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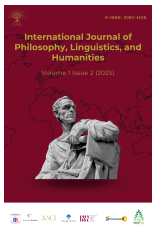

Research Article

From Drive To Depth: Learning Motivation As A Key To Reading Comprehension In Higher Education

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the extent to which learners' learning motivation influences the reading comprehension skills among college students. Anchored on the Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) framework of Guthrie et al. (2004), a descriptive-correlation design was utilized. The study involved 70 respondents and employed standardized survey instruments to assess learning motivation and reading comprehension. Data were analyzed through mean scores, correlation, and regression analysis. Results showed that students demonstrated a high level of motivation and similarly high reading comprehension skills. The correlation analysis also revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between motivation and reading comprehension. Regression analysis confirmed that learning motivation strongly predicted reading comprehension. A regression model was established, confirming that learning motivation is the primary factor contributing to students' reading performance. The model is useful for understanding and enhancing reading comprehension through motivation-centered strategies.

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1. Introduction

Students follow internal motivators to set their educational pursuits and actions, which drive them to stay dedicated as they advance their academic results (Wang et al., 2024). Developing reading ability and text comprehension requires both reading and motivation as fundamental forces. The learning process depends heavily on reading motivation, as it shapes students' focus on materials and their outcomes in reading proficiency and achievement (Teng & Yang, 2022; Vaknin-Nusbaum & Tuckwiller, 2023). Students who experience motivation will devote sustained time to reading advanced texts while using productive strategies that build their reading comprehension abilities. Reading motivation predicts reading comprehension skills in adolescents, requiring parallel development of these aspects (Guthrie & Davis, 2007, as cited in Ma & Zhao, 2025).

Students' motivation to read is the key factor affecting their reading comprehension skills. Students' motivational level in reading comprehension is significant for their educational advancement (Astuti, 2013, as cited in Patra et al., 2022). Learning activities that improve reading skills receive active student participation from those who demonstrate motivation, as they utilize their time efficiently throughout the educational process. Multiple classroom motivational approaches lead to better student educational performance (Sorayyaei, 2020).

The academic environment contains two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Ryan and Deci (2000) established that learning motivation allows readers to discover enjoyment and satisfaction within reading activities. However, extrinsic motivation occurs when readers read to obtain rewards or avoid negative consequences. Studies indicate that students who are motivated internally because of inner achievement have better reading comprehension outcomes (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). According to Baker and Wigfield (1999), students who read for outside incentives achieve better results in reading assignments. The motivational phenomenon exists across multiple dimensions, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and goal orientation. Hence, researchers must explore how motivational elements influence reading comprehension success in more detail.

The analysis of the effects of motivation on reading skills has several unanswered questions despite existing research. The field of reading comprehension motivators has primarily studied multiple cultural backgrounds (Habók et al., 2020; Kanonire et al., 2022) but lacks experiments that assess motivation as a direct predictor for reading comprehension. Research conducted by Abdelrahman (2020) on academic success motivation exists in abundance, yet few investigations have delved into the specific impact of motivation on reading comprehension. Most previous research has studied correlations between learning motivation and reading comprehension (Miyamoto et al., 2020), yet they have not utilized regression analysis to pinpoint the main predictor variables. Regression analysis allows the present research to identify which motivational factors significantly drive learners' reading achievement. The regression analysis technique faces certain boundaries when examining motivational trends affecting the reading comprehension abilities of learners. Several secondary factors obscuring motivation research continue to challenge its analysis because these elements separately influence reading comprehension performance, according to Guthrie et al. (2007).

