Self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs: Findings from a survey of EFL undergraduates in Afghanistan

Hashmatullah Tareen
Shaanxi Normal University, China
Mohammad Tahir Haand, Attaullah Muhammadi
Kandahar University, Afghanistan
BaoHui Zhang
Shaanxi Normal University, China

The concept of self-regulated learning in the field of educational psychology has been developed to comprehend how students learn autonomously. Motivation is a pivotal factor in learners' academic outcomes, and its connection with self-regulated learning is extensive. While self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs are both believed to play important roles in EFL learning, very little is known about their interplay in the Afghan context, and research on the relationship among these variables seems scarce. Therefore, to contribute to this knowledge gap, the overarching aim of the present survey was to investigate the phenomenon of self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs among EFL learners in higher education. Quantitative research was carried out on a sample size of 123 EFL learners. The data was collected through a survey questionnaire and analysed using *SPSS v24* where both descriptive statistics and inferential statistics such as one-way ANOVA, correlation, and regression were used. The findings indicated that the majority of the learners experience a high level of test anxiety. Further, the results also revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between motivational beliefs and self-regulated learning. Foreign language learning can be enhanced by designing environments in a way that fosters self-regulated learning skills. Further research could be conducted with a larger sample size from other public universities to generate a more fine-grained understanding.

Introduction

One of the topics researchers constantly write about is self-regulated learning. The purpose of research carried out on this topic is to contribute to the reasons why EFL learners become successful learners. One of the latest developments in the last twenty years has been to educate EFL learners to self-regulate their learning (Tomak & Seferoğlu, 2021). The learner-centred approach has replaced the teacher-centred approach, and the accountability of EFL learners is more vital (Banisaeid & Huang, 2015). More importantly, their role changed from passive to active learning. Within the context of instruction, it is no longer acceptable to passively memorise and recite information (DiFrancesca, Nietfeld & Cao, 2016). Instead, the focus has shifted to preparing students to become self-regulated and lifelong learners, because learning is an ongoing activity throughout a lifetime, independent of age and location (Aksan, 2009; Teng, 2021; Shen et al., 2023). Most EFL learners who are at the centre of this activity become dependent on having the responsibility of self-learning. As a result, these EFL learners can adjust their learning process and attain their objectives regarding this process.

A motivation for teaching EFL learners "how to learn" came from Rubin and Stern's work on slow and good language learners in the middle of the 19th century (Banisaeid & Huang, 2015). Afterward, many scholars made efforts to form a classification of language learning approaches. During the last twenty years, these approaches have been the focal point of many studies. With these language learning approaches, EFL learners were capable of employing various kinds of approaches for regulating their learning. Consequently, this guide to strategy instruction has the fundamental goal of instructing EFL learners to become self-regulated learners. The term "self-regulation" from educational psychology has become an issue of inquiry in foreign and second language teaching and learning studies (Yüce, 2019). Becoming a self-regulated EFL learner through arranging learning processes is now considered an essential development in education because it ignores traditional, teacher-based language classrooms. Self-regulated learning is the basis upon which EFL learners build their academic skills (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). The meaning of self-regulated learning is to self-generate views, attitudes, and performances planned and regularly modified to achieve individual objectives (Habiba, Akhter & Batool, 2019). To turn EFL learners' mental abilities, such as verbal ability, into academic performance skills, self-regulated learning as a self-directed learning process is recommended (Nejabati, 2015). Self-regulated learning is usually referred to as learners' proactive learning process of activating and regulating their metacognition, cognition, motivation, and behaviour to enhance learning (Zimmerman, 2013). The present study not only aims to outline a general picture of Afghan undergraduate students' motivational beliefs and self-regulated learning strategies in English learning but also a correlation between their use of self-regulated learning strategies and motivational beliefs in learning English as a foreign language.

