Letter to the Editor

Thank you for the opportunity to revise my paper "The factors that may impact academic motivation in college students." The following changes have been made:

Abstract

- Word "Abstract" centered and bolded
- Indention removed.
- Sample size added
- "Taking an online Research Methods class" added
- Brief introductory sentence[s] added
- Work status definitions (full/part/no)

Introduction

- Moved purpose/hypotheses into the first paragraph
- Shortened initial introductory information in the first paragraph
- Changed wordings - instead of using "like" changed it to "such as"
- Took out information not related to my variables
- Received paper from Nyet et al. in order to cite

Method

- Mentioned sampling method in first paragraph of the participants section.
- Italicized descriptive statistics (*M*, *SD*)
- Added work status statistics as they are relevant to the study.
- Removed extra spaces between sections
- Included information about informed consent and that responses were anonymous and confidential.
- Mentioned that students were told to only focus on one class
- Corrected the spelling of several authors throughout this section (Vallerand and Kaufmann)

Results

- Added *F* string for ANOVA.
- Italicised η
- Changed verbiage for effect size to "moderate"
- Added assumptions for Correlation section
- Updated hypothesis for the correlation to reflect a relationship rather than an effect.

Discussion

- Changed verbiage to "moderate effect size"
- Included reasons why work status may not have an effect on academic motivation

- Included alternative explanations for why there may not be a significant relationship between academic motivation and instructor presence
- Deleted unnecessary information about sample size and confidence intervals from the limitations section
- Added transitional words to the beginning of some sentences
- Added more implications to the conclusion

Examining the Relationships of Work Status and Instructor Presence on Academic Motivation

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Abstract

Since COVID-19, online learning has been on the rise, and it presents unique challenges for instructors and students. It is important to understand which factors may contribute to those challenges. A small convenience sample (*N*=52) of undergraduate psychology students taking an online research methods course were recruited to participate in the study. Participants filled out a survey that contained several Likert scales and Likert-like questions to measure variables such as work status, instructor presence, and academic motivation. The purpose of the study was to examine whether students' work status (full-time, part-time, and no work) impacted their academic motivation, and if there was a significant relationship between instructor presence and academic motivation. Results did not indicate that there was a significant difference in the academic motivation across work status groups, and did not indicate a significant relationship between instructor presence (behavior) and academic motivation. Both hypotheses presented were not supported by the data set.

Examining the Relationships of Work Status and Instructor Presence on Academic Motivation

As early as the 1910s, distance learning has been available (Barbour, 2021). It has evolved from educational films, radio, and television to fully remote degrees (Barbour, 2021; Sofi-Karim et al., 2022). As online learning becomes more mainstream, it is important to examine the unique challenges it presents in order to support students and create effective learning environments. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors that may impact academic motivation in college students taking online courses. The factors to be considered are instructor presence and employment status. It is hypothesized that students who are employed full-time will exhibit higher levels of academic motivation than those who do not work full-time. It is also hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between instructor presence (behavior) and academic motivation.

Academic motivation is a complicated and multifaceted factor in online learning. “Motivation can be defined as the process responsible for the initiation, intensity, and persistence of behavior”, which includes intrinsic motivation (engaging in a task for the sake of engaging in it, engaging because it's enjoyable or because a person wants to) and extrinsic motivation (engaging in a task for external rewards) (Usher & Morris, 2012, para. 1; Vallerand et al., 1992). Additionally, motivation impacts student participation and their will to persevere in online classes (Sim et al., 2025). Therefore, the more academically motivated a student is, the more they may persevere over the challenges of online courses. Because motivation is so important to learning (especially online) it is essential to find ways to keep students motivated throughout their educational careers.

What can instructors do to help keep their students academically motivated? According to

Authement et al. (2025), instructor presence may help resolve many of the difficulties associated with online learning, including motivation. Authement and colleagues (2025) explain instructor presence as the following:

> the deliberate effort by instructors to be visible, supportive, and engaged in the online environment. Instructor presence, characterized by accessibility, responsiveness, and active engagement, is crucial in bridging the gap between virtual interactions and fostering a supportive learning environment (Introduction, para 1).

