

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, SUSTAINED MOTIVATION AND ODL STUDENTS

Prakash V. Arumugam
Wawasan Open University, Malaysia

Abstract

The study aims to investigate the determinants of academic excellence and exploring the complex nature of sustained motivation among open distance learning (ODL) students. The study helps open distance learning institution and ODL students to seek opportunities for improvement in program design and study method. Based on previous literature, it can be generalized that family support, peer support and study habit are the determinants of ODL students academic excellence. Due to high demand, Open Distance Learning is now a trend for adults to expand their critical thinking. However, Open Distance Learning is not suitable for all and drop-out rates are high among the ODL students. Sustained motivations are the critical factors that help ODL students to complete their study. Based on these ideas, theoretical framework has been proposed. This study is a two-pronged look at the factors affecting the motivation of ODL students as well to evaluate the perception of these students in the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool. A survey was conducted among the MBA students taking one course at Wawasan Open University via structured questionnaire. The results indicated that family support, peer support and study habit were the determinants of academic excellence. Intrinsic goals and self-efficacy are how they sustained their motivations. The study also demonstrated that ODL students are not extrinsically motivated. Self-efficacy was found to strengthen the relationship between family supports, peer support and study habit with academic excellence. As a side note, the students are particularly welcoming of the use of WhatsApp group that enhances communication among peers.

Keywords: adult education, sustained motivation, self-efficacy, intrinsic goal, technological support

1 INTRODUCTION

Open and distance learning (ODL) focuses on open and flexible access to education. It frees the students from the constraints of time and place and offers a flexible studying opportunity. Social and economic development have contributed tremendously to the growth of ODL. ODL has become an accepted and indispensable part of the mainstream educational system in both developed and developing countries. The improved access and availability of electronic technology has enabled more adult students to participate in the learning process. This trend is also visible in Malaysia, with the emergence of several higher education distance learning institutions using e-learning to support its learning activities, one of which is Wawasan Open University. The not-for-profit educational institution open its door to the first batch of students in 2007 and has never turned back.

ODL students tend to be older, full time employees and assuming multiple roles and family responsibilities as compared to traditional students (Allen and Seaman, 2006). Most ODL students are adults who may not have had access to education in the past and hold full time jobs (Moore and Kearsley 2005). This main differentiator makes it a challenge for the adult learner to survive the multiple role he leads let alone performance well in his studies. Literature, however, shows that self-motivated and psychologically stable students perform better in ODL (Barker and Wendel 2001). The issue is on how does one sustain motivation and keeps their sanity in check with all that is going on in their lives.

The learning process is more complex for the adult students, who are older, but quite contented and secured in their jobs and families. Most adult students continue study to qualify for a better job or promotion. Challenges they have to balance study, work and family responsibilities can sometimes make the student difficult to stay motivated over the study period. ODL programmes offer limited tutorial sessions which means students actual face to face interactions with tutor and peers are very

limited. Lack of social interaction may also cause students to stay motivated.

Challenges faced by ODL students include lack of time, work pressure and responsibilities, domestic interruptions, isolation and shortage of finance (Perraton, 1993; Thorpe, 2002). Two major challenges faced by Malaysian ODL student are time management and study related problems (Dass 2001). Among the challenges of the ODL students are higher dropout rates as compared to traditional students (Arumugam, 2015). Matured, economically independent, self-motivated and psychologically stable students perform better in ODL (Barker and Wendel, 2001).

2 MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

2.1 Determinants of academic excellence

Age, gender, marital status, class attendance, semester course loads, relevant academic background are among the factors have been found as important and influencing students' performance. Class attendance was found positively associated with students' performance (Tucker, 2003). Relevant background enhanced students' performance (Mitchell 1988). Students' background and motivation can influence the amount and quality of learning (Montgomery and Groat, 1999). Married ODL students performed better than single students (Peiperl and Trevelyan, 1997). Semester loads positively correlated to students' performance (Didia and Hasnat, 1998). Factors such as reasons for enroll the courses; learning objectives and type of distance delivery method may influence student's success in distance education (Schmidt and Gallegos, 2001).

