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Exploring college students' motivations for choosing online learning program

Nicky Stephani[1,2], Silvanus Alvin[2]* and Riatun[2]

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Abstract: In recent years, many educational institutions have begun to offer online learning programs, and online learning is in great demand by students. However, evaluations of online learning programs have shown a lack of quality communication between instructors and students, as well as time management constraints that lead to high student dropout rates. These conditions form the basis of the question underlying this research: What motivates students to choose online learning programs? This research aims to identify and provide an in-depth description of motivation in regard to students' learning needs. The research used a qualitative approach and post-positivistic paradigm to explore students' motivations and compare current findings with the motivations identified in the uses and gratifications framework. Thirty-two students from different backgrounds in online learning programs were involved as focus group discussion participants. As a result, this study identified four motivational categories that encourage students to choose online learning programs, namely flexibility, learning, interaction, and expression. Each category of motivation is discussed through several themes including cost-of-living efficiency, easy access to technology and materials, making friends and networking, and freedom of opinion.

Subjects: Communication Theory; Group Communication; ICT

Keywords: motivation; college students; online learning; uses and gratifications theory; FGD

1. Introduction

The ongoing evolution of digital technology has changed many aspects of people's lives, from their perception of daily activities to the use technology to fulfill human needs quickly. Many people have

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become accustomed to shopping on e-commerce sites instead of traditional stalls or paying with electronic wallets instead of using cash (Khoa, 2020, 2021; Luthansa & Susilo, 2022). Beyond the economic field, the education industry is also gradually adjusting to the era of digital transformation (Yaji, 2019). Along with the development of digital technology, educational sites are increasingly offering online courses, and higher education institutions are launching online learning programs.

The main characteristics of online learning are individual autonomy and control during the learning process (Fotiadou et al., 2017). When learning online, students can determine what, when, how, and where they will learn. Previous studies have shown a link between autonomy, control, and motivation. However, a lack of motivation in online learning could also lead to a higher dropout rate than face-to-face or offline learning (Park & Yoo, 2021). Feelings of isolation (Lineberger, 2016), frustration with technology (Novak et al., 2021), and time management (Batbaatar & Amin, 2021) issues have been identified as factors influencing students' decision to withdraw from online learning programs. These conditions complicate the discussion of motivation in the online learning environment; motivation is not always generated in the learning process but rather underlies learning actions. Therefore, identifying students' motivations from the first time they take part in online learning is crucial.

From a theoretical point of view, studies on individuals' motivation to enroll in online learning programs are still limited. Most studies related to online learning have been based on the technology acceptance model (TAM), which focuses on the usability and ease of access to technology (Nagy, 2018; Tick, 2019), and the relationship between motivation and students' attitudes towards online learning has not been explored further. Nonetheless, the uses and gratifications theory from communication sciences has been bridging the gap between these two topics and can be used to analyze the motivation and satisfaction derived from using a particular medium.

Over the last few decades, media researchers have attempted to enrich theoretical studies by contextualizing the uses and gratifications theory in the development of massive digital technology and increasingly active media users. Researchers assume that online learning is a symbol of digital disruption and individual autonomy in media. Therefore, research in the field of communications seeks to identify the motivations that underlie students' choice to participate in online learning programs through the uses and gratifications perspective.

2. Literature review

Motivation in online learning has received scholarly attention in recent years (Kyewski & Krämer, 2018; Li & Tsai, 2017; Özhan & Kocadere, 2020; Richardson et al., 2015). Online learning motivation is important to explore because, in online learning environments, students tend to participate less (Kyewski & Krämer, 2018) and dropout at higher rates (Park & Yoo, 2021). Thus, questions about motivation must be considered to help instructors and instructional designers create effective learning environments.

Martin et al. (2013) explained that mobility and the ability to learn at any time are students' main motivations for choosing online learning. Previous research on the use of online videos for independent learning has shown that the uses and gratifications theory can be applied to educational media when students consciously choose media that satisfy their learning needs (Yuen et al., 2018). Furthermore, students recognize the reasons for choosing the learning media and seek satisfaction in the process of using the media. Another study conducted by Li et al. (2017) investigated how users obtain satisfaction from using online videos and showed three aspects of gratification that contribute to the learning experience: content gratification, process gratification, and social gratification.