According to these characteristics, instructor presence can be defined as being reachable by a mode of communication such as email, Zoom, or discussion boards, and responsiveness. Responsiveness can be defined as giving timely and meaningful feedback to students (Authement et al., 2025). If instructors are accessible and responsive then they are also actively engaging with their students, which may keep students motivated.

A common obstacle of online learning is social isolation or disconnectedness, which are characteristics of academic alienation (Ahmadi et al., 2021). According to Ahmadi et al. (2021), academic alienation and academic motivation are inversely related. Meaning, when students feel more isolated or disconnected, academic motivation lessens whereas feeling less isolated strengthens academic motivation. Academic motivation may be positively impacted by instructor presence because instructors who are more responsive create supportive environments where students may feel more comfortable connecting with instructors and peers, which could mitigate social isolation (Authment et al., 2025).

Students taking online classes often have what Hachey et al. (2022) refer to as non-traditional characteristics. Some of these non-traditional characteristics are that students may be older (over 24 years of age), employed full time, parents, or enrolled in classes only part-time

(Hachey et al., 2022). It is possible that employment status may impact students taking online courses. Studies indicate that high-intensity (number of hours worked) work negatively impacts educational outcomes such as dropping out (Neyt et al., 2019; Kroupova et al., 2024).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine how full-time, part-time, and no work impacts academic motivation, and whether there is a significant relationship between instructor presence and academic motivation. Online undergraduate students enrolled in a research methods course participated in a survey measuring several variables such as academic motivation, instructor presence (behavior), and student engagement. It is hypothesized that students working full-time will exhibit higher levels of academic motivation than those who do not work full-time, and that there is a significant relationship between instructor presence (behavior) and academic motivation.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 52 undergraduate students (41 females and 11 males) enrolled in an online psychology research methods course at a Southeastern university in the United States participated in this study. Participant ages ranged from 20-59 (M=27.64, SD=8.675, Median=24.00). Of participants, 73.1% identified as female, 23.1% identified as male, and 3.8% identified as nonbinary/third gender. Racially, 53.8% of participants identified as White, 21.2% identified as Black, and 15.4% identified as other/multi-racial. Of participants, 44.2% work full-time, 30.8% work part-time, 5.8% do not work, and 19% did not answer. Most students in the study were Seniors (76.9%). Juniors made up the remaining 23.1% of the participants. The students received extra credit points for participation in the study. Participation in this study was

voluntary and anonymous. Participants were made aware that they may skip questions they were uncomfortable with answering or withdraw their participation at any time. This study was performed to gather data for a class project. IRB approval was not a requirement for this study.

Materials

Participants were provided with an online survey that utilized several likert scales and likert-type questions to measure variables such as student engagement, instructor presence, course organization, academic motivation, and student autonomy.

The Student Engagement Factors-Measurement Model measured student engagement (Faro et al., 2025). This portion of the survey was divided into four sections measuring the following factors: self-efficacy, behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement. Each section included 9-10 items with responses measured with a 5-point Likert scale. This scale demonstrated reliability (α=0.917).

The self-efficacy section consisted of 10 items and a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Examples of statements found in the self-efficacy section include “I perform at my highest level during exams,” “I feel confident that I can perform well in difficult exams,” and “I set attainable goals by being aware of my strengths and weaknesses.”

The behavioral engagement section consisted of 9 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*). Examples of statements found in this section include “I participate in class discussions and answer questions” and “I utilize other learning materials outside that my instructor has offered.”

The emotional engagement section consisted of 10 items and a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*). Statements from this section include:

"I consider myself to be a vital component of my learning team" and "I collaborate with other students, and we all gain knowledge from one another."

Lastly, the cognitive engagement section consisted of 10 items and a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*extremely unlikely*) to 5 (*extremely likely*). Examples of statements from this section include "After writing notes, I often go through them to thoroughly understand the information" and "I recall important course content after studying."

