are related and the applicability of ERG Theory in educational motivation studies. The implications emphasize the need to ensure that learning environments are designed to add value to tasks, build self-efficacy and resolve affective learning barriers.

Keywords: Learning motivation, ERG Theory, value, expectancy, affective factors

INTRODUCTION

Motivation to engage in academic activities is a compound concept that significantly affects engagement, persistence, and learning outcomes among learners (Ryan and Deci, 2020). The research is pegged on the conceptualisation of human needs as developed by Alderfer ERG Theory of Motivation (1969), which forms the three interrelated dimensions, namely, Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG). In contrast to the hierarchical sequence of Maslow, the ERG Theory permits many needs to work concurrently and recognizes the possibility of frustration in the higher needs being regressive to the lower ones (Alderfer, 1969; Wanous and Zwany, 1977).

Within the academic setting, Existence represents the safety, comfort, and access to resources; Relatedness refers to social engagement and a feeling of belonging; and Growth is indicative of self-enhancement and the perceived worth of study (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990; Van den Broeck et al., 2016). The other theoretical perspectives have also looked at motivation such as Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002), Self-Determination Theory (Deci et al., 2001) and Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006). According to recent results (Kim and Pekrun, 2022; Tze et al, 2022), ERG Theory may offer a more comprehensive framework which incorporates cognitive, affective, and social aspects of motivation.

Statement of Problem

Nevertheless, there is limited empirical research that combines value, expectancy, and affective levels of the ERG framework. The past studies always indicate that the value of the task predicts learning effort and persistence (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990; Kusurkar et al., 2012) and that expectancy beliefs are highly related to confidence and achievement performance (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Rahmat and Thasrabiab, 2024). Similarly, the research on affective elements (e.g., anxiety and enjoyment) proves their role in motivation and engagement (Pekrun, 2006; Dong et al., 2022). Yet these threads of research are repeatedly considered separately, without inquiry into the interaction between them as mutually dependent needs of existence, of relatedness, and of growth. This disintegration does not allow a comprehensive view of the interaction between motivational elements to maintain learning. It is important to fill this gap and come up with pedagogical strategies that will both instill confidence, emotional balance, and value of tasks.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study therefore explores learners' perceptions of value, expectancy, and affective factors, examining their interrelations through the lens of ERG Theory. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions:

1. How do learners perceive value components in learning motivation?
2. How do learners perceive expectancy components in learning motivation?
3. How do learners perceive affective components in learning motivation?
4. What is the relationship between value components and other motivational dimensions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

ERG Theory by Alderfer and Its Applicability in Learning Motivation.

The ERG Theory of Motivation developed by Alderfer in 1969 builds on the hierarchical model that Maslow proposed and summarizes the human needs into three overlapping dimensions, namely, Existence, Relatedness, and Growth.

According to this theory, people can simultaneously work on several needs and that frustration in achieving higher-level needs can result in regression to lower ones (Alderfer, 1969; Wanous and Zwany, 1977). This flexibility is the reason why ERG Theory can be of great use in elucidating the diversity of learner motivation in different situations and periods.

Existence needs in education contexts are associated with safety, stability, and availability of sufficient learning materials such as conducive learning environments that boost the confidence and comfort of the learners (Zargar et al., 2013). Relatedness requirements include social sense of belonging and interpersonal relations with the peers and instructors, that contributes to engagement and collaborative learning (Graen et al., 1986). Growth needs on the other hand are the innate thirst or want of self-enhancement, mastery and intellectual satisfaction among learners (Jha, 2010). These dimensions when applied to learning indicate that the motivation is not caused by a single source but the relationship between the cognitive, affective, and social factors.

The scholars have pointed out that the ERG Theory is very similar to educational motivation models. As an example, the Growth dimension corresponds to the intrinsic motivation construct of Self-Determination Theory (Deci et al., 2001), whereas Existence and Relatedness are autonomy and social belonging. The mutual dependency of these needs indicates how learners work towards regulation of security, socialization, and self-growth in the learning process.