Existing studies often treat motivation broadly as intrinsic or extrinsic, overlooking its multidimensional nature that includes self-efficacy and goal orientation. Furthermore, the limited use of regression-based methods constrains the identification of which motivational variables serve as the strongest

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predictors of reading comprehension. This gap highlights the need for a focused investigation on college students, employing predictive analysis to determine the distinct contributions of various motivational dimensions to their reading comprehension skills.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design. Descriptive design provides a snapshot of a population's current conditions, characteristics, or phenomena that are essential for identifying relationships and patterns that exist naturally without manipulation, making it suitable for educational settings (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2021). This perspective complements Creswell's (2012) notion that researchers employ correlational statistical tests to define and measure the degree of association between variables. This rationale aligns with the objectives of this study, which is to examine the predictive relationship between learning motivation and reading comprehension. Furthermore, the study employed regression analysis to estimate and provide predicted values for reading comprehension skills. Inferences were made about the associations to better understand how variations in learning motivation rates affect reading comprehension levels among college students.

2.2. Respondents and Sampling

This study involved 70 college students. A sample size of 70 was determined using the 20:1 rule for regression based on the presence of two independent and dependent variables (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012). This approach ensures that every participant in the population has an equal chance of being selected through stratified random sampling (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Students were grouped by department and randomly chosen to maintain balance across the sample. Participants who were not officially enrolled, declined participation, transferred mid-semester, were diagnosed with cognitive or behavioral conditions, or who could not understand or complete the survey instrument due to language restrictions or other constraints.

2.3. Research Instruments

Two survey questionnaires were adapted to gather data from the study respondents. The first set of the questionnaire was the learning motivation developed by Elvina and Quirap (2024). The second instrument was the reading comprehension test, designed by Tambis et al. (2023). To meet the research instrument's validity and reliability, the researcher ensured fidelity from face validity to reliability testing and tool use. The survey questionnaires were also sent to experts for modification in the respondents' community. The instruments underwent pilot testing for reliability, which measures consistent results. Huck (2015) noted that a scale has high internal consistency if items 'hang together' and measure the same construct, ideal for Likert scales. Whitley (2002) states that no absolute rules exist, but most accept a minimum internal consistency coefficient of 0.70. This study also used a five-point Likert scale because it is one of the most commonly used scales.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection entailed the use of the validated survey instruments on selected respondents using the sampling procedure. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were used to tally the responses, organize them, and analyze the results. A correlation analysis

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was adopted as a tool for examining the extent to which learning motivation is linked to the skill of reading comprehension among students. In contrast, regression analysis was used as an instrument to reveal the extent to which learning motivation correlates with reading comprehension skills among students.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The researcher took note of the ethical standards in the course of the study. The participation was by choice, and the consent was informed on the part of the respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were ensured. The research also made sure that the participants could withdraw at any point with impunity. Before the participants were allowed to gather data, the research protocol was scrutinized and accepted by the academic institution's ethics committee.

3. Results

Table 1 outlines the marked motivation of students across various indicators, as measured by mean and standard deviation, with a descriptive equivalent of *High*. The students' motivation is strong, with an overall mean rating of 4.14 and a standard deviation of *0.45*. Students exhibit strong motivation, as reflected in the statement *studying hard*, with a mean rating of 4.11, a standard deviation of 0.84, and a description of *High*. Equally, *setting realistic but challenging academic goals* has a mean rating of 4.07 with a standard deviation of 0.86, also described as *High*. Therefore, the lowest-rated indicator, *studying beyond class homework*, has a mean rating of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 0.86; overall, the students are perceived as motivated but not very engaged in active learning beyond assigned work.

Table 1. Level of Learning Motivation

	Indicator	SD	Mean	Description
1.	studying hard	0.84	4.11	High
2.	setting realistic and challenging academic goals	0.86	4.07	High
3.	doing study outside (beyond) class homework	0.86	3.67	High
4.	making a strong effort to achieve high marks	0.72	4.49	Very High
5.	valuing achievement (passing) in studies	0.75	4.41	Very High
6.	having the confidence to pass the studies	0.84	4.11	High
7.	showing genuine interest in learning	0.72	4.27	Very High
8.	trying to learn from those who are more experienced	0.94	4.14	High
9.	taking studies as a personal responsibility	0.78	4.50	Very High
10.	liking the rewards that studies bring	0.90	4.06	High
11.	enjoying intellectual challenges that academic work brings	0.77	3.99	High
12.	having fun with peers during study time	0.93	3.90	High
	Total Mean	**0.45**	**4.14**	**High**

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The results indicate that students are quite active, particularly in their motivation to achieve high marks and self-accountability for learning. However, their participation is much lower in the independent learning tasks that are not assigned. The differences captured by the standard deviation in the various indicators suggest varying motivation levels. This indicates that some students may require additional support to develop self-directed learning skills and intellectual curiosity beyond tasks and the set curriculum. These findings support the need to develop further strategies to deepen learning while promoting self-directed, independent intellectual work and cultivating an overall appreciation for the academic work required to maintain motivation for learning over extended periods.

