

An Empirical Bond between Learner Autonomy and Well-being: A Vocational Students' Perspective

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Abstract : Autonomous learning was reported to be very helpful in distance learning because it helped the students to understand the lesson without direct guidance from the teacher and decided to learn with their learning styles which allow them to maximize learning. Yet, students' well-being is essential to reveal as it can be one of the indicators which can be taken into account on measuring the workload of students enrolling in the vocational state-owned institution. Therefore, this study is eager to reveal the relation between learner autonomy and well-being. The instrument which will be occupied in this study is a survey which derived from the various well-established scales in the literature, and then the back-translation method was used to produce a version in Bahasa Indonesia. All students of the polytechnic will be asked to participate in this study. Further results of this study will be processed with SPSS 25 version and AMOSS supported by additional sources from documents in the polytechnic. This study portrayed a significant relation between learner autonomy and wellbeing in terms of academic performance.

Keywords: Autonomous learning, Students' Wellbeing, Academic performance

INTRODUCTION

Autonomous learning is widely reviewed again lately related to distance learning practice during pandemic situations ¹. Autonomous learning was reported to be very helpful in distance learning because it allowed the students to understand the lesson without direct guidance from the teacher and decided to learn with their learning styles which allow them to maximize learning ².

¹ Teguh Ariebowo, "Autonomous Learning during COVID-19 Pandemic: Students' Objectives and Preferences," *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning* 6, no. 1 (2021), <http://dx.doi.org/10.18196/ftl.v6i1.10079>; Fidyati Fidyati et al., "Autonomous EFL Learners' Ways of Practicing Speaking Skills During Pandemic of COVID 19;," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Social Science, Political Science, and Humanities (ICoSPOLHUM 2020)* (Atlantis Press, 2021), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210125.038>.

² Girindra Putri Ardana Reswari and James Kalimanzi, "Re-Promoting Autonomous Learning for University Students: A Lesson from Pandemic Covid-19," *Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2021): 38–47, <http://dx.doi.org/10.29303/jipp.v6i1.144>; Misbachuddin Akbar Putra, "Encouraging Autonomous English Learning in

Students' perceptions of teachers' autonomy support had significant direct implications on their satisfaction with the educational center and their life satisfaction, as well as indirect effects on all academic outcomes studied ³.

Autonomy is a term that exists both in discussion of language learner autonomy (LLA) and self-determination theory (SDT). Within the discussion of LLA autonomy refers to the learners own the capacity to control their learning ⁴. Meanwhile autonomy is considered to be one of three psychological needs within the discussion of SDT ⁵. It is one of the main principles of Self-determination theory which states that basic psychological needs must be addressed in order to acquire higher motivation, self-development, and well-being⁶. Students become more motivated and more likely to display increased study engagement when their desire for autonomy is addressed, which leads to improved performance.

Although the term 'autonomy' is used in seemingly different environments, autonomy in LLA and SDT is interrelated. SDT provides a paradigm for comprehending the psychological and social foundations of autonomous learning ⁷.

Benson⁸ defines autonomy as a capacity that learners have and display to various degrees in different contexts. Benson then emphasized that the capacity is related the control over one's learning. This include learner's autonomy capacity are taking charge for their own learning, making decisions independently, and have an intrinsic motivation to learn⁹. Further, Holec ¹⁰ elaborated the capability to take charge of his/her own learning includes determining the objectives, contents and progressions, methods as well as monitoring and evaluation of what has been learned. By doing this so autonomous

Overcrowded Online Class of Elementary School during Pandemic," *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics* 6, no. 1 (2021): 57, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v6i1.493>.

³ Melchor Gutiérrez and José M Tomás, "The Role of Perceived Autonomy Support in Predicting University Students' Academic Success Mediated by Academic Self-Efficacy and School Engagement," *Educational Psychology* 39, no. 6 (2019): 729–748, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2019.1566519>.

⁴ Phil Benson, "Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning" (Routledge, 2013), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315833767>.

⁵ Nigel Mantou Lou et al., "Complementary Perspectives on Autonomy in Self-Determination Theory and Language Learner Autonomy," *TESOL Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2017): 210–220, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tesq.403>; Elizabeth L Pollard and Patrice D Lee, "No Title," *Social Indicators Research* 61, no. 1 (2003): 59–78, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/a:1021284215801>; Richard M Ryan and Edward L Deci, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective: Definitions, Theory, Practices, and Future Directions," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 61 (2020): 101860, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>.

⁶ Ryan and Deci, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective: Definitions, Theory, Practices, and Future Directions."