The influence of the new communication technology in the present 21st century has redefined how learners learn and the mode of instructional delivery by the instructors. Ike and Ihebereme (2008) opined that the use of technology is believed to revolutionize teaching profession. This is because instructors can now reach out to learners using any available social media channels at their own pace. WhatsApp has been seen as an effective communication and collaborative tool in the teaching and learning process due to its advantages over other forms of social media tools. Barhoumi (2015) observed that WhatsApp facilitate knowledge sharing among peers, improve learners' manipulative skills, facilitate the learning process and foster evaluation process. WhatsApp is seen as an educational mobile tool with great potentials of helping students construct their own knowledge while making use of the digital mobile devices.

2.2 Complex nature of sustained motivation

Sustained motivation is the ability to maintain a need or desire to act (Geddes and Grosset, 2002). In order to see things through, complete difficult tasks and strive for accomplishments, sustained motivation provides the endurance required. Sustained motivation is associated with personal characteristics of determination and perseverance, both enduring qualities which is valuable for work and personal endeavours. The individual's current skills, strengths and experience in addressing the task determine the level of challenge. External pressure such as competition, stressful environment and the resource demands such as limited time, space or finances as well as the need for physical and mental endurance and strength usually involves in the challenge. The need for sustained motivation to complete the six months short course will definitely different from completing a postgraduate qualification, which requires research.

ODL students who set more intrinsic goals, value their learning, believe in their ability will be able to success in academic demands and can handle distractions and maintain concentration finished more exams, accomplish them faster and achieved higher test scores (Radovan, 2011). Self-regulated students have higher levels of self-efficacy, more confident in their abilities (positive attributions) and more internally motivated (Pintrich et al, 1991; Zimmerman, 2000). Active students are improves in their learning achievement (Artino and Stephens, 2006). Intrinsic motivation has energized the individual interest (Chyung et al, 2010).

2.3 Relationship between sustained motivation and academic excellence

Academic performance is positively related to the age, maturity, economic stability, self-motivated and psychology stable (Barker and Wedel 2004). Earlier characteristics of ODL are some factors that can make them excel in their academic performance. With that, the study will explore the relationship between the selected factors i.e peer support, family support and study habit with the academic excellence. The hypotheses are that the academic excellence and the selected factors are positively correlated. The determinants of ODL students academic excellence become theoretically and practically important as distance learning moves from marginal to integral role in the education.

Understand the complex nature of the sustained motivation of the distance learners has been a topic (Mitchell 1982). Motivation has a great significance in student performance and continuity (Murphy 1989; Oxford et al. 1993; Chan et al. 1999). Student achievement is motivated by self-efficacy, attributions, intrinsic motivation and goal orientations (Pintrich 2004). Motivation tends to fluctuate from time to time which will cause the unstable academic performance of the ODL students. Understand what sustain the motivation of ODL students are critical. The hypotheses are intrinsic goals, extrinsic goals and self-efficacy are contribute to sustained motivation, which will lead to academic excellence.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is a quantitative study with the correlational design and apply the cross sectional method. The research approach is to test the hypotheses and make sense of the data collected. Primary data derived from questionnaire. A self-developed structured questionnaire was distributed via Google Form, and collected within the sampling frame of 3 weeks.

3.1 Population and Sampling

The study was done on a group of MBA students enrolled in one course in the university. The participants were chosen using convenience sampling as the study was designed to look at the motivation of postgraduate students. All these students received the usual academic resources from the university; the self-instructional learning materials, the course guide, tutorial, etc. All of them were also members of a WhatsApp group setup by the course coordinator (the researcher). The questionnaires were distributed via Google Form to 95 students, all of whom returned the responded questionnaires within three-weeks.

The questionnaire has three sections; the first section is demographic data, second section is on the determinants of the academic excellence and the third section is on the sustained motivation where the respondents will response by ticking on the number that best describe them. A Likert scale numbering from 1 to 5 was used with number one representing strongly disagree and number five representing strongly agree.

3.2 Variables

There are three sub-variables, which are family support, peer support and study habit in this study. There are four self-developed items for family support, five items for peer support and three items for study habit variables. Five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" was used to measure the scale. The dependent variable is the students' current CGPA.

Moderating variable is a third variable that changes the relationship between independent and dependent variable (Baron and Kenny 1986). Thus, moderating variable allows for more precise description of relationship between independent and dependent variables.