Afghan undergraduate students coming from diverse life circumstances vary in their qualifications and English competency. When these students enter university, especially when they begin their studies in an EFL context, many have inadequate English language competency, although this is essential for meeting the requirements of academic reading, writing, and spoken language. It is a common learning problem, Whilst English language policy for the EFL curriculum mandates use of the English language (Durán & García, 2021), in teaching and learning English in Afghanistan, grammar-translation, audio-lingual methods, and other traditional teaching methods with teacher-centredness have been used for many years (Orfan et al., 2021). As a result, it is difficult for Afghan EFL learners to attain convincing communication skills. This is further illustrated by Alamyar (2017) who argued that Afghan EFL learners are observers and passive learners in the process of language learning rather than active participants. EFL lecturers teach EFL learners more theoretically than practically. Afghan EFL learners have little chance to practise group discussions and pair work because nearly all activities depend on their lecturers' preferences.

EFL lecturers have to be aware of tangible ways to support their learners by enabling them to take control of their learning. This will be an effort to make language learning more successful. Also, EFL lecturers can initiate ways to diminish learners' difficulties in learning raised by their dearth of understanding. This is advantageous, especially for some Afghan EFL learners who may enter university with a 'spoon-feeding' mentality.

Generally, Afghan EFL learners confront problems developing and acquiring practical skills. Lack of awareness of self-regulated learning approaches learners could be the reason. With this in mind, it is evidenced by Virtanen and Nevgi (2010) and Virtanen, Nevgi and Niemi (2013), who claimed that learners in higher education often lack self-regulated learning skills and have no realistic conceptions of their use of learning strategies. This difficulty can lead to correlative associations among a lack of academic success, a poor sense of worth, a lack of motivation, limited task engagement and tenacity, an undervaluation of learning, and low output (Virtanen, Nevgi & Niemi, 2013).

Many empirical studies have been carried out to investigate self-regulated learning in Western countries. The present study can be regarded as important in terms of its scope and context, as there is little research and information available about how Afghan EFL learners in higher education self-regulate their language learning. Self-regulated learning qualifies as an important research area for researchers in Afghanistan, and they believe there is a need. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring whether EFL learners have the potential to enhance their self-regulation, and also contribute to self-regulation research in the context of EFL learners in higher education. Our study is guided by four research questions:

1. What are the levels of EFL learners in relation to self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs?
2. Is there any significant difference in self-regulated learning among freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors?
3. Is there any significant relationship among the five components that measure self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs?
4. Is there any significant impact of self-regulated learning on motivational beliefs?

Literature review

Research into EFL learners' lack of willingness to adopt individual accountability for their academic learning and performance (Zimmerman, 2013) may draw upon the work of Albert Bandura. Our research survey is situated within social-cognitive theory functioning as a theoretical framework for this study. The main beliefs of social cognitive theory have been applied widely to self-regulation, as it involves personal, behavioural, and environmental features. This perception has proven to be fruitful for researchers interested in various features of self-regulated functioning, such as motivational beliefs, mental health improvement (e.g., stress management, anxiety), career choice and development, complex decision-making and organisational functioning, and academic success (e.g., studying and test preparation and performance) (Zimmerman, 1990).

A key notion of this theory is that people desire "to control events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1991). Bandura's social-cognitive theory (1991) has a strong impact on self-regulated learning, and its principles have been employed in the learning of self-regulation skills (Zimmerman, 2013). Most human behaviour, being purposeful in social cognitive theory, is comprehensively motivated and regulated by forethought and the ongoing exercise of self-influence (Bandura, 1991). During the past twenty years, a broad range of

literature in educational psychology has discussed several theories of self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001; Zimmerman, 2013). Social cognitive researchers see self-regulation as an achievement of socialisation processes. Self-regulation works through a set of psychological sub-functions that must be evolved and equipped for self-directed change. Self-regulation, according to Bandura's social cognitive theory, is a key process that affects students' learning and achievement. Self-regulated learning for Bandura is proposed to "expand freedom of action and enable people to serve as casual contributors to their life course by selecting, influencing, and constructing their circumstances" (Zimmerman, 1990). According to Bandura (1991), people are unable to make an impact on their motivation very well unless they pay proper attention to their performances. A key variable for motivational belief is self-regulation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). A person's motivation will be raised if self-regulation leads to success or avoids failure (Zimmerman, 1990).