⁷ Peng Zhou et al., "Fatal Swine Acute Diarrhoea Syndrome Caused by an HKU2-Related Coronavirus of Bat Origin," *Nature* 556, no. 7700 (April 1, 2018): 255–259.

⁸ Benson, "Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning."

⁹ Ana María Sierra Piedrahita and Cristina Frodden, "Promoting Student Autonomy Through Self-Assessment and Learning Strategies," *HOW* (2003); Ann Macaskill and Andrew Denovan, "Developing Autonomous Learning in First Year University Students Using Perspectives from Positive Psychology," *Studies in Higher Education* 38, no. 1 (2013): 124–142, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.566325>.

¹⁰ Henri Holec, "Plaidoyer Pour l'auto-Evaluation (Advocating Student Self-Evaluation).," *Francais dans le Monde* 21, no. 165 (1981): 15–23.

learners are able to direct the course of their own. In other words, the ability of making decision concerning the learning is the manifestation of having control on the learning. This capability involved responsibility for the same matters¹¹.

Motivation, emotion and beliefs are psychological factors that significantly influence learning. In the implementation of autonomous learning, motivation is the most frequently discussed as among the factors that affect autonomy, such as teachers, environment and tasks¹². We recognize the term extrinsic and intrinsic motivation which are widely discussed under the Self-determination theory. Research from SDT that shows that both intrinsic motivation and well internalized (and thus autonomous) forms of extrinsic motivation predict a variety of positive outcomes across a range of educational levels and cultural contexts. Further, a study found out that intrinsic emotion is connected to positive emotion¹³. Interestingly, Zull¹⁴ argues that our emotions affect our thinking instead of the contrary. Meanwhile, Little and Singleton¹⁵ argued that beliefs might assist the learners in exploring their own preferences and styles and adapting them to the learning task. These psychological factors could point to a link between learner autonomy and learner well-being.

Autonomy also has a favorable impact on well-being¹⁶. Yet, the situation in Indonesia Railway Polytechnic still longing for a package system curriculum which doesn't allow students to pick and choose their own preferred subject, often overwhelmed and makes them less focus to study¹⁷. Therefore, this research came up with the topic An Empirical Bond between Learner Autonomy and Well-being: A Vocational Students' Perspective with the research question of How is the correlation

¹¹ John Stephenson, "Supporting Student Autonomy in Learning," in *Capability and Quality in Higher Education* (Routledge, 2013), 129–141.

¹² Benson, "Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning"; Mei Latipah et al., "Folktales as a Means of Ecological Education for Society in Bejiharjo Village, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta," *Pancaran Pendidikan* 6, no. 2 (2017): 161–170; A. S. İpek and S. Okumuş, "İlköğretim Matematik Öğretmen Adaylarının Matematiksel Problem Çözmede Kullandıkları Temsiller," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 11, no. 3 (2012): 681–700.; Sierra Piedrahita and Frodden, "Promoting Student Autonomy Through Self-Assessment and Learning Strategies"; Yi-Lien Yeh and Yu-Ju Lan, "Fostering Student Autonomy in English Learning through Creations in a 3D Virtual World," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 66, no. 3 (2017): 693–708, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11423-017-9566-6>; Ruiqi Zhou and Yiyi Bao, "The Impact of Achievement Motivation on Project-Based Autonomous Learning — An Empirical Study on the 2017 NBEPC," *English Language Teaching* 11, no. 11 (2018): 31, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n11p31>; Gina Smith et al., "Successful Instructional Leadership Styles in Education.," *Journal of Instructional Research* 6 (2017): 46–52.

¹³ Micòl Beseghi, "Emotions and Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning at University," *ELLE*, no. 2 (2018), <http://dx.doi.org/10.30687/elle/2280-6792/2018/02/003>.

¹⁴ J Joy James, "Zull, J. E. (2002). *The Art of Changing The Brain: Enriching The Practice of Teaching by Exploring The Biology of Learning*," *SCHOLE: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education* 24, no. 1 (2009): 181, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1937156x.2009.11949644>.

¹⁵ "David Little and David Singleton: Authentic Texts, Pedagogical Grammar and Language Awareness in Foreign Language Learning," *Language Awareness in the Classroom* (Routledge, 2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315845524-20>.

¹⁶ T. S. Cristea et al., "THE RELATION BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND WELL-BEING IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC," in *Proceedings - SEFI 49th Annual Conference: Blended Learning in Engineering Education: Challenging, Enlightening - and Lasting?*, 2021.

