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Enhancing Learning Motivation through Blended Approaches at the University Level

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Abstract

The importance of social media for interaction and socializing cannot be denied. Over time, social media has started playing its part in an educational circle and augmenting teachers' efforts to keep students motivated and toward better learning. The current study aims to assess the impact of blended learning approaches on university students' motivation towards learning. It was a quantitative and descriptive study. The study sample comprised 350 participants from public sector universities in Lahore through a simple random sampling technique. Self-developed 5-point Likert scale was used to get the data. The data were analyzed through SPSS 22, including descriptive and inferential statistics with mean, SD, ANOVA, and regression. Based on the findings, the research identified ten factors influencing students' motivation: face-to-face and collaborative learning, social presence, group discussion, cognitive presence, and the teachers' role in creating and sustaining motivation. The paper also discusses the increasing importance of social media, such as WhatsApp, in educational settings and the potential of blended learning to enhance students' motivation. The findings suggest that teachers' role in creating intrinsic and sustaining motivation is the most influencing factor among the ten identified factors. The study provides valuable insights into the potential of blended learning to enhance students' motivation and the increasing role of social media in educational settings.

Keywords: *Blended Learning, Motivation Towards Learning, Collaboration, Social Media*

1. Introduction

Technology has become an integral part of our lives in the digital age, and its impact on education can no longer be ignored. With the advent of digital devices such as smartphones and computers, social media has assumed greater importance in our daily lives, and its role in education has become increasingly significant (Reich & Ito, 2017). Although there are some demerits of this major change, there are also more benefits if we develop ourselves to make reasonable and productive use of technology (Office of Educational Technology, 2017).

As delineated by Tomlinson and Whittaker (2013), the term "blended learning" has emerged as the predominant conceptualization denoting any synthesis of conventional face-to-face instruction with computer-based technologies encompassing both online and offline activities and associated materials (p. 12). Blended learning is a teaching approach that combines traditional face-to-face

instruction with online learning. Although the concept has long historical roots, it was not firmly established until approximately the start of the 21st century (Friesen, 2012). Currently, the prevailing use of the term denotes a combination of Internet and digital media technologies with conventional classroom techniques necessitating the physical co-presence of instructors and learners (Friesen, 2012). In blended learning environments, traditional pedagogical approaches are augmented but not replaced by online components. The optimal balance between these modalities continues to be an area of exploration within the literature.

Integration of such blended learning techniques may enhance English language pedagogy and acquisition. At its core, blended learning involves identifying optimal modalities to actively engage learning objectives within a classroom environment, melding traditional methodologies with modern online-mediated approaches. Particularly, given the embeddedness of technologies like mobile devices within adolescent lifestyle realities and their conceptualization as cultural resources, blended learning may offer enhanced flexibility for contemporary students in the 21st-century context (Tomlinson & Whittaker, 2013). Blending collaborative online study components with traditional learning allows students to self-direct in a personalized manner optimally aligned with individual competency across skills like academic writing, critical reading, and communication capacities. From the instructor's perspective, analysis of student interaction with online components can provide invaluable insights into learner strengths, weaknesses, and requirements for pedagogical scaffolding. While primarily examined in the context of single-subject materials, blended learning techniques offer untapped versatility across diverse educational settings (Thomas et al., 2022).

Still, there are certain parameters based on which this research could predict the direction of the future. The theme revolves around technology and how it affects and shapes our lives. As far as our professional life is concerned, we have to see how effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity are influenced by galloping development in science and technology for better knowledge sharing and generating new knowledge as critical thinking has been focused in science and other subjects (Jamil, Muhammad, Y. Masood, S. & Habib, Z., 2020; Naseer, Muhammad, & Jamil, 2022).

. The latest developments, such as connectivity, digital devices, and Android phones, are great blessings if we can use and utilize them for humanity's benefit. The benefits of knowledge sharing can be reaped with the help of connectivity worldwide. In almost all fields, people benefit immensely from the latest technology, be it physics, chemistry, biology, medical science, or social sciences (Chen et al., 2010).