We know it is crucial to practise a series of techniques designed for relevant contexts to be a successful learner. These techniques can be framed as self-regulated learning. In teaching EFL learners, the notion of self-regulation is the primary aspect. Particularly in the last decade, a wide range of studies have been conducted on the links between motivational beliefs and self-regulation in language learning (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001; Gilbert, 2010; Pintrich & Garcia, 2012; Zahidi, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013). In this regard, several recent studies in the literature are explored within the scope of this study. With the shift from behaviourism to cognitivism, educational psychology has located a cumulative obligation on EFL learners for learning, and self-regulated learning has become a continuing area of research in the field of education (Mahmoodi, Kalantari & Ghaslani, 2014; Teng, 2021). In the field of educational psychology, the concept of self-regulated learning has been established to understand how learners learn voluntarily (Fukuda, 2018). A succinct definition of self-regulation is "the ability for people to control their behavior, feelings, and thoughts" (Williams, 2022).

Self-regulated learning in EFL context

The need for regulating one's learning has appeared due to the value placed on education and has underlined self-regulated learning. Attaining a top level of foreign language competency depends on the self-regulatory skills of EFL learners (Mahmoodi, Kalantari & Ghaslani, 2014). Recent studies, according to the authors, suggest the applicability of self-regulated learning strategies to the field of language education. Self-regulation of cognition and behaviour is a significant aspect of student learning and achievement in the EFL context (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Chin, 2021). The noticeable characteristics of self-regulated EFL learners, according to Yüce (2019), are self-awareness, competency, and determination. Self-regulated EFL learners not only monitor themselves in accomplishing tasks, but they also try to find useful information by acting consciously. In general, it is necessary to see how EFL lecturers characterise self-regulated EFL learners and self-regulated learning. Mezei (2008) elaborated on these concepts, as learning is student-led and EFL learners unceasingly execute the assignments. The researcher further stated that EFL learners are independent and practice effective learning strategies, and these learners

can think deeply about their work. Also, self-regulated EFL learners naturally enjoy learning, are able to set intrinsic and personal goals, are pragmatic about their comprehension, and love learning (Kulusakli, 2022). In addition to that, EFL learners are self-confident, diligent, and persistent. The practice of self-regulated learning requires EFL learners to keep an eye on how their learning approach avoids remaining overly dependent on lecturers or peers (Nejabati, 2015; Lee, 2021). These monitoring activities consist of verifying the content of the study, assessing learning issues, measuring growth, and anticipating educational outcomes. EFL learners are capable of creating better learning routines, heightening study skills, observing development, measuring their outcomes, using tactics to boost their preferred results, and measuring their academic success and learning (Zumbrunn, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011).

Moreover, EFL learners are intended to become more fluent, autonomous, determined, and reflective when a self-regulated learning strategy is applied (Erickson, Geist & Hatch, 2017). EFL lecturers have a significant role in applying self-regulated learning to assist EFL learners in becoming self-regulated (Abadikhah, Aliyan & Talebi, 2018; Teng, 2021). To this end, EFL lecturers should ensure which self-regulated learning strategy requires more comprehensive focus to adapt the instruction to meet EFL learners' needs. Also, EFL lecturers should be accustomed to the features that impact an EFL learner's ability to self-regulate and the approaches they can employ to pinpoint and endorse self-regulated learning in their classrooms (Zumbrunn, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011; Wang et al., 2012). Self-regulated learning, according to Abadikhah et al. (2018), endeavours to make clear how EFL learners can be successful in academic surroundings irrespective of the benefits or drawbacks they might have in their cognitive capacity, social setting, and quality of schooling. Self-regulating learning augments EFL learners' language learning performance. To illustrate this, Gilbert (2010) considered that self-regulation has generally been used to help weak EFL learners develop skills for improving their learning performance and language acquisition. Self-regulated learning strategies are found to be imperative in increasing learners' self-regulated learning skills to develop language proficiency (Oxford, 2017), thereby drawing growing research attention, including in Afghan EFL contexts.