According to the uses and gratifications framework, several motivations can create user satisfaction with information systems like social media and online learning systems, namely

convenience, socialization, entertainment, and experience-sharing. The convenience motivation relates to the ability to learn anywhere and anytime and quickly find information (Ha et al., 2015). The socialization motivation refers to how students enjoy meeting and interacting with other people to feel togetherness and peer support (Apaolaza et al., 2014).

The use of online learning can also be based on the entertainment motivation, which refers to students joining a group for entertainment or to do assignments, exams, and quizzes (Ledbetter et al., 2016). The experience-sharing motivation, on the other hand, refers to students' motivation to share what they know with others (Karpova et al., 2019; Mujiono Susilo, 2021) and seek or maintain their own status and their friends' status through participation in online groups. Students use groups to receive information about events on or off campus. The uses and gratifications theory assumes that the use of an information system such as online learning makes users satisfied. Satisfaction is based on buying and using certain media (Ulaan et al., 2016).

Previous research has thus shown a link between motivation and online learning programs. In general, researchers use the uses and gratifications framework with a quantitative approach to examine motivations for media use. The results of previous research showed several motivations for using new media that may have similarities with the motivations for using old or conventional media. However, unique motivations that encourage individuals to access new media such as online learning are likely to develop. Therefore, by combining a qualitative approach and the uses and gratifications framework, this study seeks to identify the emerging motivations that encourage students to choose online learning programs.

3. Research methods

This exploratory research study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research takes a broad and flexible approach that seeks to understand, interpret, and explore complex phenomena in depth. It is characterized by its focus on the richness of context, subjective experiences, and the meanings people attribute to their lived realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Research with an exploratory spirit acts as a gateway that opens the door to phenomena that have never been studied in detail and, at the same time, opens opportunities for the development of other, more renewable research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017).

The data collection method used in this study was focus group discussion (FGD). FGD is rooted in qualitative research methodology and is a valuable approach for gathering insights, perceptions, and shared experiences from a group of participants (Hennink, 2014). This method allows researchers to explore new topic areas, gain valuable information about specific behaviors, and provide initial information that is useful for grounding future research.

This study used a purposive sampling method that required participants to meet certain sample criteria. The criteria were: (1) participants must be active students in the Communication Science Online Learning Program and (2) participants must have attended an online learning program for at least one semester.

Participant recruitment began with collecting student information from the university's academic system platform (https://my.umn.ac.id). In particular, the researchers selected data based on the study program taken (the Communication Science Online Learning Program) and batches (students who entered at least in the 2022/2023 academic year). Researchers then contacted students who met these requirements to ask about their willingness to participate in discussions and schedule meetings.

In addition, to ensure the diversity of information, the researchers determined a representative proportion of participants based on gender (man and woman), batch, age, and experience (fresh graduate and currently or have worked). The participants were divided into four groups of six to ten people each. The FGDs were held in February to April 2023. The FGDs were guided by a moderator

and assisted by two observers. Each group was involved in a discussion for approximately 120 minutes, in which the participants were free to express their opinions on the topic.

After each FGD was over, the research assistant compiled a transcript of the discussion. Transcripts were analyzed following grounded theory procedures to find unique themes from the discussion results. One researcher first read the entire transcript without taking notes, then read it a second time and made notes. On the third reading, the researcher compiled a transcript memo listing possible emerging themes. The most prominent theme was determined based on how frequently it was mentioned and the information provided by the participants about the theme. Next, the second researcher repeated the same process, adding new support to the memos that were compiled and considering which themes should be included in the analysis.