The advent of mobile phones supported by the Internet has assumed much greater importance for a faster exchange of knowledge and information than ever before. WhatsApp and Facebook are also important in connecting students and teachers for better knowledge sharing and motivation (Johnson & Majewska, 2022). Certain challenges are also unfolding, which are difficult to handle, especially in Pakistan, where literacy is very low and not up to the mark compared with developed countries. Education is vital to both individual and collective development of Society (Government of Pakistan, 2009).

The population is also growing exponentially due to the scarcity of resources. The need of the hour is to make the best use of available resources to benefit human resources. Knowledge is a power in this era of cutthroat competition, so we, the people in Pakistan, must be well-equipped with the latest technology to capitalize on new opportunities for educational development and uplift (Niederhauser et al., 2018). There are still so many areas where traditional education methods are being followed. Resource utilization and the latest knowledge, especially technical knowledge, are crucial. The introduction of Web 2.0 has also facilitated the communication and exchange of

information. Information technology has given us greater connectivity than ever before. This is how the concept of blended and distant learning was introduced.

Interaction with other people for knowledge sharing and knowledge generation is possible. The importance of social media in education cannot be overstated, as it provides a platform for students and teachers to connect, collaborate, and share knowledge. It has led to technology integration in education, leading to blended learning approaches combining face-to-face and online learning experiences (Thomas et al., 2022). Blended learning has enhanced students' motivation, allowing them to leverage the benefits of traditional and online learning methods. Connectivity with WhatsApp is used for social interaction with the least to do with learning and educational development. This research aims to discover how WhatsApp and face-to-face are used for educational purposes and how they could be used as a blended tool for students' learning motivation.

2. Research Objectives

The objective of this study was as follows:

1. To explore the learning methods of the students at the university level.
2. To assess the impact of blended learning approaches on university students' motivation towards learning.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the learning methods of the students at the university level?
2. How do blended learning approaches affect university students' motivation towards learning?

4. Literature review

E-learning represents an emergent technological innovation increasingly being integrated into modern educational contexts. Under the auspices of the National Information and Communication Technology Plan and attendant educational policies, the Thai government recognizes the immense potential of e-learning. It has provided material support through tangible infrastructure investments and strategic planning initiatives, as outlined in the Thailand ICT Master Plan and e-education framework (Rattanawong et al., 2019). Within this schema, Thai students across geographic locales can enrich their educational endeavors by accessing global knowledge through digital learning mediums. Consequently, e-learning usage has increased across numerous Thai universities in Bangkok's urban centers and additional municipal locations. As an exemplar, Kasetsart University, a prominent government institution - actively encourages its faculty to incorporate e-learning pedagogical tools to bolster student learning.

Presently, the University is pursuing comprehensive integration of ICT into classroom-based language instruction and embedding networked resources within curricular programming. Beyond enhanced motivational outcomes and unconstrained academic/professional interactivity, the broad penetration of e-learning within Thailand has fundamentally transformed underlying teaching methodologies and pedagogical paradigms. Abundant scholarly research has delineated robust correlations between online learning resource utilization and improved language acquisition facilities. For example, Dawley (2007) concluded that e-learning stimulates learners to proactively seek, evaluate, collaboratively share, and ultimately transform information into personalized knowledge. Complementarily, Tanveer (2011) conducted an empirical investigation exploring instructor perceptions, challenges, and advantageous strategies for integrating e-learning within classroom-based language teaching environments.

Larsen (2012) empirically examined blended learning utilization, its pedagogical efficacy, and its impact on student perceptions within an ESL writing course context. Outcomes indicated that

participants operated more autonomously and focused while concomitantly assuming greater ownership over their scholarly progress (Larsen, 2012). Although the terms "autonomy" and "self-directed learning" are occasionally used interchangeably, some salient differences exist; as Holec (1979) delineated, autonomy denotes the capacity to independently direct one's learning process (p. 3-4), whereas self-directed learning more narrowly refers to explicit learner responsibility for academic accomplishments (p. 3-4). Holec pioneered the concept of the autonomous learner concerning second language acquisition contexts, formulating a working definition centered upon students' ability to orchestrate personal and educational endeavors. Recognizing these proven outcomes, the current study incorporated a blended learning structure within its methodological design (Ali et al., 2023).