Motivational beliefs in EFL context

Another area of interest as a pivotal factor in EFL learners' academic outcomes is motivational beliefs. This became important as research interests and connections with self-regulated learning were extensively examined through many studies. For example, Mahmoodi, Kalantari and Ghaslani (2014), Banisaeid and Huang (2015), and Fukuda (2018) found a correlation between self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs. Also, self-regulated learning is known as a key instrument of students' academic motivation and accomplishment (Zumbrunn, Tadlock & Roberts, 2011). The main factor in self-regulated learning is motivation, so that EFL learners can maintain a cycle of self-regulation. Similarly, Wolters and Pintrich (1998) revealed that self-regulated learning has emphasised the importance of motivational factors in classroom learning. As an illustration, Habiba, Akhter & Batool (2019) argued that self-regulated learning strategies such as guiding instruction and scaffolding boost EFL learners' motivational beliefs. Moreover, the

authors added that EFL learners' motivation for learning was also enriched in a learning environment with enlarged self-regulated learning opportunities (Zumbrunn et al., 2011). Since motivation is considered a key aspect in ensuring academic success, educators should make every endeavour to comfort EFL learners and improve these strategies (Fukuda, 2018). Meanwhile, EFL learners must also retain the taught knowledge and skills to become long-lasting learners (Nejabati, 2015; Teng, 2021). Weak motivational belief, according to Aksan (2009), is due to a lack of self-regulated learning strategies. Aksan further explored that self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs predicted learners' achievements. Self-regulation and motivational beliefs are closely related to helping students learn and achieve success in the classroom (Zumbrunn et al., 2011). Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) argued that successful EFL learners retain motivational beliefs and intrinsic interest as they choose and plan their academic tasks. Some studies (e.g., Guo, Xu & Liu, 2018; Shih, 2019) revealed a negative association between EFL anxiety levels and self-regulated learning. Mohmoodi et al. (2014) surveyed self-regulated learning and its impact on learner motivation in the Iranian context. The findings of the study revealed that self-regulated learning is relevant to motivation in English language learning. In addition to that, the learners in this study did not seem to be self-regulated learners. Another study was carried out by Yüce (2019), who investigated the perceptions of EFL learners at a public university in Turkey concerning self-regulated learning. The results indicated that the majority of the EFL learners had problems with the environment and had issues retaining regular times for learning processes. Also, the learners were uneasy about controlling their stress levels during language learning. In this study, however, the learners did not give up on reaching their objectives by allotting enough time for learning a foreign language.

Research design

The current study was quantitative in design to best answer the research questions being posed. Quantitative research, according to Creswell (1999), is a type of research that enlightens by collecting numerical data that is analysed using mathematically based methods. Furthermore, a questionnaire is often used as a survey method. The present study was a case study that employed a descriptive approach to explore learners' perceptions concerning self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs. The case study enables the researcher to gain great insight into a case where the focus is on a specific context (Yin, 2013).

Population and sampling

The participants of this case study were all EFL learners from Kandahar University, where their perspectives were studied. A random sample of 123 EFL learners (89 male and 34 female) aged between 20 and 35 years old studying English language and literature at Kandahar University located in Kandahar, Afghanistan, participated in this study from the total population of 190. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population of 190 subjects, a sample size of 123 subjects is required to represent the whole population. Therefore, the random sampling technique is considered well-suited, and this can be based

on the expectation that an investigator wants to determine, understand, and attain knowledge (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

Questionnaire

Data were collected from the participants via the *Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire* (MSLQ) (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), administered in English using paper copies during June 2022. Brief details are provided in Appendix 1.

The researchers examined the internal reliability of each category separately. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated, indicating that all five of the categories reported above .70 alpha levels (Table 1).

Table 1: Reliability of the questionnaire

Categories	No. of items	Items deleted	alpha
Self-efficacy	9	-	.91
Intrinsic value	9	-	.90
Test anxiety	4	-	.80
Cognitive strategy use	13	-	.90
Self-regulation	9	-	.78

Data collection and ethical issues

Before the data were collected from the participants through a questionnaire, it was a requirement to seek approval. Therefore, the researchers approached the administration of Kandahar University and sought permission for data collection through a request letter because essential ethical concerns are associated with any social research, including that into education, which addresses the views, values, and lives of people (Kirk, 2007). In the first step, lecturers were notified of the consent protocol, and a brief introduction was made to the learners about the survey and its purpose in the classrooms before the questionnaire distribution. The questionnaire was designed with a consent letter, and it was anonymous because the perspectives the participants shared were confidential and only used for research purposes. The consent letter was prepared to ask permission, whether the participants were willing to take part in the study or not. The letter also explained the aim and purpose of the study. The participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The cooperation of departmental heads and lecturers made it possible to obtain 150 responses, from which 123 were deemed fully completed and acceptable.