Motivation for Learning

Learning motivation involves psychological mechanisms that guide, maintain, and control behaviours with respect to academic objectives (Ryan and Deci, 2020). It is usually subdivided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is based on curiosity, enjoyment, and interest in the learning process itself and extrinsic motivation; it is based on external factors and this includes recognition, grades, or rewards (Al-Dhamit and Kreishan, 2013). Despite the importance of the two, overdependence on extrinsic motivation may reduce intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 2001).

There are various theoretical views that have enhanced the knowledge on learning motivation. According to Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002) the motivation of learners revolves around two key elements namely; the belief in success (expectancy) and the value or usefulness learners have in a task (value). Goal Orientation Theory has differentiated between mastery goals, which are competence-oriented and performance goals, which are ability-oriented (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990). This Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), focuses on the accomplishment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs as critical in the maintenance of intrinsic motivation (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Moreover, the Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2006) takes into account the emotional aspects and states that the enjoyment, anxiety, or boredom of

the learners is caused by the perceived control of learning and the value attached to it.

Collectively these frameworks emphasise three key dimensions of learning motivation: cognitive (expectancy), evaluative (value) and affective (emotional) - which relate to the three needs of Alderfer: Existence, Growth, and Relatedness. This theoretical convergence is in favor of applying ERG Theory in educational motivation research as it places one on the same page of understanding the relation between the cognitive beliefs, emotional experiences, and value perceptions among learners.

Empirical Studies on Motivation and ERG Theory

The inductive evidence always supports the fact that motivation is complex and mutually dependent. Ceylan (2024) showed that motivational beliefs such as task value and self-efficacy have a positive effect on emotional management and persistence. According to Kusrkar et al. (2012), autonomous and value-based motivation are predictors of study effort and performance, but extrinsic regulation does not demonstrate strong results. On the same note, the study by Wouters et al. (2016) demonstrated that rather than its intensity, the quality of motivation, and especially its value-driven dimension are greater predictors of achievement.

Pintrich and De Groot (1990) have found intrinsic value to be positively related to cognitive engagement and strategy use, and Dong et al. (2022) have found that expectancy-value constructs are predictors of persistence even in the presence of affective pressure. Other recent studies by Tze et al. (2022) also confirm that motivational dimensions are interdependent and that cognitive and affective factors do not act independently but instead interact with each other.

Although these have been learned, there are comparatively limited studies that have looked into such relationships using the ERG theoretical framework. By incorporating the value, expectancy, and affective variables into the triadic framework of ERG, one may gain a more comprehensive insight into learner motivation as the phenomenon that will incorporate both the psychological needs and affective processes.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

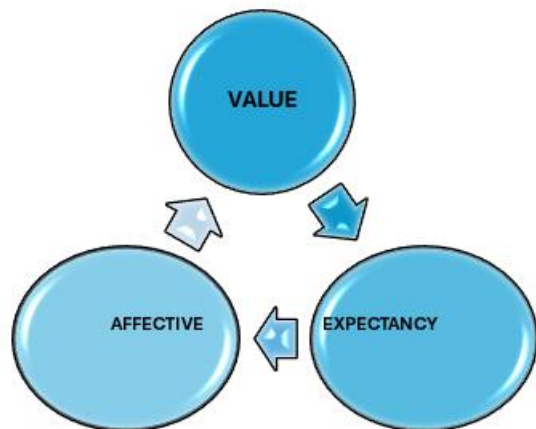
Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, the study uses the ERG Theory by Alderfer in its conceptual framework. In this framework:

- **Growth** is represented by learners' intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations and their task-value beliefs (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990).
- **Existence** corresponds to learners' expectancy-related beliefs, including self-efficacy and control of learning (Rahmat & Thasrabiab, 2024).

- **Relatedness** aligns with the affective dimension, encompassing learners' emotions such as enjoyment, anxiety, and social comparison (Pekrun, 2006).