Blended learning can effectively develop language skills, enhance the English learning environment, and promote students' motivation toward learning the language (Li, 2022). The study emphasized the academic and social benefits of blended learning, which combines traditional and online teaching modes. The promise of blended learning rests on the strengths of both teaching approaches (Wang, 2021). However, the study also highlighted the challenges that language teachers face when using blended learning, and more research is needed to identify and deal with these challenges.

A randomized controlled trial (Stewart et al., 2012) found that a blended learning method significantly improved motivation, mood state, and satisfaction compared to traditional teaching. The study involved undergraduate students and aimed to improve their competence in English. The study also found frequent app users showed stronger motivation and perceived greater gains in their English-language competence than infrequent users. However, the study did not find any significant improvement in knowledge uptake. In the Pakistani context, a study conducted by Sharjeel, Muhammad, & Waqar (2022) regarding primary students' online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mothers' perspective was explored in the study. According to the findings, online learning was not effective for primary students.

5. Research Methodology

A quantitative research design was employed to assess the effects of blended learning approaches on university students' motivation towards learning. The study utilized a self-developed questionnaire to collect data from two public sector universities in Lahore. Data were collected from 350 selected participants through a simple random sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire was distributed among students from various disciplines and educational backgrounds. Data were analyzed through SPSS 22. The demographic information of the participants is summarized as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Demographics		**Frequency**	**Percentage**
	Male	178	51%
Gender	Female	172	49%
	Total	**350**	**100%**
	Others	11	3.1%
Academic	Graduation	56	16%
Qualification	Masters	239	68.3%
	M Phil.	13	3.7%
	PhD	31	8.9%
	Total	**350**	**100%**

The above table presents the demographic breakdown of 350 respondents by gender and academic qualification. Regarding gender, the sample contains slightly more male (51%, N=178) respondents than female (49%, N=172). Most respondents have a Master's degree (68.3%, N=239), followed by those with a graduation degree (16%, N=56 respondents). A small percentage have a PhD (8.9%, N= 31 respondents), M Phil (3.7%, N= 13 respondents), while the remaining (3.1%, N=11 respondents) are grouped under the "Others" academic qualification category.

6. Findings of the Study

The findings of the study are described in the next table.

Table 2: Learning methods perceived by the students

	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
FTF (face to face)	350	3.5793	.56993
CL (collaborative learning)	350	3.6257	.50667
SP (social presence)	350	2.4562	.37148
GD (group discussion)	350	3.7724	.56924
OC (open communication)	350	3.6236	.55781
AE (affective expression)	350	3.7038	.57946
CP (classroom participation)	350	3.6714	.61368
TRCIM (Teacher's role in creating initial motivation)	350	3.6636	.58165
TRSM (Teacher's role in sustainable motivation)	350	3.7304	.55895
TRSE (Teacher's role in encouraging self-evaluation)	350	3.6771	.47460
Total	**350**		

The above table shows the descriptive statistics of 350 respondents in which the value of respondents is given as minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. The values of respondents lie between 1 and 5. The variables were divided into ten categories to differentiate between their rate of minimum, maximum, mean and Std Deviation on its dimensions as FTF (face to face) with (min 1.50, max 5.00, mean 3.57, std. deviation .56993) CL (collaborative learning) with (min 1.75, max 4.75, mean 3.62, std. deviation .50667) SP (Social Presence) with (min 1.67, max 3.33, mean 2.45, std. deviation .37148) GD (Group Discussion) with (min 1.67, max 5.00, mean 3.77, std. deviation .56924) OC (Open Communication) with (min 2.00, max 5.00, mean 3.62, std. deviation .55781) AE (Affective Expression) with (min 2.00, max 5.00, mean 3.70, std. deviation .57946) CP (Classroom Participation) with (min 1.33, max 5.00, mean 3.67, std. deviation .61368) TRCIM (Teacher's role in creating initial motivation) with (min 1.75, max 5.00, mean 3.66, std. deviation .58165) TRSM (Teacher's role in sustaining motivation) with (min 1.91, max 4.93, mean 3.73, std. deviation .55895) TRSE (Teacher's role in encouraging self -evaluation) with (min 1.88, max 5.00, mean 3.67, std. deviation 0.47460). The above table shows the maximum mean for GD (group discussion) with M=3.7724 and the minimum for SP (Social presence) with 2.4562.