In Table 2, the total mean was calculated to be 3.75, with a standard deviation of 0.59, indicating that the respondents demonstrated an overall high level of reading comprehension skills. The indicator, *getting high reading comprehension scores*, received a mean rating of 3.77 and a standard deviation of 0.80, with a descriptive equivalent of *High*. Similarly, *grasping the main topic of the reading text in text-related images* was rated with a mean of 3.81 and a standard deviation of 0.80, also classified as *high*. The ability to *determine the main and supporting ideas of texts* was recorded with a mean rating of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.86*, indicating* a descriptive equivalent of *High*. These data suggest that students have high reading comprehension but need further development, especially in making precise predictions and retaining the readings.

Table 2. Level of Reading Comprehension Skills

	Indicator	SD	Mean	Description
1.	getting high marks on reading comprehension.	0.80	3.77	High
2.	grasping the main topic of the reading text in text-related images.	0.80	3.81	High
3.	identifying the main and supporting ideas in texts.	0.86	3.84	High
4.	explaining and summarizing what one has read.	0.88	3.83	High
5.	making accurate predictions about the texts	0.77	3.56	High
6.	reading without the guidance of teachers.	1.00	3.86	High
7.	summarizing the text.	0.86	3.91	High
8.	evaluating the text.	0.80	3.64	High
9.	grasping the meaning of text-related images, tables, or graphics.	0.80	3.64	High
10.	having long-term memory of the readings.	1.10	3.67	High
	Total Mean	**0.59**	**3.75**	**High**

Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the selected independent variables—learning motivation and the dependent variable, reading comprehension skills. The correlation between learning motivation and reading comprehension skills is positive and moderate, with an R-value of 0.465 and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests a significant finding that learning motivation has a positive correlation with reading comprehension skills. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, this result is statistically significant, indicating that reading comprehension skills also improve as learning motivation increases. The data support the hypothesis that more motivated learners understand texts better than their less motivated counterparts. It emphasizes the need to enhance students' motivation in the educational context.

The data gathered shows that learning motivation centers around reading skills. This data highlights the need to enhance students' motivation, leading to improved performance in reading activities.

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Table 3. Correlation between Variables

Pair of Variables		r-value	p-value
Independent Variable	Dependent Variable		
Learning Motivation	Reading Comprehension Skills	.465*	.000

Table 4 indicates that the intercept (β = 1.199, p = .051) is insignificant. This is not statistically strong, given the conventional α = 0.05 level. Moreover, an adjusted R-squared of 0.194 suggests a slightly lower correlation between learning motivation and reading comprehension skills. The results support the other findings of the regression model, showing an F-value of 9.296 with a p-value of 0.000. Since the p-value falls below the 0.05 threshold, the model is deemed statistically significant, confirming that learning motivation has a considerable influence on reading comprehension skills.

Table 4. Regression Analysis of Learning Motivation as Predictors of Reading Comprehension Skills

	Coefficients	**Standard Error**	**t stat**	**p-value**	
Intercept	1.199	0.603	1.988	.051	not sig
Learning Motivation	0.613	0.142	4.306	.000	sig

R square = 0.194
F value = 9.296
p value = 0.000 (significant)

Based on the data, learning motivation emerges as a potent predictor, with a strong and statistically significant impact on reading comprehension (β = 0.613, p = .000). Students who demonstrate higher motivation levels tend to possess better reading comprehension skills. Motivation appears to be central in determining students' understanding and processing of text. In conclusion, these findings reinforce the notion that motivation has a significant influence on reading comprehension skills, underscoring the need to develop students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to enhance their reading abilities.