In addition to ensuring the selection of a representative and diverse sample, the researchers ensured the trustworthiness of the study through triangulation, researcher reflexivity, and ethical considerations. In terms of triangulation, researchers combined various data sources to investigate students' motivation for choosing online learning. For example, the FGD results were cross-checked with previous research and relevant data to validate the findings. Although efforts to maintain trustworthiness were made, the researchers are aware that personal biases and prejudices can affect the interpretation of the findings. Credible research involves recognizing and addressing this potential for bias. Therefore, the researchers always maintained an open and reflexive attitude throughout the study.

This research referred to the principle of saturation as a guide for assessing the adequacy of the sample size. The collection of data from 32 participants showed that all important issues or insights related to the topic are "saturated," so the theory that emerged is comprehensive and has a strong database (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

In terms of ethical considerations, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants before the FGDs began; therefore, the participants knew the research objectives, FGD procedures, rights of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the security and future usage of research data. Researchers also prioritized the voluntary participation of FGD participants, so participants had the freedom to ask questions and retract their consent to the research at any time without any impact. In these ways, researchers ensured the well-being and rights of the participants while maintaining research trustworthiness.

4. Research findings

4.1. Research participants

This study involved 32 students majoring in communication science who chose to participate in an online learning program. Even though they chose the same major, the participants had different backgrounds in terms of gender, age, and student type. There were 12 men (38%) and 20 women (62%), and the age of the participants ranged from 19 to 32 years with an average age of 22.5 years. In terms of student status, 26 were part-time students (81%) who studied while working, and six were full-time students (19%).

All participants were active students who had participated in online learning programs for more than two semesters. Therefore, they accessed online learning platforms every day using laptops and personal computers, as well as smartphones.

All participants joined in a learning program which takes place online. There are 14 meetings each semester, including three synchronous online meetings and 11 asynchronous online meetings. In the synchronous online meetings, students took part in face-to-face learning with the facilitator via Zoom. In asynchronous online meetings, however, they studied independently by accessing videos and materials through e-learning platforms and taking quizzes online.

4.2. Emerging categories and themes

According to the FGD results, four categories of motivation underlie students' choice to participate in online learning programs. The four categories of motivation are convenience, learning, interaction, and expression, and each category has more specific themes that clarify the differences between one category and another. These themes can also be positioned as keywords that characterize each category of motivation.

4.2.1. Convenience

Students in online learning programs have varied backgrounds, which influence how they choose a learning mode. For students who are already working (part-time students), choosing a study program that can be followed while working is important. Therefore, the **flexibility** offered by online learning programs motivates students to register and participate in them. This consideration is illustrated by the following participant comment:

> It would be very tiring if I had to go to campus because I was studying while working. While online lectures do not need to go to campus, they can be done from home, and save time. (Woman #2, 22 years old)

Participants who were already working were aware of the consequences of going to college at the same time; they knew they must be good at managing their time and energy to accommodate both activities. Thus, a learning program that could be done anytime and anywhere was a good option. Students can access all materials remotely, so they are not required to travel to campus or an educational institution. In addition, online learning does not require students to study at certain hours or for a set length of time. This kind of flexibility aligns with the needs of the participants who want to continue studying even though they are already working, and vice versa.

The convenience of learning anywhere and anytime is also related to the **efficiency of student living costs**. Participants who are already working tend to have more salient financial considerations than participants who are only college students (full-time students). For these students, conventional learning programs (offline, face-to-face) include expenses, such as transportation and rent, that can increase their financial burden. Additional extra costs are likely if the location of their workplace is far from the campus and or their place of residence. Therefore, some participants believed that by participating in an online learning program, they could save costs and learn effectively:

> I can save monthly budget because studying online can reduce expenses for rent, transportation, and other costs … Instead of using the money to go to campus, it is better to use it for other purposes. (Woman #7, 20 years old)

Furthermore, online learning programs leverage a variety of digital technology resources to deliver immersive learning experiences. For example, lecture material can be accessed through a site integrated with other features (such as presentation slides or video tutorials) and can take questions and collect exam sheets through a document download and upload mechanism. **The ease of accessing** platforms and learning materials encourages these digitally literate students to choose online learning programs over in-person lectures:

> Learning materials are easily accessible as long as we are connected to the internet. As long as the connection is not interrupted and there is WiFi everywhere, I can still study even though I don't always have to be at home. (Man #5, 30 years old)

Finally, online learning programs allow students to regulate their learning (self-paced learning) and encourage students to find the most appropriate and impactful learning style for themselves. For example, part-time students generally access material from one to three meetings at once on weekends, while on weekdays they do not access lecture material at all. This form of learning may

differ from other students who access the material every day. The flexibility to adjust learning methods or **personalize learning experiences** motivates students to take part in online learning program. For example, one of the participants expressed:

> The online learning system is self-reliant. We can adjust when, where, and how to learn. If you don't study or are late in submitting your assignments, you must bear the risk because it's a personal mistake. (Man #4, 21 years old)

4.2.2. Learning

All participants stated that their main goal in studying was to get a bachelor's degree. Despite having the same goal, several participants had different views about the benefits of bachelor's degrees. Some participants believed that continuing education at the university level was an obligation for high school graduates. They believed that with a university diploma, job opportunities would be wide open, and their chances of being accepted at a company would also increase. The motivation to **continue their education** encourages them to seek information about universities or educational institutions that provide study programs that suit their interests, needs, and daily activities. Participants relayed the importance of completing education at the undergraduate level:

> Why did I choose online college because I was already working and wanted to develop myself. I want to have a higher level of education and the process should not interfere with my work as much as possible. (Man #8, 21 years old)

Meanwhile, several other participants felt the need to **develop themselves**, particularly with regard to knowledge and abilities relevant to their daily lives. This urgency is very clear among students who are already working. Part-time students are aware that the demands of their jobs change over time. Sophisticated information and communications technology, along with changes in people's lifestyles, also impact their fields of work. For example, students who work as customer service personnel must now be more active in handling complaints and offering company products. They must communicate solutions effectively and persuade clients to use the products and services offered. However, companies often do not teach client persuasion strategies, and the workers need other sources to learn it; for example, studying communication science.

> My job as a customer service bank requires skills to communicate with customers, especially for product or service socialization. My study major in communication science is aligned with my work. The hope is that I can speak better in front of clients. (Woman #15, 22 years old)

For participants who studied full-time, their choice of an online learning program was based more on the desire **to acquire new knowledge**. Some participants were curious about the communication science major (what was studied, what courses were offered, and so on), so they searched the internet and found information about online learning programs in the field. Other participants had been interested in communication science or wanted to work in the communications industry for a long time, then looked for various information to compare one program to another. One participant shared:

> After graduating from high school, I went straight to work. Then I realized that the times are growing and technology is also getting more sophisticated. I'm finally looking for what new things I can learn. Then, I got information about online learning programs and felt that studying with an online system would be more effective. (Woman #10, 22 years old)

4.2.3. Interaction

The next category of motivation is interaction, namely the desire to establish relationships and communicate with other parties. Online learning programs in the digital ecosystem prioritize interactivity during learning activities. For participants, the characteristics of an interactive online learning program create opportunities for them to **build a network** with individuals who share the same interests as them. One participant stated that the main reason he chose the online learning

program was because he wanted to expand his connections and networking. The student works in the food and beverage (F&B) industry and hopes to meet people who are interested in starting a business with him:

> Even though studying online, we still need to build a network with friends. Who knows, maybe you can meet friends who think the same way and are nice to chat with, maybe they can also open up business opportunities in the future. (Man #1, 32 years old)

The desire to interact is also seen in group assignments. In certain courses, students can work in groups on assignments or exams. In addition to lightening the workload, forming groups is also expected to facilitate students' need to **involve** themselves in a project as well as socialize with other students. The participants had diverse views regarding working in teams. Some participants agreed with the mechanism of teamwork because they could complete tasks more effectively and efficiently and could exchange ideas about many things outside of the task matter. Their involvement in groups helped them understand the mindset and character of other people, and the personal stories they exchanged strengthened their relationships outside of campus matters. For example, one participant stated:

> I didn't expect that my friends in my group could actually work together and communicate well. Even though many friends are already working and have their own activities. Since our time is limited, working on assignments or tests in groups can be a place for us to chat with each other. (Woman #12, 21 years old)

However, some participants disliked working in groups. Involvement in groups requires them to manage other people's personal problems, which ultimately affect group performance. These participants argued that instead of fostering a spirit of cooperation among students, group work actually divided the class. As stated by one of the participants:

> Working in teams always has problems even though I have tried to adjust and not think about my personal ego. Sometimes I am confused about how to deal with people who don't like me but like it or not I still have to be in the same group as them. (Woman #1, 24 years old)

Another motivation that led students to choose online learning programs was the desire to **engage** with others. Students in this online learning program come from all over Indonesia and even from around the world. Therefore, online learning programs open wide opportunities for friendship without space and time limitations. For some participants, this opportunity helped them socialize and create new friendships. One student who lived outside Java thought that the friendship environment in his area tended to be monotonous, and he wanted to get to know more people outside his area. The interpersonal relationships formed while students participate in the online learning program lead to many conversations about the outside world, ranging from what is trending and the attitude of the community towards an issue to the unique habits that are only held by people from certain regions. For example, as stated by one participant:

> Since the third semester the interaction with friends has started to increase. Even though some are closed, I try to make friends. At least have the courage to start a conversation so that you can still have friends even though you study online, rarely meet face-to-face, and don't go to campus. (Man #6, 21 years old)

4.2.4. Expression

One of the characteristics of learning in higher education is the freedom to express one's opinions. Students are expected to be able to convey their views regarding an issue or phenomenon and discuss it with other students. In this exchange of ideas, each opinion has its own role, and diversity of expression is greatly appreciated. This characteristic of higher education was recognized by each participant. They wished to freely **express their opinions** regarding current events

using their knowledge and experience. They wanted to know what other people think and identify individuals who shared their thoughts:

> We want to express opinions based on what we know. We can see if our opinion is right or wrong based on the discussion (from the lecturer or tutor -ed) in online learning. We can get some explanations in the material slides and this becomes new knowledge to give opinions at the next opportunity. (Man #2, 25 years old)

In the communications online learning program, this freedom of expression is facilitated through discussion forums. Lecturers provide questions about phenomena that occur in the field of communications and ask students to express their opinions. In addition to answering the discussion questions, students can **give feedback** to others. Lecturers or instructors are also involved in the discussion by providing responses or other questions. The discussion forum is usually closed with a conclusion given by the lecturer considering the responses of all students involved in the discussion. From this practice, we can see that the desire to express opinions is also accompanied by the desire to get feedback. Thus, interactive communication activities are formed during the online learning process. For example, consider the following explanation:

> Here (online learning program -ed) we are very open if we want to ask anything in the forum. Our opinions are responded to by other lecturers and students and we can also respond back to their comments ... When there is material that we don't understand, you can also ask the lecturer via email or WhatsApp and respond later. (Woman #11, 21 years old)

Other participants said that their personality tended **to be introverted**, so they often felt uncomfortable if they had to appear in front of the public directly. Nonetheless, one participant realized that sooner or later he would need to express himself in social circles to complete his education and enter the world of work. He needed a place that could facilitate his personality while helping him gradually adapt to the friendship environment. Online learning programs that do not require students to study face-to-face throughout the semester are seen as a means that suits the personality and needs of these students. Students can still study independently, interspersed with synchronous meetings (face-to-face via Zoom), virtual discussions, and group work.

> To be honest, I originally couldn't communicate well, preferred to be silent, and didn't dare to ask questions. I thought that by going to college majoring in communication science, I could be more open and courageous in dealing with other people ... Here (online learning -ed) I can choose whether I want on cam or not, discussions can be held via forums, questions and answers can be via email or WhatsApp. Gradually I started to dare to speak, then in the group I started to actively do many things. (Woman #4, 20 years old)

Expressing oneself is a need in everyday life. In the learning process, participants wanted their opinions to be heard and to hear the opinions of others, including the participants with introverted personalities. Online learning meets this need for expression. While in a conventional class, the activity of sharing opinions with classmates often stops after class is over, in an online class, students can freely upload their opinions and respond to the opinions of others. The online learning program is therefore considered successful in providing a wide range of expressive learning experiences, regardless of space and time.