Table 3: Correlations of different variables related to blended learning

		FTF	CL	SP	GD	OC	AE	CP	TRCIM	TRSM	TREE
FTF	Pearson Correlation	1									
	Sig. (2-tailed)										
	N	350									
CL	Pearson Correlation	.559**	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000									
	N	350	350								
SP	Pearson Correlation	.543**	.504**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000								
	N	350	350	350							
GD	Pearson Correlation	.518**	.527**	.488**	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000							
	N	350	350	350	350						
OC	Pearson Correlation	.436**	.426**	.415**	.458**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000						
	N	350	350	350	350	350					
AE	Pearson Correlation	.379**	.453**	.430**	.625**	.670**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000					
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350				
CP	Pearson Correlation	.417**	.443**	.387**	.443**	.551**	.464**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350	350			
TRCIM	Pearson Correlation	.411**	.316**	.364**	.434**	.417**	.415**	.554**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350		
TRSM	Pearson Correlation	.576**	.503**	.522**	.618**	.588**	.583**	.575**	.608**	1	

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	
TREE	Pearson Correlation	.532**	.492**	.500**	.595**	.777**	.708**	.787**	.793**	.869**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350	350

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table shows that there are strong positive correlations between most of the variables related to blended learning, like FTF (face-to-face instruction), CL (collaborative learning), GD (group discussions), etc. It also suggests these components tend to co-occur or reinforce each other in blended instruction. The strongest correlation is between teacher engagement (TREE) and overall motivation (r = .869), indicating that a teacher's active involvement in blended learning greatly impacts student motivation.

Table 4: Impact of different variables on university student's motivation

		Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
FTF	Between Groups	8.975	4	2.244	7.415	.000
	Within Groups	104.388	345	.303		
	Total	113.362	349			
CL	Between Groups	4.591	4	1.148	4.659	.001
	Within Groups	85.002	345	.246		
	Total	89.594	349			
SP	Between Groups	1.008	4	.252	1.843	.120
	Within Groups	47.154	345	.137		
	Total	48.162	349			
GD	Between Groups	3.009	4	.752	2.358	.053
	Within Groups	110.079	345	.319		
	Total	113.089	349			
OC	Between Groups	2.363	4	.591	1.919	.107
	Within Groups	106.230	345	.308		
	Total	108.593	349			

AE	Between Groups	4.207	4	1.052	3.212	.013
	Within Groups	112.977	345	.327		
	Total	117.184	349			
CP	Between Groups	3.785	4	.946	2.557	.039
	Within Groups	127.652	345	.370		
	Total	131.437	349			
TRCIM	Between Groups	2.481	4	.620	1.851	.119
	Within Groups	115.592	345	.335		
	Total	118.073	349			
TRSM	Between Groups	3.906	4	.976	3.204	.013
	Within Groups	105.132	345	.305		
	Total	109.038	349			
TREE	Between Groups	3.014	4	.753	3.439	.009
	Within Groups	75.595	345	.219		
	Total	78.609	349			

A one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to determine the impact of FTF, CL, SP, GD, OC., AE, CP, and TRCIM on motivation. Table indicated that there was a statistically significant difference at the ($p<.05$) level in FTF for the between groups and within group (between-group =8.975); (within group =104.388) F (7.415, p= .000. Post-hoc comparison using Turkey's test indicated that mean scores were significantly different from group 2. A statistically significant difference of CL for the between groups and within group (between-group =4.591); (within group =85.002) F (4.659, p= .001 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.01).A statistically significant difference OF SP for the between groups and within group (between-group =1.008); (within group =47.154) F (1.843, p= .120 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0. 120). A statistically significant difference of GD for the between groups and within group (between-group =3.009); (within group =110.079) F (2.358, p= .053 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0. 053). A statistically significant difference of OC for the between groups and within group (between-group =2.363); (within group =106.230) F (1.919, p= .107 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.107). A statistically significant difference of AE for the between groups and within the group (between-group =4.207); (within group =112.977) F (3.212, p= .013 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.013). A statistically significant difference of CP between groups and within the group (between-group =3.785); (within group =127.652) F (2.557, p= .039 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.039). A statistically significant difference of TRCIM for the between groups and within the group (between-group =2.481); (within group =115.592) F (1.851, p= .119 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.119). A statistically significant difference of TRSM for the between groups and within group (between-group =3.906); (within group =105.132) F (3.204, p= .013 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.013). A statistically significant difference OF TREE for the between groups and within group (between-group =3.014); (within group =75.595) F (3.439, p= .009 with the small effect size (eta squared= 0.009). The above table shows that FTF (Face-to-face) interaction and CL (collaborative learning) methods impact learning motivation.