¹⁷ Ainun Fikria, Akhyat Hilmi, and Afita Pratiwi, "Factors Influencing Students' Well-Being on Educational Outcomes in the Indonesian Railway Polytechnic," *IJET (Indonesian Journal of English Teaching)* 10, no. 2 (2021): 136–147, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15642/ijet2.2021.10.2.136-147>.

between learner autonomy and well-being and to what extent the relation between learner autonomy and well-being

METHOD

The objective of the quantitative correlational study is to investigate the possibility of a relationship between learning autonomy and well-being in the Indonesian Railway Polytechnic. From total population 632 cadets, total sample N=72 participated on this study chosen by using convenience sampling. The participants are active students from year 2021 and 2022. The data collected from February to May 2022.

The questionnaire consisted questions related to learners' wellbeing and autonomy. Since recent studies show that both hedonic and eudemonic wellbeing can give impact one another¹⁸. therefore this study employs both hedonic and eudemonic well-being as the variables. The learner Eudemonic well-being were developed from positive psychological characters such self-acceptance or feeling good about ourselves (ex, I have been waking up fresh) purpose in life (ex: I was concerned about my study), as well as self-control (ex I have been in firm control of my behavior)¹⁹. Meanwhile the hedonic approach gives emphasize on a subjective well-being construct which focuses on happiness²⁰. It consisting of a cognitive component of evaluation in terms of life satisfaction and an affective component described commonly by positive emotions rather than negative emotions²¹.

Learner autonomy was measured via readiness (5 items), responsibility (6 items) and decision making (6 items).

Table 1 - Instrumentation

<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Wellbeing Aspect</i>	<i>Question</i>	<i>Statement</i>
Wellbeing	Eudemonic/ Psychological	Q1	I have been feeling emotionally stable and sure of myself
		Q2	I have been in firm control of my behavior, thoughts, emotions, or feelings
		Q3	I have been waking up fresh and rested
		Q7	I was concerned or worried about my studies

¹⁸ Veronika Huta and Alan S. Waterman, "Eudaimonia and Its Distinction from Hedonia: Developing a Classification and Terminology for Understanding Conceptual and Operational Definitions," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 15, no. 6 (2014): 1425–1456; Ning Jia et al., "Beneficial Effects of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motivations on Subjective Well-Being in Adolescents: A Two-Wave Cross-Lagged Analysis," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 17, no. 5 (2021): 701–707, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2021.1913641>.

¹⁹ Carlos Salavera et al., "Eudaimonic Well-Being in Adolescents: The Role of Trait Emotional Intelligence and Personality," *Sustainability* 12, no. 7 (2020): 2742, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su12072742>.

²⁰ FRED FELDMAN, "Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology* (New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), Pp. Xii + 593," *Utilitas* 18, no. 2 (2006): 192–196, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/s0953820806231972>.

²¹ Annamaria Di Fabio and Letizia Palazzeschi, "Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being: The Role of Resilience beyond Fluid Intelligence and Personality Traits," *Frontiers in psychology* 6 (September 11, 2015): 1367, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26441743>.

	Hedonic/ Subjective	Q4	I have been under or felt I was under any strain, stress, or pressure.
		Q5	I felt satisfied or pleased with my studies
		Q6	I felt that my daily life is full of things that are interesting to me
<i>Learner's Autonomy</i>	Readiness	Q10	It is easy for me to perform well in my study
		Q14	During the process of studying, I keep in line with my predetermined plan
		Q17	I feel more comfortable when I study independently after class
		Q19	I can manage situation in which I study to make myself comfortable
		Q22	I think my studies are too hard
	Responsibility	Q9	I make effort to overcome emotional issues that may hinder my study progress
		Q11	I clearly understand the teacher's intention during in class learning activities
		Q15	During my studies, I check and correct my comprehension of the previous studied materials
		Q18	I feel that I can adapt well with teaching styles of my lecturers
		Q21	I always evaluate all materials and progresses I make
		Q24	I can consider that my academic stuff run well based on my expectation and preparation
	Decision Making	Q8	I take advantage of various opportunities from my studies in my daily activity
		Q12	If I realize that my study style is impractical, I quickly find a more suitable one
		Q13	I always study together with other people to gain more insights
		Q16	I can select and prioritize what to study out of class
		Q20	I need peer supports when I study
		Q23	I can apply all I learned in class in my daily lives

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The calculation used SPSS to seek the value of Cronbach's Alpha was conducted, this resulted .895 which indicated that Y (17 items) variable is valid, meanwhile the coefficient value of X (7 items) variable using the same calculation is .640 which also confirms strong validation among the items.

General overview of Student Autonomy and Wellbeing

Based on the calculation done using SPSS which has the main purpose to articulate the degree of wellbeing belonging to students, it indicates that most of the students considered having moderately good state of wellbeing as it shows more than 2.0 amongst the elements of questions. Another interesting thing to highlight is that there is one strong point related to student wellbeing which focuses on subjective wellbeing reaching at 3.04.