The framework assumes that the value element will serve as a middle man connecting the cognitive confidence (expectancy) and emotional involvement (affective). It is based on the premise that the learners will have a higher likelihood of believing in their ability to achieve success when they assign some kind of meaning to a task, and they will experience positive emotions in relation to the process of learning.

Figure 1- Conceptual framework of the Study



This theoretical connection allows a detailed analysis of the simultaneous functioning of motivational needs of learners. By placing value in the middle of ERG triadic model, the study aims at elucidating the sustainability of engagement and motivation to learn among undergraduate students through these connected elements.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative research design to examine the role of value in motivating learners based on the ERG theory that was developed by Alderfer. The research aimed at studying three important aspects such as value, expectancy, and affective components and the interrelations between them among undergraduate learners.

Initially, there were 220 undergraduate students of a Malaysian government university who were sampled voluntarily on the basis of convenience sampling. The participants had been attending language classes during data collection. The research used a questionnaire in a structured form that was administered online, which involved demographic questions and questions on the motivation.

Table 1- Likert Scale Use

1	Never
2	Rarely
3	Sometimes
4	Very Often
5	Always

The questionnaire used five-point Likert scale where the answers are given as 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). It was a 24-item scale that was more or less based on Pintrich and De Groot (1990), which dealt with three constructs:

- Value Components (12 items)
- Expectancy Components (7 items)

- Affective Components (5 items)

Table 2- Distribution of Items in the Survey

Sect	Construct (Keywords)	Variable	No Items	Total Items	Cronbach Alpha
B	Value Components	A) Intrinsic Goal Orientation	4	12	.920
		B) Extrinsic Goal Orientation	3		
		C) Task Value Beliefs	5		
C	Expectancy Component	A) Students' Perception Of Self-Efficacy	5	7	.919
		B) Control Beliefs For Learning	2		
D	Affective Components			5	.878
Total No Of Items				24	.942

The instrument reliability was studied using Cronbach alpha coefficients. The findings revealed a high level of internal consistency of all components:

- Value = .920
- Expectancy = .919
- Affective = .878
- Overall instrument reliability = .942

These values indicate excellent reliability and confirm that the instrument was suitable for the current research context (Jackson, 2015).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarise learners' responses, while Pearson correlation analysis was employed to determine relationships among the three motivational constructs. The findings are presented according to the four research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate that most of the respondents were women (67%), and men were also few (33%), and the respondents were mostly between the ages of 22 and 23 years (58%). This distribution represents a group of senior undergraduates who are highly exposed to academic content at the undergraduate level, to give important information in the motivation patterns.

Table 3- Percentage for Demographic Profile

Question	Demographic Profile	Categories	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	33%
		Female	67%
2	Age	18-19	3%
		20-21	39%
		22-23	58%

Findings for Value Components

Learners' perceptions of value components, which include intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations and task-value beliefs, revealed consistently high motivation levels.

- **Intrinsic Goal Orientation:** Students expressed strong curiosity and interest in challenging materials ($M = 3.9$, $SD \approx 0.8$).
- **Extrinsic Goal Orientation:** Learners reported high motivation driven by grades, recognition, and family expectations ($M = 4.1$, $SD \approx 0.8$).
- **Task Value Beliefs:** Participants perceived course materials as relevant and useful ($M = 3.9$ – 4.1 , $SD \approx 0.7$ – 0.9), though they rated transferability of learning across courses slightly lower ($M = 3.7$).