3.1. The Regression Model

The general model indicates that learning motivation is a significant predictor of reading comprehension skills in higher education. The regression model reveals that motivation is significantly associated with reading comprehension, reaching conventional levels of statistical significance. Motivation exerts a strong positive influence on comprehension (coefficient = 0.613, p < .001), solidifying its role as the primary driver in this analysis, with a standard error of 0.142 and a 95% confidence, confirming the precision and reliability of the estimate. The model yielded an R^2 value of 0.194, indicating that learning motivation modestly explains 19.4% of the variance in reading comprehension.

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3.3.1 The General Model:

The model below includes motivation and provides the overall structure of the regression analysis. Using the general model, one could examine students' estimated reading comprehension skills scores.

$$Y = 1.199 + 0.613 \text{ (Motivation)}$$

Model 1: Y = 1.199 + 0.613 (Motivation)

4. Discussions

4.1. Learning Motivation

The students' learning motivation reveals two interesting insights: taking studies as a personal responsibility received the highest mean score of 4.50, with a descriptive equivalent of Very High; conversely, the lowest-rated item, studying beyond class homework, was given a mean score of 3.67 and a descriptive equivalent of High. These differences are telling, but these attributes provide a clear dominant feature concerning the students' motivational profile: students have a strong internal drive to take full responsibility for their academic work, while they lack motivation for independent work.

The rationale behind the high rating for taking studies as a personal responsibility aligns with learning motivation theories, particularly with the Self-Determination Theory, which marks autonomy as one of the crucial elements of effective learning (Psychreg, 2024). If learners feel that their education is something they bear personal responsibility for, they will approach it with all seriousness, effort, and intention. This sense fosters responsibility and achievement, as provided by Gupta and Mili (2017), who emphasized that learning motivation is correlated to personal growth and self-education in the context of lifelong learning. In addition, this responsibility is likely to help students persist through challenges, bolster their self-belief, and encourage them to take a proactive approach to their education.

In contrast, the low value given to studying beyond class homework indicates a lack of self-initiated learning and independent study, which might indicate a dependence on external factors like grades or assignments. Hartnett (2020) noted that students often struggle to engage in self-motivated activities that require self-direction and autonomy, particularly when these activities do not offer immediate gratification or feedback. This agrees with Kerdijk et al. (2015) and Graham (2020), who contend that motivation is somewhat controlled by academic structures such as assessment and feedback. Motivation is likely to be absent due to the absence of these structures, particularly for students who rely on extrinsic motivation.

The various ratings illustrate the difference in self-directed learning skills and their importance for the students. To encourage self-directed learning, students should be motivated to go beyond the classwork, which requires cultivating autonomy and interest in the subject taught. Monteiro (2013) and Wigfield et al. (2016) highlighted the impact of motivational and metacognitive reading strategies on higher-level comprehension and learning, applying analysis and synthesis of texts. Students can be equipped with lifelong learning skills through educator-facilitated peer learning, goal-directed behaviors, and reflective thinking strategies.

In conclusion, the findings reveal gaps that need to be addressed in self-directed independent learning, which is often perceived as less academically engaging, despite students demonstrating a high sense of responsibility

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toward their learning. Compared to the highest and lowest-rated indicators, the gap exemplifies a distinct need for motivation strategies that blend responsibility and pupil-driven interest in learning outside the classroom. Ortega and Sumayo (2024) argue that motivation breeds an environment that encourages active student involvement and fosters deep engagement and participation in learning endeavors. These findings support a growing body of literature examining the relationships among motivation, academic achievement, and self-regulated learning.