There are three sub-variables which are intrinsic goals, extrinsic goals and self-efficacy. There are three self-developed items for intrinsic goals, three items for extrinsic goals and four self-developed items self-efficacy respectively. Five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree" was used to measure the scale.

3.3. Statistical Techniques

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 24.0 was used to analyse the data collected. Data coding, entry, editing and transformation are the process for data collected (Sekaran and Bougie 2013). Data was analysed using statistical techniques.

3.3.1. Descriptive Analysis

Overall respondents' profile was statistically described by the descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics on the demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, staying with parent, current employer, working experience, admission mode, year of study, average courses taken per semester, most useful tool for learning, failed TMAs and exam and current CGPA).

3.3.2. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is used to analyse the structure of interrelationships among large number of variables to determine whether information can be condensed into a smaller set of factors (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2010). Factor analysis summarised data by grouping inter-correlated variables (Heppner and Heppner, 2004).

Factor analysis was performed on the independent and the moderating variables. The variables determinants of academic excellence and sustained motivation were measured separately. Varimax rotation method was used to simplify the columns of the factor matrix. The extraction technique used was principal components analysis (PCA). PCA is the better choice if the researcher merely wants an empirical summary of the data set (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007)

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value were used to measure the overall inter correlation of the data matrix. $P < 0.05$ is the significant for the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and the minimum acceptable value for KMO is 0.50 (Hair et al. 2010). The variable with value less than 0.50 should be dropped from the factor analysis (Hair et al. 2010). An item should load > 0.50 and have a loading of < 0.35 on other factors (Igbaria, Livari and Maragahh, 1995). Regrouping of items into variables is based on the loading results.

3.3.3 Reliability Analysis

Factor analysis was performed before the reliability tests. Reliability of the variables was measured using Cronbach's alpha (α) as it is widely used for that purpose (Hair et al. 2010; Sekaran and Bougie 2010). The lower limit of the Cronbach's alpha values is between .60 and .70 (Hair et al. (2010).

3.3.4 Correlation Analysis

Strength and direction of relationship between two variables are measured by bivariate analysis of correlation coefficient (r) (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). Pearson's correlation coefficient was chosen for this study. R value ranges between +1 to -1 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). +1 means there is a perfect positive relationship, 0 indicating no relationship, and if the r equals -1, it indicates a perfect negative relationship (Keller 2009).

3.3.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regressions were used to test the hypotheses. This multivariate statistic technique used to analyse the relationship between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent or criterion variable (Hair et al., 2010). Multiple regression analysis can be applied when the data are metric and the dependent and independent variables are clearly identified (Hair et al., 2010). The current study's dependent and independent variable have been clearly identified and metric data. As

such, multiple regression analysis is a perfect choice.

3.3.6 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regressions was used to test the hypotheses on moderating variables. Hierarchical regression was designed to test theoretical assumptions and examine the influence of several predictor variables in a sequential way (Cohen, 2001) and (Wampold and Freund, 1987). The relative importance of the predictor is judged based on how much it adds to the prediction of a criterion, over and above that which can be accounted for by other predictors.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A total of 95 questionnaires were received from the students via Google Form. The students were enrolled in the same course in the same semester though the cohorts would be different. All the respondents submitted their responses making the response rate at 100%.

4.1 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

The demographic profiles of the respondents were assessed by age, gender, marital status, staying with parent, current employer, working experience, admission mode, year of study, average papers taken per semester, failed TMAs and exam and current CGPA. The demographic profiles of the respondents are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Demographic variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20 – 30 years	26	27.37
	31 – 40 years	33	34.74
	41 – 50 years	24	25.26
	51 – 60 years	8	8.42
	> 60 years	4	4.21
Gender	Male	41	43.16
	Female	54	56.84
Marital Status	Single	31	32.63
	Married	60	63.16
	Widowed	2	2.11
	Divorcee	2	2.11
Staying with parents	Yes	17	17.89
	No	78	82.11
Current employer	Public Sector	8	8.42
	Private Sector	61	64.21
	Self-employed	20	21.05
	Others	6	6.32
Years of working experience	< 1 years	2	2.11
	1 – 5 years	17	17.89
	6 – 10 years	49	51.58
	11 – 15 years	18	18.95
	16 – 20 years	6	6.32
	21 – 25 years	1	1.05