Figure 2- Mean for Intrinsic Goal Orientation

Item	Mean	SD
MSVCQ1 In this program, I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things.	3.8	0.8
MSVCQ2 In the courses of a program like this, I prefer course materials that arouse my curiosity, even if they are difficult to learn.	3.9	0.7
MSVCQ3 The most satisfying thing for me in this program is trying to understand the content of the courses	3.9	0.8
MSVCQ4 When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.	3.8	0.8

Figure 3- Mean for Extrinsic Goal Orientation

Item	Mean	SD
MSEGQ1 Getting a good grade in the classes is the most satisfying thing for me right now.	4.1	0.8
MSEGQ2 The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this program is getting a good grade.	4.1	0.8
MSEGQ 3 I want to do well in the classes because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, or others.	4.1	0.8

Figure 4- Mean for Task Value Beliefs

Item	Mean	SD
MSTVQ1 I think I will be able to transfer what I learn from one course to other courses in this program.	3.7	0.9
MSTVQ2 It is important for me to learn the course materials in the courses.	4	0.7
MSTVQ3 I think the course material in the courses of this program is useful for me to learn	4.1	0.8
MSTVQ4 I like the subject matter of the courses.	3.9	0.7
MSTVQ5 Understanding the subject matter of the courses is very important to me.	4	0.7

These findings indicate that learners' motivation is shaped by both intrinsic curiosity (Growth needs) and extrinsic recognition (Existence needs), consistent with the propositions of ERG Theory.

Findings for Expectancy Components

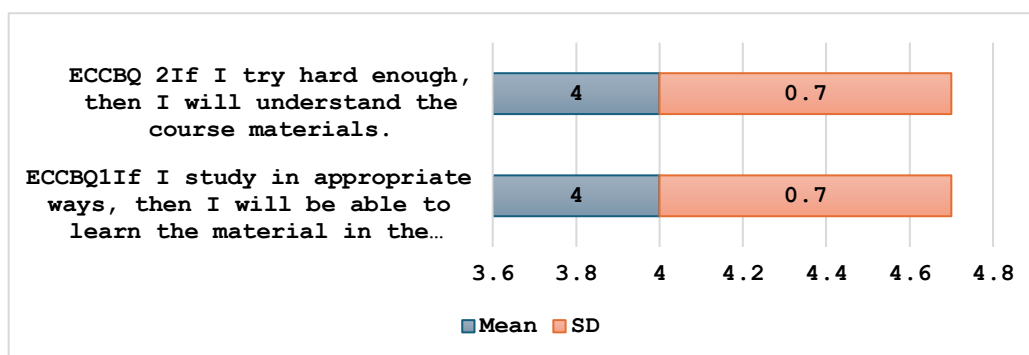
Expectancy components measured self-efficacy and control beliefs for learning.

Respondents demonstrated moderately high self-efficacy ($M = 3.7\text{--}3.8$, $SD \approx 0.8$), expressing confidence in their ability to perform well and master new material. Control beliefs for learning were also high ($M = 4.0$, $SD \approx 0.7$), indicating that learners believed their effort could directly influence success.

Figure 5- Mean for Students' Perception of Self-Efficacy

Item	Mean	SD
ECSEQ1 I believe I will receive excellent grades in the classes.	3.8	0.8
ECSEQ2 I'm confident I can understand the most complex materials presented by the instructors in the courses.	3.7	0.8
ECSEQ3 I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this program.	3.8	0.8
ECSEQ4 I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in the classes.	3.7	0.8
ECSEQ5 Considering the difficulty of the courses, the teachers, and my skills, I think I will do well in the classes.	3.8	0.8

Figure 6- Mean for Control Beliefs for Learning



These results affirm that expectancy-related beliefs align positively with Existence needs (security and competence) and Growth needs (self-development) as conceptualised in ERG Theory.

Findings for Affective Components

The affective aspect analyzed the emotional experience of the learners, especially their anxiety and comfort in the learning and evaluation situations. Findings showed that there was moderate anxiety ($M = 3.6\text{--}3.8$, $SD = 0.8\text{--}1.0$). The most mentioned by learners were peer comparison and performance on exams, physical manifestations of anxiety (e.g., racing heartbeat) were less common, and lesser mentioned.