7. Conclusions

The study aimed to assess the impact of blended learning approaches on university students' motivation towards learning. Blended learning combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning components. A quantitative research design was employed, with 350 students from two public sector universities in Lahore. According to the key findings, blended learning approaches positively impact students' learning motivation. Specifically, face-to-face instruction, collaborative learning, group discussions, social presence, open communication, affective expression, classroom participation, and the teacher's role in motivation were identified as key factors influencing motivation. The data indicates strong positive correlations between most blended learning components, meaning they tend to mutually reinforce one another. The strongest correlation was between teacher engagement in blended instruction and student motivation. It highlights that a teacher's active involvement is crucial for success. Additionally, face-to-face interaction and collaborative learning greatly impacted motivating students in the blended context. While social media platforms facilitate connectivity, the human element remains essential for fostering engagement.

8. Discussions

This quantitative study assessed the impact of blended learning approaches on university students' motivation to learn. A survey was conducted with 350 students from public universities in Lahore, Pakistan, to analyze how components of blended learning like face-to-face instruction, online collaboration, social presence, and teacher engagement influence motivation. As digital integration rises globally across education, such insights can shape resilient blended models, spurring enduring student motivation. Statistical analysis identified positive correlations between most blended variables, suggesting interdependency and mutual reinforcement. The strongest association occurred between teacher engagement and overall motivation ($r = .869$). It aligns with Chen et al. (2010), who emphasized instructor involvement as pivotal for technology-enabled engagement. Beyond correlation, factors with the greatest motivational impact included face-to-face learning and peer collaboration. Although connectivity via social platforms is rising, human interaction remains essential for engagement.

These findings demonstrate blended learning's potential to motivate students by melding modalities, provided balance is struck. Li et al. (2022) noted that neither pure online nor exclusive face-to-face instruction optimizes outcomes. The work reinforces this while stressing the irreplaceable social dimension despite technological ubiquity. Instructors must deliberately foster interactive forums, support structures, and human connections, counteracting isolation risks in virtual environments. Attuned blending enables customization to learner diversity besides leveraging data analytics for remedial inputs.

Motivational challenges are particularly pronounced for students socialized in didactic educational settings with limited autonomy over learning. Its emphasis on participation, peer engagement, etc., carries heightened relevance given prevailing Pakistani pedagogical norms centered upon teacher authority and transmission-based instruction. Blending provides vital flexibility to cultivate student ownership as agents directing personalized learning journeys. Findings here may shape policies emphasizing motivational scaffolding via ICT without diminishing treasured traditions of nurturance.

9. Recommendations

The study provides significant insights into leveraging technology to augment traditional pedagogies. Certain recommendations can further enhance blended learning's motivational outcomes:

1. Flexibility in teaching approaches is vital to accommodate diverse learner needs in a connected world. Instructors should embrace innovative blended solutions tailored to context.
2. Incorporate regular formative and summative assessments for feedback. Make students aware of assessment criteria and expectations around self-directed online components.
3. Emphasize online collaboration through forums, messaging, conferencing tools, etc. Social interaction can inspire intrinsic motivation.
4. Provide scaffolding and support structures for autonomous online learning. Guard against the isolation risk of purely self-directed work.
5. Develop specialized training for instructors on spurring engagement via online channels with clear rules of conduct.
6. Leverage data analytics from online activities to identify disengaged students requiring motivation and remedial inputs.

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