Variables such as instructor presence and course organization were measured using the Online Learning Climate Scale (Kaufmann et al., 2016). This scale was divided into 5 sections. Each section included the following factors: instructor presence (behavior), course structure, course clarity, deadline flexibility, and student connectedness. Aside from the instructor presence (behavior) section, each section consisted of 3 items with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The instructor presence (behavior) section had 6 items with a 7-point Likert scale also ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Statements from the Online Learning Climate Scale included "Based on my online class interactions with the instructor, I perceived my instructors as understanding," " Based on my experiences with and perceptions of online courses, online courses provided ample opportunities for communication among students," "Based on my experiences with and perceptions of online classes, the organization of online classes are clear," "The late policy impacts me to a great deal," and "Based on my online class interactions with other students, I perceive students as respectful of one another." The measure for instructor behavior demonstrated reliability ($\alpha = 0.925$) as did the measure for course organization ($\alpha = 0.852$) and deadline flexibility ($\alpha = 0.715$).

Academic motivation was measured with the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al.,1992). This scale consisted of 28 items with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*does not correspond at all*) to 7 (*corresponds exactly*). It included statements such as "to what extent each of the following items presently corresponds to one of the reasons why you go to college: because with only a high-school degree I would not find a high-paying job later on," "...to prove to myself that I am capable of completing my college degree," and "Because I want to show myself that I can succeed in my studies." The academic motivation scale demonstrated high reliability (α =.936).

The student autonomy variable was measured with the Learner Autonomy Scale (Macaskill & Taylor, 2010). The scale consisted of 12 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very much unlike me*) to 5 (*very much like me*). Statements from the Learner Autonomy Scale included the following: "I enjoy learning new experiences," "I enjoy being set a challenge," and "My time management is good." The student autonomy scale also demonstrated reliability (α = .796).

Procedures

This study used a convenience sample of undergraduate psychology students. Students enrolled in an online research methods course were asked to participate. The participants were made aware of the study through an announcement made by the professor on the university's learning management system. The survey was accessed online, and it could be done anywhere and anytime before the due date. First, participants completed the informed consent in which they were made aware that their answers would remain anonymous and confidential. The participants were told to concentrate on one class while filling out the survey. They were then asked to provide demographic information such as their sex assigned at birth, gender identity,

ethnicity, age, employment status, current GPA, credit hours being taken, and class standing. Afterwards, participants completed the Online Learning Climate Survey, Student Autonomy Scale, Student Engagement Factors scale, and the Academic Motivation Scale. The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete. Participants were awarded extra credit after completing the survey.

Results

ANOVA

A one way ANOVA was performed to test the following hypothesis: students working full-time exhibit higher levels of academic motivation than students who do not work full-time. The ANOVA compared academic motivation across students working full-time (M=131.81, SD=24.86), those working part-time (M=115.23, SD=18.75), and those not working (M=116.75, SD=30.07). The hypothesis was tested using a significance level of α=0.05. A visual inspection was conducted to ensure the normality of all study variables. The distribution for academic motivation looked relatively normal with a slight negative skew. The Levene Statistic showed no significance $F(2,47)=0.007$, $p=0.63$; there was homogeneity of variance. When comparing the variables of work status and academic motivation, results did not indicate significance $F(2,47)=2.36$, $p=0.105$. While results did not indicate a statistical difference between the two variables, there was a moderate effect size ($\eta^2=0.091$). The findings did not support the hypothesis.

Correlation

A Pearson correlation was performed to test the following hypothesis: instructor behavior and academic motivation would have a significant relationship. The Pearson correlation examined the relationship between instructor behavior (M=37.55, SD=4.80) and academic

motivation (M=122.68, SD=26.03). Variables used for the correlation are both continuous. There were no outliers in the data. While the distribution for academic motivation is relatively normal with a slight negative skew, the distribution for instructor behavior is not normally distributed; it is negatively skewed. The hypothesis was tested with a significance level of α=0.05, and though the correlation was positive 0.22, the data did not indicate a significant relationship $r(47)$=0.22, p=0.13. The findings did not support the hypothesis.