<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>					
<i>Indicator</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
<i>Psychological Wellbeing</i>	72	4	19	9.93	3.083
<i>Subjective Wellbeing</i>	72	5	15	8.35	1.915
<i>Responsibility</i>	72	6	27	14.39	4.638
<i>Readiness</i>	72	8	22	13.10	3.086
<i>Decision Making</i>	72	6	26	14.22	4.780
<i>Valid N (listwise)</i>	72				

The Correlation between Learner Autonomy and Well-being

Table 3. Correlation between Learner Autonomy and Well-being

		<i>psychological well being</i>	<i>subjective well being</i>	<i>responsibility</i>	<i>readiness</i>	<i>decision making</i>
<i>psychological well being</i>	Pearson Correlation	1	.467**	.725**	.664**	.712**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	72	72	72	72	72
<i>subjective well being</i>	Pearson Correlation	.467**	1	.403**	.347**	.382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.003	0.001
	N	72	72	72	72	72
<i>responsibility</i>	Pearson Correlation	.725**	.403**	1	.838**	.887**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	72	72	72	72	72
<i>Readiness</i>	Pearson Correlation	.664**	.347**	.838**	1	.806**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.003	0.000		0.000
	N	72	72	72	72	72
<i>decision making</i>	Pearson Correlation	.712**	.382**	.887**	.806**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	
	N	72	72	72	72	72

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

The first aim of this research is to investigate the possibility of a relationship between learning autonomy and well-being in the Indonesian Railway Polytechnic students. The research result shows a strong positive correlation between learner well-being and learner autonomy. It is amenable since both autonomy and well-being have cognitive dimension. This fact also explains the possibility of reciprocal correlation between learner well-being and learner autonomy as revealed in the previous

studies compared to recent study. The result also showed the agreement that psychological and subjective well-being possibly influenced one another ²³.

The second objective is to find out the extent of the correlation between learner autonomy and well-being. The result acknowledged us that the psychological well-being has a stronger correlation with students' autonomy than subjective well-being. This finding is consistent with the previous studies since the capacity to take a responsibility toward learning process which involve the ability to control learning process needs represent the psychological wellness requirement which comprises personal initiatives ²⁴ as well as motivation²⁵. Psychological well-being is seen as the full functioning of the person ²⁶ as well which is related to cognitive dimension of the learning concerning the ability to in defining a task, setting goals to achieve, selecting strategies and managing the related learning process ²⁷. Subjective wellbeing is also has also Subjective well-being which is frequently associated with positive emotion formerly stated as having linked to intrinsic motivation which is widely discussed as the factor influencing autonomous learning. The occurrence of positive emotions becomes of great relevance when students work autonomously ²⁸. This is related to the feelings of enjoyment and enthusiasm which may lead them to explore the learning material on their own ²⁹.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above it can be concluded that learners' well-being correlate to students' autonomy. The result support that not only students' psychological capacity to control their cognitive process during the learning process that support the autonomy; the way the students feel and think on their life has also related to the autonomy learning process. Developing students' capacity that is related to autonomy as well as providing environment that can sustain students' motivation to study autonomously would be advantageous for students' achievement. This finding is important, regarding the students of PPI Madiun are living in an environment which in an integrated education, between school and dormitory. Therefore, the comprehensive program that support students' wellness is needed to allow the students to study more independently.

²³ Huta and Waterman, "Eudaimonia and Its Distinction from Hedonia: Developing a Classification and Terminology for Understanding Conceptual and Operational Definitions"; Jia et al., "Beneficial Effects of Hedonic and Eudaimonic Motivations on Subjective Well-Being in Adolescents: A Two-Wave Cross-Lagged Analysis."

²⁴ Macaskill and Denovan, "Developing Autonomous Learning in First Year University Students Using Perspectives from Positive Psychology."

²⁵ Benson, "Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning"; Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior," *Psychological Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (2000): 227–268, http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1104_01.

²⁶ Deci and Ryan, "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior."

²⁷ Gideon P Van Tonder, Magdalena M Kloppers, and Mary M Grosser, "Enabling Self-Directed Academic and Personal Wellbeing Through Cognitive Education," *Frontiers in psychology* 12 (February 15, 2022): 789194, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35242068>.

²⁸ Beseghi, "Emotions and Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning at University."

²⁹ Beseghi, "Emotions and Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning at University."

Being autonomy does not mean the students need no support from the school. The school can provide an appropriate approach that can be taken to foster students' autonomy. This feature may be investigated in the future to give a conducive learning environment for studying more independently.

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