Data analysis

After the researchers collected the data, they shared it with an expert in the field of education to check if it was completed appropriately. After the expert checked the data and provided constructive feedback, the researchers analysed the data using *SPSS version 24*. Descriptive statistics were compiled to show the frequencies, mean scores and

standard deviations. Additionally, a one-way ANOVA test was used to determine the differences between EFL learners' grade levels. Also, multiple correlations were launched to yield relationships among multiple variables and a simple regression was calculated in general to discover the correlations between the subject variables of self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs.

Findings

Characteristics of the participants

Table 2 presents information about the participants in classifications of gender, age, stage of study, shift, and faculty of enrolment.

Table 2: Demographic information of the participants (N=123)

Demographic	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	89	72.4
	Female	34	27.6
Age	18-21	42	34.1
	22-26	67	54.5
	27-30	9	7.3
	Above 30	5	4.1
Stage of study	Freshman	22	17.9
	Sophomore	19	15.4
	Junior	35	28.5
	Senior	47	38.2
Shift	Day	97	78.9
	Night	26	21.1
Faculty	Education	55	44.7
	Language and Literature	68	55.3

Findings related to RQ 1: Scores for self-regulated learning and motivation

Table 3: Gender differences in MSLQ scores (N-123)

MSLQ scale (Appendix 1)	Male EFL learners (n=89) M (SD)	Female EFL learners (n=34) M (SD)
Self-efficacy	5.34 (1.21)	5.21 (1.10)
Intrinsic value	5.62 (1.08)	5.46 (1.29)
Test anxiety	4.31 (1.46)	4.25 (1.32)
Cognitive strategy use	5.38 (1.04)	5.33 (0.97)
Self-regulation	4.86 (1.04)	4.50 (0.92)

Table 3 shows the highest mean scores were obtained for the category of intrinsic value for both genders, followed by cognitive strategy use. The lowest mean scores were obtained for test anxiety for both genders. Overall, this indicates that EFL learners are self-regulated and have motivational beliefs for learning except for test anxiety.

Findings related to RQ 2: Differences between stages of study

Table 4: One-way ANOVA: Self-regulated learning among stages of study
(freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior EFL learners)

		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Self-efficacy	Between groups	6.084	3	2.028	1.472	.226
	Within groups	163.985	119	1.378		
	Total	170.069	122			
Intrinsic value	Between groups	6.117	3	2.039	1.588	.196
	Within groups	152.795	119	1.284		
	Total	158.913	122			
Test anxiety	Between groups	15.463	3	5.154	2.638	.053
	Within groups	232.532	119	1.954		
	Total	247.995	122			
Cognitive strategy use	Between groups	2.621	3	.874	.827	.482
	Within groups	125.809	119	1.057		
	Total	128.430	122			
Self-regulation	Between groups	2.143	3	.714	.676	.569
	Within groups	125.837	119	1.057		
	Total	127.980	122			

Table 4 shows one-way ANOVA results of self-regulated learning among EFL learners' stages of study to determine if there is any significant difference. The one-way ANOVA analysis indicates that there are no significant differences among freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior EFL learners and with respect to self-regulated learning in terms of the five components: self-efficacy ($F_{(3, 119)} = 1.472$, $p = .226$); intrinsic value ($F_{(3, 119)} = 1.588$, $p = .196$); test anxiety ($F_{(3, 119)} = 2.638$, $p = .053$); cognitive strategy use ($F_{(3, 119)} = .827$, $p = .482$); and self-regulated learning ($F_{(3, 119)} = .676$, $p = .569$).

Similarly, the post-hoc LSD multiple comparison analysis also indicates that there is no significant difference between educational level and self-regulated learning.

Findings related to RQ 3: Relationships among the five MSLQ components

To answer RQ 3, Pearson correlations were calculated. These suggest that 8 out of 10 correlations were statistically significant and were greater or equal to ($r > = +.35$, $p<.25$). The results of multiple correlations also indicate that there are significant relationships among the five components. In general, the results indicate that if Afghan EFL learners feel self-regulated and motivated in one component, they tend to feel self-regulated and motivated in other components as shown in the following (Table 5).