4.2. Reading Comprehension Skills

The results show that the highest mean score for reading comprehension was recorded against the item summarizing the text. This item achieved a mean score of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.86. It can then be posited that students' capability to summarize, where they condense information and present core ideas indicative of comprehension, is a key strength. Identifying and separating the main ideas and details that are less relevant from the two parts of summarization requires metacognition and higher-order thinking. As noted by Khalilova (2023), learners who practiced strategic reading, including summarization and reflecting on the text, tended to appreciate the text at a deeper level. This is corroborated by Zhang and Hope (2021), who stated that effective reading comprehension depends on the reader's interaction with the related information within the text and how that information is structured.
In addition, Fang (2024) emphasized the importance of metacognitive strategies, particularly summarizing, as essential to learners' comprehension of the material in the context of the heavily laden cognitive demands of the reading material. Hence, the high score indicates the students' comprehension skills and ability to undertake analytic and reflective reading.

In contrast, the indicator with the lowest mean rating is the item making accurate predictions about the texts, for which the mean rating was 3.56 with a standard deviation of 0.77. While still in the high descriptive range, this rating, which is the lowest, points to the least achieved value and suggests an increase in inferencing and anticipatory reading skills development. As a psychological process, prediction involves matching one's prior knowledge with text cues (hints) that a reader's mental strategies build a logical sequence needed for meaning construction and anticipation of upcoming elements in the text. The Active View of Reading (AVR) model by Duke and Cartwright (2021) stressed the importance of prediction from a metacognitive perspective, relating it closely to one's ability to understand (comprehend) and higher-order thinking skills (executive function). This comparatively low predictive performance implies that students would benefit from teaching strategies such as Reciprocal Teaching, which improves prediction and other comprehension strategies through questioning, summarizing, and clarifying. Furthermore, Sari and Margana (2023) emphasized the importance of customized instruction and the fostering of advanced critical reading skills, specifically those designed to predict and interpret text structure, as fundamental to navigating complex texts.

These findings suggest that describing specific pieces of information requires cognitive processing that learners can draw upon. On the other hand, the ability to predict is much more complex and demanding, qualitatively different from a student's previous experiences, and requires a solidified strategy. Adjusting this would require metacognitive training and strategic instruction in reading, as Bakkaloğlu and Pilten (2023) highlight, where the two argue that motivation and awareness of one's thinking are the dominant factors affecting reading achievement. In addition, some prediction skills may also be developed through the use of

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technologically augmented reading environments, including AR or AI-integrated reading tools (as researched by Arduino et al., 2020, and Zhang et al., 2024), which provide more interactive and adaptive reading experiences for users. Furthermore, this result also aligns with Royeras and Sumayo's (2024) report, which suggests that vocabulary and intrinsic drive are interlocking foundations of deeper reading. This implies that teachers at any level should foster word mastery alongside persistent motivation to enhance overall proficiency. Finally, the difference between the most and least rated indicators of reading comprehension skill level highlights the need to develop more effective cognitive strategies that support anticipating and connecting ideas, as well as deep engagement with texts.

4.3. Correlation

A significant relationship exists between learning motivation and the reading comprehension abilities of the college students in this study, with an r-value of 0.465 and a p-value of 0.000. This suggests that greater motivation is positively correlated with improved reading comprehension performance. These findings complement previous research, which has shown that intrinsic factors of motivation — particularly those related to reading for personal enjoyment or interest — increase reading engagement and comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004). Students who are motivated to read for enjoyment are more likely to employ appropriate reading strategies and actively engage with the text at a higher level, resulting in improved reading comprehension skills. This emphasizes the need and value placed on fostering internal motivators in educational contexts, as motivation, as shown, not only correlates with academic success but also with the use of more complex cognitive measures needed to tackle difficult texts.

As Ryan and Deci (2000) pointed out, extrinsic motivation, such as rewards, while potentially sparking success in the short term, does not cultivate understanding or promote sustained engagement with the material. This is the position of the Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) framework, which incorporates motivational and cognitive strategies to enhance comprehension (Guthrie et al., 2004). All in all, the findings underscore the significant role of motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation, in achieving success in reading. To improve students' reading abilities, teachers must implement pedagogical techniques that foster motivation through meaningful and engaging interactions with the material.