5. Discussion

This study applied the uses and gratifications theory to explore student motivation in choosing online learning programs. The results align with previous studies that identified various kinds of motivations that drive individuals to access certain media. In addition, the findings showed that there are unique motivations related to selecting online learning programs that are not found for other digital media.

Van Dijk (2020) explained that physical access to media begins with motivation, attitudes, and hopes to gain access and use the media. The motivation to access media is determined by mental or psychological factors, as well as social and cultural factors. Most of the motivations identified in this research show the extent to which psychological drives are constructed by the social environment. For example, participants with the convenience motivation expect easy access to online learning platforms that do not increase costs, interfere with work, and provide learning experiences that suit their needs.

Convenience is a prominent motivational category for selecting online learning programs. This finding aligns with previous digital media studies that used the uses and gratifications framework, in which ease of access and the use and speed of online learning platforms also appears (Guo et al., 2010; Kaye, 2005). In particular, participants emphasized convenience when accessing online learning materials. This convenience is not only based on the ease of accessing the internet via mobile devices but also the convenience resulting from alignment with needs. When students who also work do not have enough time to travel from one place to another because, online learning programs are the most convenient study choice.

The comfort motivation is primarily based on cost-of-living efficiency. Participants who were part-time students presented a new perspective in defining comfort. For these students, easy access to learning materials, coupled with the absence of additional expenses for transportation and housing during college, is an important and primary determinant of comfort. This study observes that cost is seen as an additional sacrifice—besides time and effort—that needs to be avoided by participating in an online learning program. Therefore, this study concluded that the smaller the sacrifices made by the participants, the higher the participants' comfort with the online learning program. Similar findings were also shown in Florenthal's (2018) regarding the use of the Socrative mobile application, which is considered convenient because it is free to access and users do not experience technical problems when using it.

According to the TAM, motivations and attitudes regarding the intention to gain access to technology can be explained by factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, and subjective norms (the expectations of important others that someone should use digital media). All of these factors become stronger as technology matures and integrates into everyday life (Van Dijk, 2020).

The next motivation, learning and knowledge acquisition, was often noted by students. Similar findings have also been reached by research on the use of mobile applications (Florenthal, 2018; Gerlich et al., 2015). For example, Gerlich et al. (2015) identified the acquisition of knowledge and education and engagement/disengagement as factors that motivate individuals to use mobile applications. In the present study, the motivation for knowledge acquisition and education is the same as the motivation for knowledge acquisition and learning, while the motivation for engagement/disengagement is equivalent to the motivation to want to be engaged and seen (to be involved). The desire to learn also emerged as a popular theme in research conducted by Rana et al. (2016), who examined student engagement in the online learning programs of business and management majors.

Previous studies have also shown how people with higher education tend to use sophisticated applications of digital media to increase capital related to work, career, and education, while people with lower education more frequently use simple applications for entertainment, commerce, and conversation (Bonfadelli, 2002; Cho et al., 2003; Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014; Van Dijk, 2005; Zillien & Hargittai, 2009). These findings confirm that discrepancies in education levels is one of the causes of the digital divide in society (Van Dijk, 2020).

Interaction and engagement are recurring themes in explorative qualitative studies of digital media use (Noel et al., 2015; Voelkel & Bennett, 2014). In the present study, the interactions under study can be divided into two categories: interactions between students and instructors and

interactions between fellow students. Instructor interactions with students aim to motivate and interest students through providing feedback mechanisms, sharing clear information, and clarifying misunderstandings (Hartnett, 2016). These interactions also develop and nurture a strong sense of community in an online learning program.

This finding aligns with previous research studies that have found that students feel the active role of lecturers in responding and providing explanations is beneficial for their learning experiences and outcomes in online learning programs. While motivation is important, perceived learning support contributes to the success of online learning regardless of the student's particular motivation. Such support can come from the class structure and design or interactive instructors and study partners.