Table 5: Multiple correlations: Relationships among the five components (N=123)

	Scale	Self-efficacy	Intrinsic value	Test anxiety	Cognitive strat. use	Self-regulation
Self-efficacy	Pearson correlation	1	.850**	.163	.743**	.495**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.072	.000	.000
Intrinsic value	Pearson correlation	.850**	1	.258**	.789**	.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.004	.000	.000
Test anxiety	Pearson correlation	.163	.258**	1	.436**	.442**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.072	.004		.000	.000
Cognitive strategy use	Pearson correlation	.743**	.789**	.436**	1	.690**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
Self-regulation	Pearson correlation	.495**	.481**	.442**	.690**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

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

Findings related to RQ 4: Self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs

Table 6: Regression of self-regulated learning on motivation (N=123)

Variable	B	Beta	SE	p-value
Constant	1.000	.781	.300	.000
Self-regulated learning	.801		.058	
R^2	.610			

Table 6 indicates the effect of self-regulated learning on motivation. The dependent variable was regressed on the predicting variable to test the hypothesis. Self-regulated learning predicted motivation, $F(1, 121) = 189.46$, $p<.001$. This indicates that self-regulated learning can play a significant positive role in shaping motivation ($\beta =.781$, $p<.001$). Moreover, $R^2 =.610$ indicates that the variable explained 61% of the variance in motivation. Self-regulated learning was a strong predictor of motivational beliefs.

Discussion

Our study investigated public university learners' perspectives on self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs, addressing four research questions. This part of the discussion is relevant to the first research question. The analysis of this study found that male and female undergraduate students had a moderate level of intrinsic motivation and cognitive strategy use in their learning (Table 3). This result is understandable because EFL learners of both genders at Kandahar University are not professionally trained and developed to become self-regulated learners at a high level. The result of this study is in line with the result from Tek, Baharom and Saad's (2011) study, which showed that intrinsic motivation was not affected by gender. Another result found in this study is that test anxiety affects both genders (Table 3). Students in both groups were considered to have high test anxiety. Male and female learners are both likely to experience some fear and be unable to complete a test properly. This finding accords with Saija (2019), who identified that test anxiety is quite common among undergraduate students.

Our results for the second research question identified that there is no difference in terms of self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs among different educational levels of EFL learners at Kandahar University. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and senior EFL learners had the same attitudes regarding self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs. However, our literature screening revealed some studies on variables influencing the self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs of EFL learners. For example, Alotumi (2021) found that the majority of the junior and senior EFL learners reported themselves as having medium regulation of their learning and seeking other ways to boost their learning.

Moreover, considering the third research question, our study found that all of these dimensions are related. It means that if EFL learners at Kandahar University feel motivated and self-regulated in one dimension, they are more likely to be motivated and self-regulated in other dimensions. To be more specific, if EFL learners are motivated in their learning, they tend to be more self-regulated learners. This finding is corroborated by Adesola and Li (2018), who investigated the relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulation, and test anxiety. They indicated that self-efficacy was found to be highly correlated with cognitive strategy use and self-regulation, indicating that students who report high self-regulation also applied cognitive strategy and self-efficacy in achieving their goals. As to the fourth research question, the analysis of the regression further discovered that self-regulated learning strategies produced significant predictive effects on motivational beliefs. This means that self-regulated learning plays an essential role in building motivational beliefs to ensure the academic success of EFL learners. This finding aligns strongly with Zumbrunn, Tadlock and Roberts (2011), who found that when EFL learners apply suitable self-regulated learning strategies, they are more likely to become motivated to learn. This is further supported by Pintrich (2000), who believed that self-regulated learning plays the role of a catalyst for EFL learners to retain motivational beliefs. On the other hand, a lack of self-regulation causes weak motivation (Aksan, 2009). Therefore, self-regulation and motivational beliefs should go hand in hand for becoming successful EFL learners in the classroom (Teng, 2021).