	26 – 30 years	1	1.05
	> 30 years	1	1.05
Admission mode	Regular	51	53.68
	Open	32	33.68
	APEL	12	12.63
Year of study	1 st year	4	4.21
	2 nd year	61	64.21
	3 rd year	15	15.79
	4 th year	8	8.42
	5 th year	5	5.26
	> 5 years	2	2.11
Average enrolled course per semester	1	5	5.26
	2	51	53.68
	3	32	33.68
	4	7	7.37
Most useful tool for learning	Course material	25	26.32
	LMS	20	21.05
	WhatsApp	45	47.37
	Email / Phone	5	5.26
Have you ever failed TMA?	Yes	13	13.68
	No	82	86.32
Have you ever failed exams?	Yes	23	24.21
	No	72	75.79
CGPA	3.50 - 4.00	21	22.11
	3.00 – 3.50	42	44.21
	2.50 – 3.00	24	25.26
	2.00 – 2.50	8	8.42

Majority of the respondents are aged between 20 to 40 years old (approximately 61%) in tandem with the student population of WOU who are getting younger since the inception. Of which 57% are females and 43% are males with 63% of them are married. A huge majority (84%) of the respondents are not staying with their parents.

Most of the respondents (64%) work in the private sector with a majority (52%) having 6 to 10 years of working experience. As long as admission mode is concerned, most of the respondents (54%) entered the programme through the regular entry, which means they have a first degree. The rest came with either an open entry system (34%) or the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) system (13%).

A large portion of the respondents is in their second year (64%) with third year students being the second largest (16%). Majority of the students (55%) take 2 papers per semester while 6% take 4 courses which is the maximum the university allows. Quite interestingly, WhatsApp seem to be the most useful tool for learning among the respondents at 47%.

Majority of the respondents (88%) has never failed the TMAs and 76% of the respondents have never failed the examination. More than 66% have CGPAs above 3.00 which is the minimum required for graduation while a handful of the respondents are in the danger zone with CGPA of between 2.00 – 2.50.

4.2 Factor Analysis

4.2.1 Factor Analysis on the Independent Variables

1	CGPA	1						
2	Family support	-.16	1					
3	Study habit	.45**	.15	1				
4	Peer support	.79**	-.04	.39**	1			
5	Intrinsic Goals	.44**	.09	.21**	.64**	1		
6	Extrinsic goals	.42**	-.19*	.25**	.53**	.43**	1	
7	Self-efficacy	.86**	-.10	.44**	.84**	.61**	.48**	1

** $p < .01$, correlation is significant at the .01 level

* $p < .05$, correlation is significant at the .05 level

Looking at the table above, current CGPA has a significant positive relationship with study habit ($r = .45, p < .01$), peer support ($r = .79, p < .01$), intrinsic goals ($r = .44, p < .01$), extrinsic goals ($r = .42, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($r = .86, p < .01$).

Family support has a significant negative relationship with only extrinsic goals ($r = -.19, p < .05$). Study habit has a significant positive relationship with peer support ($r = .39, p < .01$), intrinsic goals ($r = .21, p < .01$), extrinsic goals ($r = .25, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($r = .44, p < .01$). WOU has been experimenting with the use of WhatsApp as a communication channel with the students. All tutors are expected to setup WhatsApp groups and the course coordinator is a member of all the groups.

Peer support has a significant positive relationship with intrinsic goals ($r = .64, p < .01$), extrinsic goals ($r = .53, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($r = .84, p < .01$). Intrinsic goals has a significant positive relationship with extrinsic goals ($r = .43, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($r = .61, p < .01$). Meanwhile, extrinsic goals has a significant positive relationship with self-efficacy ($r = .48, p < .01$).

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Hypothesized relationships are examined based on Multiple Regression Analysis coupled with Analysis of Variance F Statistic (ANOVA). The smaller the value of F statistic, the better as it indicates that the predictor variable is good at explaining the changes in the criterion variable and vice versa. The findings on the seven proposed hypotheses are discussed as below.