4.4. Influence

This study's findings reveal that learning motivation has a significant influence on college students' reading comprehension skills. This finding aligns with prior studies emphasizing the essential role of motivation in academic achievement and lifelong learning (Gupta & Mili, 2017; Takaloo & Ahmadi, 2017). Learning motivation, driven by autonomy, competence, and identity (Psychreg, 2024), fuels student engagement, strategic text processing (Monteiro, 2013; Wigfield et al., 2016), and improved reading outcomes (Lustyantie & Aprilia, 2020). Internally motivated students are better equipped to handle complex texts, suggesting that fostering learning motivation is critical to advancing reading comprehension.

While technology and instructional strategies, such as reciprocal teaching (Duke & Cartwright, 2021), continue to enhance reading education, the central role of motivation remains a consistent focus. Factors, such as structured learning environments and feedback systems (Graham, 2020; De Kraker-Pauw et al., 2017), can support but not replace the effects of internal drive. In conclusion, the results highlight the importance of learning motivation in improving reading comprehension among college students.

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Educational strategies should prioritize cultivating students' internal goals and engagement to enhance reading proficiency.

4.5. Model for Reading Comprehension Skills

The regression model highlights the significance of learners' motivation in enhancing reading comprehension skills. The statistical output also confirms learners' motivation, indicating a sufficiently positive coefficient of 0.613. This means that increasing the learners' motivation will result in a 0.613 improvement in reading comprehension skills. This aligns closely with Gupta and Mili (2017), who argue that motivation is highly associated with one's academic pursuits, achievements, and learning in later life. Similarly, Cartwright et al. (2020) and Kassem and Alqahtani (2023) argue that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are instrumental in achieving reading comprehension results, thereby reinforcing motivation as a crucial factor for educational success.

The regression results are supported by the Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) framework, which emphasizes the combination of motivational and cognitive approaches to enhance reading performance. As Guthrie et al. (2004) describe, CORI enhances students' reading comprehension skills by fostering their motivation to engage meaningfully with the material. This model supports the notion that motivation levels enable all students to engage in strategic reading, utilize advanced metacognitive skills, and enhance their understanding. Based on the available theory and the statistical evidence, this study confirms that text comprehension can be accurately predicted and enhanced through motivation-centered interventions. It is the strongest and most beneficial focus for educators hoping to enhance students' reading performance.

5. Conclusions

This study found that learners possess strong learning motivation alongside high-level reading comprehension skills. Considering learners' notably high level of motivation, educators should continue reinforcing learning motivation by creating purpose-driven tasks that foster autonomy and personal growth. Students' motivation can be further enhanced by their ability to make choices in the reading materials offered. Meanwhile, students with strong comprehension skills who struggle with predictive and inferencing abilities should be taught using Reciprocal Teaching strategies, incorporating prediction exercises and metacognitive strategy training. These methods will enhance students' ability to predict and engage critically with the texts. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between learning motivation and reading comprehension skills, indicating that greater internal motivation is associated with improved comprehension. The regression model derived from the data in this study can help curriculum designers and educators enhance learning motivation within reading programs. In the future, programs must enhance students' internal engagement with the text as a critical lever for improving comprehension outcomes.

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6. Limitations

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample size (n = 70) may limit the statistical power and accuracy of the results, making it more challenging to detect smaller effects or interactions. Second, because the participants were selected from a specific group of college students, the generalizability of the results across various programs and geographic regions may be limited. Third, the utilization of self-reported questionnaires introduces potential response bias, as participants may have exaggerated or understated their actual behaviors and learning experiences. These limitations warrant careful interpretation of the findings and underscore the necessity for more rigorous and diversified data collection in future research.

Author Contributions:
Four researchers collaboratively authored this paper, each contributing according to their expertise: Prof. Imperial led the development of the introduction, interpretation of the results, and discussion of the findings; Prof. Caloc was responsible for critical proofreading and refinement of the manuscript; Prof. Alo ensured the rigor of the study through validation of the methodology and results; and Dr. Matalam undertook the comprehensive review and provided scholarly feedback on the writing.

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Informed Consent Statement:
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