The second category of interactions is interactions between students. In general, these interactions include sharing information and understanding, working together to solve problems and complete assignments, and sharing opinions in discussion forums. Communication mediated through online technology provides opportunities for students to collaborate and participate in the co-construction of knowledge (Chatterjee & Correia, 2020). This study found that the presence of interactions between students determines the continuity of their learning activities in online learning programs. Collaboration in the form of harmonious and cooperative group work can help the student learning process, although interactions that are full of challenges can hinder or even stop the student learning process. This finding aligns with previous research findings that position interaction as an important factor in creating and maintaining online communities (Bonk & Khoo, 2014; Cleveland-Innes et al., 2019; Wentzel & Brophy, 2014).

Engagement is the concept most often associated with individual use of digital media. In this study, online learning programs that allow students to participate in group projects were found to keep students in the program. Thus, the creation of relationships and interactions between individuals is special for students in online learning programs. This finding aligns with research conducted by Heaslip et al. (2014) and Rana et al. (2016), who found an increase in student involvement in class discussions when using digital learning applications. The level of interaction or interactivity experienced by students also contributes to their perception of involvement, fun, and entertainment, especially if they are technology literate (Han, 2014; Rana et al., 2016). The interaction motivation thus supports the argument that most digital skills are not the result of computer courses but are learned through practice in certain social user environments (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2014).

The last category of motivation is expression. This motivation refers to the individual's need to convey their unique point of view and interact with likeminded individuals (Kaye, 2005). Previous literature has shown that there is a close relationship between the expression and interaction motivations for media use. Individuals who feel that their expressions can be channeled through media will continue to interact through the same media or be loyal to using the media (Han, 2014). In the context of online learning programs, the need for expression is channeled through discussion forums and live question and answer sessions.

Furthermore, the expression motivation is also related to the theme of feedback, that is, individuals' desire to know other people's judgments or views regarding their opinions. Students in online learning programs are enthusiastic about expressing their opinions in discussion forums because their opinions will be responded to by other students and lecturers. Research conducted by Rana and Dwivedi (2016) explained that feedback is most often expected in the business and management learning process. When receiving feedback on their views, students in online learning feel appreciated and can assess their own abilities as well as those of other parties.

Social support from friends and facilitators also influences one's motivation and intention to accept new media (Van Dijk, 2020). Furthermore, the social environment influences all phases of access, ranging from physical access and access to skills to the actual usage of online learning media.

6. Conclusion

Motivation plays a critical role in online learning. It can influence what, when, and how students learn, as well as be a significant factor in determining learning performance. In online learning programs, motivation also determines whether students will remain in the program. Therefore, identifying students' motivations and understanding their nature can have important practical implications for those involved in online learning. Understanding student motivation can help instructors and lecturers design learning activities oriented towards students' needs, beyond what is considered ideal by the country's educational institutions and systems. Motivation comes with expectations, and when online learning programs can fulfill these expectations, students feel satisfied and complete their studies.

This study shows the significant benefits that online learning programs provide to students. The most important benefit is that students are motivated to learn new things and develop themselves to prepare for their future careers. In addition, students are motivated to express themselves and find learn the opinions of others through discussion forums and in synchronous meetings. In addition, this research shows the importance of feedback in the form of responses from other students and lecturers. Through feedback, interactions are formed that allow students to position themselves in the class environment and build friendships. How students then measure their abilities and plan their learning activities independently cannot be separated from the process of providing this feedback.

Amid the growth of research on new media, this research sought to explore students' motivations for choosing online learning programs with a more explorative uses and gratifications framework. The four groups of motivations that emerged show the uniqueness of the motivations for using new media and could be applied in uses and gratifications research on a larger scale. Subsequent research may link the motivations identified with learning outcomes and user satisfaction. Finally, the scope of research could be expanded to assess study programs or other majors to determine whether there are variations in motivation based on the characteristics of different study programs.

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