With current CGPA as the dependent variable, the R^2 value revealed that 67% of the variance for academic excellent is explained by family support, peer support and study habit and 33% of the variance is explained by other unknown additional variables.

The multiple regression model for academic excellence ($F = 101.01, p < .01$) was a significant model in predicting academic excellence. Constant ($\beta = 2.25, p < .01$) with standard error .10 and $t = 22.42$. Looking at each predictor individually, family support ($\beta = -.07, p < .01$), standard error .02 and $t = -3.34$, peer support ($\beta = .37, p < .01$), standard error .03 and $t = 13.70$ and study habit ($\beta = .11, p < .01$) with standard error .03 and $t = 3.92$ was a significant predictor for academic excellence.

Therefore, family support was significantly related to academic excellent with negative relationship while peer support and study habit were significantly related to academic excellent with positive relationship. As a result, H1 was not supported because the direction of relationship is negative, H2 and H3 were supported. See table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Results of Hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Multiple Regression	Hierarchical Regression
H1 Family support is positively related to the academic excellence.	Not supported	Not supported
H2 Peer support is positively related to the academic excellence.	Supported	Supported
H3 Study habit is positively related to the academic excellence	Supported	Supported
H4 Intrinsic goals, extrinsic goals and self-efficacy are the factors that sustained the motivation of ODL students.	Not supported	Not supported
H5 Intrinsic goals will strengthen the relationship	Not applicable	Not supported

among the family support, peer-support and study habit with academic excellence.		
H6 Extrinsic goals will strengthen the relationship among family support, peer-support and study habit with academic excellence.	Not applicable	Not supported
H7 Self-efficacy will strengthen the relationship among family support, peer-support and study habit with academic excellence.	Not applicable	Supported

With current CGPA as the dependent variable, the R^2 value revealed that 74% of the variance for sustained motivation was explained by intrinsic goals, extrinsic goals and self-efficacy and 26% of the variance was explained by other unknown additional variables.

The multiple regression for sustained motivation reveals that the model ($F = 143.43, p < .01$) was a significant model in predicting sustained motivation. Constant ($\beta = 2.28, p < .01$) with standard error .10 and $t = 23.13$. Looking at each predictor individually, intrinsic goals ($\beta = -.07, p < .05$) with standard error .03 and $t = -2.44$ and self-efficacy ($\beta = .49, p < .01$) with standard error .03 and $t = .85$ was a significant predictor for academic excellent. However, extrinsic goals ($\beta = .02, p > .10$) with standard error .03 and $t = .85$ was not found to be a significant predictor.

Therefore, intrinsic goals were significantly related to academic excellence with negative relationship while self-efficacy was significantly related to academic excellence with positive direction. Extrinsic goals have no significant relationship with academic excellence. As a result, H4 was not supported.

4.5 Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple liner regression was performed to test on the moderating variables. When family support, peer-support and self-efficacy entered in step 1, they significantly predicted academic excellence. The result is consistent with the multiple regression done earlier. When intrinsic goals were added in step 2, there is a small increase in R^2 from 67% to 67.2% with constant ($B = 2.30$, standard error .11). The entire group of variables were significantly predicted academic excellence, $F = 75.91, p < .01$. Looking at each predictor individually, family support ($\beta = -.15, p < .01$), peer-support ($\beta = .74, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) was a significant predictor for academic excellence. However, intrinsic goals ($\beta = -.06, p > .05$) was not found to be a significant predictor.

Therefore, intrinsic goals were not significantly strengthen the relationship among the independent variables with the academic excellent. As a result, H4 was not supported.

When family support, peer-support and self-efficacy entered in step 1, they significantly predicted academic excellence. The result is consistent with the multiple regression done earlier. When extrinsic goals were added in step 2, there is a small increase in R^2 from 67% to 67.2% with constant ($B = 2.32$, standard error .12). The entire group of variables were significantly predicted academic excellence, $F = 75.89, p < .01$. Looking at each predictor individually, family support ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$), peer-support ($\beta = .73, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .21, p < .01$) was a significant predictor for academic excellence. However, extrinsic goals ($\beta = -.05, p > .05$) was not found to be a significant predictor.

Therefore, extrinsic goals were not significantly strengthened the relationship among the independent variables with the academic excellent. As a result, H5 was not supported.