Figure 7- Mean for Affective Components

Item	Mean	SD
ACQ1 When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.	3.7	0.9
ACQ2 When I take a test, I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer	3.8	0.8
ACQ3 When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.	3.7	0.9
ACQ4 I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.	3.6	0.9
ACQ5 I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.	3.7	1.0

These results demonstrate that learners report to undergo reasonable emotional arousal which motivates to pay attention and work instead of paralysing stress. In the ERG model, this is the Relatedness needs, which are represented by the wish to get social confirmation and a sense of belonging by the learners in the evaluative situations.

Correlation among Motivational Components

Correlation analysis was performed to examine relationships among value, expectancy, and affective dimensions.

Table 4- Correlation between Value and Expectancy Components

		Value	Expectancy
Value	Pearson (Correlation)	1	.786**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	220
Expectancy	Pearson (Correlation)	.786**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	220	220

Table 5- Correlation between Expectancy and

		Expectancy	Affective
Expectancy	Pearson (Correlation)	1	.349**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	220
Affective	Pearson (Correlation)	.349**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	220	220

Table 6- Correlation between Affective and Value Components

		Affective	Value
Affective	Pearson (Correlation)	1	.413**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	220
Value	Pearson (Correlation)	.413**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	220	220

Results indicate statistically significant positive relationships among all three constructs:

- Value and Expectancy: strong correlation
($r = .786^{**}$, $p < .01$)

- Expectancy and Affective: moderate correlation
($r = .349^{**}$, $p < .01$)
- Affective and Value: moderate correlation
($r = .413^{**}$, $p < .01$)

These results indicate that the learners, who have a perception of increased task value also exhibit greater levels of self-efficacy and positive emotional states. The quality of the association between value and expectancy reinforces the piece that the perception of value among the learners is the key motivational force that binds the belief and the feeling.

These outcomes support the statement made by Alderfer according to which Growth needs (value) have an impact on the Existence (expectancy) and Relatedness (affective) dimensions. Therefore, learners motivational system exists in an integrated form as opposed to being in a fragmented form.

Integrated Interpretation of Findings

The interaction of the value, expectancy, and affective elements suggests that multiple dimensions model is the best to explain the motivation of learners. High task value leads to confidence and involvement which consequently lower anxiety and increases perseverance. This interdependent connection reinforces the finding by Ceylan (2024) regarding the motivational and affective factors as interrelated in influencing the continued engagement of learners.

Furthermore the data confirms that motivation is not fixed but dynamic- students control their effort, emotion and confidence not only concurrently but in a response to the perceived value of the task. The findings thereby confirm the applicability of the ERG Theory as an integrative theory in exploring the academic motivation in higher education.

DISCUSSION

The results of this paper highlight the multi-dimensional and at the same time unified interplay of value, expectancy, and affective learning motivation beliefs as it has been theorized within the ERG Theory proposed by Alderfer. The findings confirm that the motivation of learners cannot be explained using one dimension but a combination of the satisfaction of Growth, Existence, and Relatedness needs simultaneously.

Value Component as the Central Motivator

The students exhibited a great intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations and high task-value beliefs indicating that they view learning as a personal and socially significant experience. This is in line with Ceylan (2024) and Kusurkar et al. (2012) who discovered that value-based motivation improves persistence and self-regulation among learners. When students realise the benefits and fun in the academic activities, they tend to become preoccupied and work harder. This is the same result as the Growth dimension of the ERG Theory, which focuses on fulfilment of self-development and mastery.

Expectancy and Affective Dimensions

Emotional stability and involvement were positively related to expectancy beliefs, as well as reflected in self-efficacy and control of learning. Students who thought that they could achieve high scores reported lower anxiety levels that are manageable, which is in line with the results reported by Pekrun (2006) and Kim and Pekrun (2022). This connection implies that Existence needs satisfaction, including security and competence, assists in regulating the affective reactions, which enhance focus and persistence.

The affective component, which was characterized by moderate levels of test related anxiety showed that the emotional state of the learners was not debilitating but rather adaptive and helped them to perform well when effectively controlled. This observation is reflected by the argument of Dong et al. (2022), who argue that

moderate anxiety levels can facilitate engagement because they keep attention and energy levels high. In the context of the ERG framework, the results of the current research demonstrate that the relevance of the Relativity needs, including the needs of social reassurance and belonging, assist in managing emotional reactions in the context of evaluation.