Conclusion

The main purpose of this survey was to explore EFL learners' self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs at one of the public universities in Afghanistan, and present a contextualised view of self-regulated learning skills. Self-regulated learning in foreign language learning is not only considered an individual capability; it is also viewed as a process of personal and environmental events. This study, framed Bandura's social cognitive theory, investigated self-regulated learning strategies and motivational beliefs empirically. Findings revealed that there were no differences in terms of demographics, such as gender, or year stage of degree study. Based on the findings, the majority of the learners, male and female, were highly self-regulated. Very few of the learners considered themselves to be low-level self-regulated learners. The results of this research also revealed that if EFL learners are self-regulated and motivated in one area, they are likewise self-regulated and motivated in other categories. It was also found that learners with a high degree of self-regulated learning skills can experience psychological freedom from

motivational beliefs. Therefore, interest in better self-regulated learning abilities has been associated with motivational beliefs.

Based on the findings of the present investigation, some pedagogical implications are recommended. In the first place, foreign language learning can be augmented by tailoring environments in a way that promotes self-regulated learning skills. More importantly, teaching techniques may be advantageous for language education contexts that assist EFL learners to overcome language learning stress. Furthermore, EFL learners should record their learning process by writing portfolios to help turn themselves into self-regulated learners.

However, this research has three limitations, along with recommendations for future research. First, the measures of motivation and self-regulation relied on the Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) MSLQ instrument developed for junior high school students. Other commonly cited instruments developed in the area of higher education by Pintrich et al. (1993) could have been considered besides the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. Second, this survey was conducted in June 2022 before Afghanistan's new Taliban Government initiated major changes in higher education policies later in 2022, and further research will be needed into changes in self-regulated learning and motivational beliefs in the new policy environment. Third, the data collection procedure was problematic, and the sample size was very small. As a result, there might have been dishonest and rushed responses, which may affect the findings. To increase the reliability of participants' responses, the questionnaire should be short.

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Appendix 1

Prior to administration, the questionnaire was presented to two experts in the field of education for constructive feedback to establish validity, ensure that correct wording was used, and address grammatical errors that could influence the result of the study. Some minor improvements were adopted. For example, the demographic information of learners was included. From the total of 44 items in the MSLQ, one or two sample items from each of the five scales are given below to assist readers who may lack ready access to the MSLQ (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). These items used a seven-point Likert-type scale: 1=very untrue of me; 2=untrue of me; 3=somewhat untrue of me; 4=neutral; 5=somewhat true of me; 6=true of me; and 7=very true of me.

MSLQ scale		Item no.	Item
Motivational beliefs	Self-efficacy	2	Compared with other students in this class, I expect to do well.
		7	I am certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course.
	Intrinsic value	1	I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things.
		5	It is important for me to learn what is being taught in this class.
	Test anxiety	14	I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take a test.
Self-regulated learning strategies	Cognitive strategy use	33	It is hard for me to decide what the main ideas are in what I read.
		35	When I study, I put important ideas into my own words.
	Self-regulation	32	I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying.

Hashmatullah Tareen *MEd TESL* is a Senior Teaching Assistant in the Department of English at Kandahar University, Kandahar, Afghanistan. He has a masters degree in teaching English as a second language from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Shah Alam, Malaysia. He is currently a PhD student in curriculum and methodology at Shaanxi Normal University, Xian, China. His areas of research are teaching and learning, student-centred learning in higher education.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8808-2618
Email: hashmatt2@gmail.com

Mohammad Tahir Haand received his BA in English language and literature and MA degree in linguistics from Osmania University, India, in 2018. Mr Haand is a lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature, Education Faculty, Kandahar University, Afghanistan.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4142-2619
Email: tahirhaand@gmail.com

Attaullah Mohammadi is currently a lecturer in Pashto Language and Literature Department, Education Faculty, Kandahar University, Afghanistan. He received his bachelor and masters degrees in Pashto Language and Literature from the same Department at Kandahar University.
Email: atta.muhammadi@gmail.com

BaoHui Zhang (corresponding author) is a professor in the Faculty of Education, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, China. His teaching and research is at the intersection of educational technology, science education, teacher education, and the learning sciences. He is East-Asia Association for Science Education (EASE) 2021 Distinguished Contribution Award winner.
Email: baohui.zhang@snnu.edu.cn