When family support, peer-support and self-efficacy entered in step 1, they significantly predicted academic excellence. The result is consistent with the multiple regression done earlier. When self-efficacy was added in step 2, R^2 changed from 67% to 76.6% with constant ($B = 2.15$, standard error .09). As indicated by R^2 , self-efficacy strengthens the relationship between independents variables with academic excellence by 9.6%. The entire group of variables were significantly predicted academic excellence, $F = 121.10, p < .01$. Looking at each predictor individually, family support ($\beta = -.10, p < .01$), peer-support ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .11, p < .01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = .59, p < .01$) was a significant predictor for academic excellence.

Therefore, self-efficacy was significantly strengthening the relationship among the independent variables with the academic excellent. As a result, H6 was supported.

4.6 WhatsApp and learning behaviour

The descriptive analysis showed that WhatsApp is preferred by most of the respondents as an effective tool for communication. A side study was also conducted on the same respondents on their perception of the use of WhatsApp in enhancing their learning experiences.

Table 4.5: WhatsApp in learning

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value=2			Results
			t	df	Sig	
Using WhatsApp helped me to enrich my vocabulary.	2.0833	.96732	.517	35	.608	Insignificant
Using WhatsApp helped me to learn from my course mates' mistakes	3.7500	.55420	8.120	35	.001	Significant
Using WhatsApp helped me to think in English.	3.6944	.70991	5.869	35	.001	Significant
Using WhatsApp helped me to overcome my fear of using English.	2.1111	.94952	.702	35	.487	Insignificant
Using WhatsApp helped me get immediate feedback from my instructor	3.6667	.75593	5.292	35	.001	Significant
It is easier to contact my instructor through WhatsApp than other application	3.5000	.87831	3.416	35	.002	Significant
Using WhatsApp motivated me to keep learning.	3.7500	.60356	7.456	35	.001	Significant

The results indicated that the respondents have a liking for the use of WhatsApp for learning as it provides them with speedy response (mean = 3.67) as well as the convenience in communicating (mean = 3.50). The highest significant response received in this small survey was that WhatsApp helped the students learn from one another's mistakes (mean = 3.75) and this in turn motivates them to learn better (mean = 3.75). The least significant response was that WhatsApp did not help these students in vocabulary acquisition (mean = 2.08) and helped in overcoming their fear in using English (mean =2.11). This is acceptable as rarely anyone uses proper English in their communication using social media related applications. This portion of the study is still work in progress and the results shared here are preliminary ones.

5 CONCLUSION

Overall, the study has managed to answer the research questions and fulfil the research objectives. First objective is to investigate the determinants of academic excellence of ODL students. Second objective is to find out how ODL students sustain their motivation to achieve their goals to graduate from the ODL.

It can be concluded that family support, peer support and good study habit are the determinants of

ODL students' academic excellence. However, ODL students who set intrinsic goals, high in self-efficacy can sustained their motivation to study in an ODL environment. Self-efficacy strengthens family support, peer support and study habit relationships with academic excellence.

Peer supports are an efficient way to help ODL students and increase the achievement level of challenging students. Peer supports is a two-way street, boosting the academic outcomes, social skills, and self-esteem of students with disabilities and the peers who support them. Within this context, the WhatsApp experiment shows that a tool other than the traditional email or LMS forums are necessary in keeping these students connected. Good study habits and organizational skills is a great start on a path to success. ODL students with positive study habit study more efficiently and experiencing lesser stress in the process.

ODL students sustained their motivation by internal factors. The need for self-esteem and to build image in society sustained the ODL students' motivation. The nature of adult learning who learn when the need arises is one of the factors that strengthen their intrinsic motivation. Relevancy and practicality of the study are among the reasons why students build self-efficacy.

In general, it can be concluded that, ODL postgraduate students of WOU have moderately sustained motivation, though they get low family support to continue their education. They do receive a moderate peer support and practice moderate study habits.

REFERENCES [Arial, 12-point, bold, left alignment]

The list of the references should be given at the end of the paper. References are numbered in brackets by order of appearance in the document (e.g. [1], [2], [3]). The same reference can be cited more than once in the text with the same reference number.

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