Interrelation among Components

The significant relationship of value and expectancy, and moderate relationships with affective factors demonstrate that the perception of value of learners is the key engine that connects cognition and emotion. When students attach greater importance to their learning activities, not only they are more convinced of their capacity to excel, but also they tend to be affected more positively in terms of emotional involvement. This trend validates the idea proposed by Alderfer (1969) according to which the satisfaction of the needs is mutual: the satisfaction of the Growth needs contributes to the enhancement of the Existence and Relatedness dimensions.

Together, the results support the idea that value is a motivational mediator that builds the relationship between the conception of what learners believe they are able to accomplish (expectancy) and the attitude towards learning (affective). This process related to one another offers a deeper insight into motivation in the educational context and justifies the relevance of the ERG Theory as a holistic motivational theory.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to motivational theory by demonstrating that ERG Theory offers a flexible and integrative model for understanding learners' motivation. The ERG Theory takes into consideration the concomitant activation and interaction of various needs, unlike models that detail motivational constructs as independent. The existing results confirm the idea by Alderfer that the Growth needs (value) may be affected by and influence the Existence (expectancy) and Relatedness (affective) needs.

The synthesis of these constructs in a single framework contributes to a higher level of theoretical knowledge compared to the traditional linear models. It also helps to bridge cognitive and affective views of motivation research by locating self-efficacy, task value, and emotional experience to one explanatory system. This multidimensional view would be useful in future motivational theories especially where an individual learner has to keep on balancing confidence, emotion and purpose.

Pedagogical Implications

The implications of the findings on educators aiming to develop sustainable motivation among students are also very important. Because value became the determinant factor in the area of expectancy as well as affective dimensions, the teaching methods are supposed to increase the perceived value of the learning tasks. This may be done through connecting the contents of a course to real life practical use as well as individual objectives of the student in order to make the process of learning more meaningful and pertinent. It is also important to develop a self-efficacy of students. The educators can reinforce expectancy beliefs through offering systematic support, explicit feedback and avenues of gradual triumph. The emphasis on the consideration of minor accomplishments can foster confidence and minimize the learned helplessness.

In view of the moderate levels of test-related anxiety, the strategies that would combine academic challenge with emotional support should also be taken into account by the instructors. Constructive feedback and formative assessments and various evaluation mechanisms could be useful to keep the optimal arousal and minimize stress on performance.

In general, pedagogical strategies that serve the existence, relatedness, and growth needs of learners at the same time can promote holistic and sustainable motivation, resulting in increased engagement, emotional balance, and academic achievement.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further studies can elaborate on the current results by using the longitudinal or mixed method research design to study the change in motivation among learners as time goes by. Further comparison of various academic fields, study levels or cultures might also help in understanding how well ERG Theory can be generalised in the educational setting further. Future research may also consider the role of intervention based research on the role of improving task value via instructional design or feedback to the motivational system to enhance the dynamic interaction of the expectancy and affective elements.

Also, qualitative methods, including the interviews or reflective journals would perhaps reveal more emotional and cognitive subtleties, hence contributing to the comprehension of the role of value-based motivation in learning engagement.

CONCLUSION

The study explored the motivation of the learners to study under the context of the ERG Theory, emphasizing on the relationship between value, expectancy, and affective elements. Results prove the value as the focal motivational tool that affects the cognitive and emotional part of learning. There was high extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and moderate levels of anxiety among learners that were interrelated positively.

The study concludes that the value dimension serves as a motivation bridge and this is a motivational factor that connects belief and emotion as part of motivation process of learners. This multifaceted insight reaffirms the applicability of the ERG Theory as a universal framework of explaining academic motivation as well as informing pedagogical practices to satisfy learners in terms of growth, confidence, and belonging.

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