Discussion

This study examined whether a college student's work status (full-time, part-time, or no work) impacts their academic motivation, and if there is a relationship between instructor presence and academic motivation. In this study, it was expected that students working full-time would demonstrate higher levels of academic motivation; however, the data did not indicate a significant difference in academic motivation between the three work status groups. Those working full-time did not show higher or lower levels of academic motivation than those working part-time or those not working. While the data did not support a significant statistical difference in academic motivation across work statuses, it did reveal a moderate effect size. A moderate effect size may indicate that there is a relationship between work status and academic motivation, even if the present study is unable to support the relationship with data. Previous studies suggested that high-intensity work (intensity being the number of hours worked) negatively impacted educational outcomes (Neyt et al., 2019; Kroupova et al., 2024). A meta-analysis by Kroupova et al. (2024) found that high-intensity work was more likely to impact a student's decision to drop out than it impacted academic performance (test scores). Current results may not agree with the findings by Neyt et al and Kroupova et al because work status may be too broad of a categorization. The hours worked by students, job demands, and

schedule conflicts may be more relevant to academic motivation than whether students worked full-time or not. Many students work to financially support themselves while obtaining their degrees. For their benefit, it is important to determine how much work may affect their academic motivation so they may choose a work schedule that helps them balance their finances and motivation.

There was an expected significant relationship between instructor presence and academic motivation. The data suggested a weak positive relationship between instructor presence and academic motivation though it was not found to be statistically significant. A larger sample size may be needed to determine whether there is a true correlation between the two variables. A study by Ahmadi et al. (2021) found a significant relationship between academic alienation (which included feelings of disconnection and social isolation) and academic motivation. Meanwhile, a study by Authement et al. (2025) found that higher levels of instructor presence establish safe and supportive learning environments which may decrease feelings of disconnection. Combining these findings, higher levels of instructor presence may increase academic motivation. It is important for instructors to understand how their presence may affect the motivation of their students so that they may help students stay motivated throughout their academic career. It is possible that academic motivation is determined by intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic factors such as instructor presence.

Limitations

This study used a small convenience sample of psychology students which may make it more difficult to identify significant effects and relationships between variables. Because of the small sample size, it is difficult to determine whether the data is normally distributed. It is possible that a larger sample size may help to determine whether there is a true relationship. This

study divided the variable work status into the following three groups: full-time work, part-time work, and no work. Dividing the work status groups made each group even smaller. It is possible that dividing the groups into full-time and not full-time could have a significant effect on the results.

Future Research

There is limited research on work status and academic motivation as well as instructor presence and academic motivation. Past research often examined variables such as academic performance (grades, GPAs, etc.) and student engagement as opposed to academic motivation. Future researchers should gather data from larger samples of students from universities across the world. Including students from other countries may help researchers identify factors that impact academic motivation for students globally to better generalize the data.

Additionally, future researchers could design the work status variable differently. For instance, work status could be reduced to two groups or work status could be defined by the hours worked. It may also be beneficial to examine work status and academic motivation over time using a longitudinal study to determine how employment over a student's academic career impacts their academic motivation.

Conclusion

The current study did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between work status and academic motivation or instructor presence and academic motivation nor did it support the hypotheses. These findings may suggest that instructor presence and work status may not be closely related to academic motivation, although limited sample size may explain the insignificant relationship. Additionally, the results may show that there are many factors that impact academic motivation. For instance, understanding how academic motivation may be

impacted by work could help institutions identify students at risk of dropping out, so that flexible courses can be created to retain and support these students. Additionally, instructors who understand what keeps their students motivated may be more likely to see increases in academic success. It is important to understand which factors may increase or decrease academic motivation so that students can stay motivated throughout their academic careers.

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