

# Factors that Make Pupils have High Motivation in Learning History: Pupils' Perspectives

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the factors that make pupils have high motivation in learning History at Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Bonus. The objectives of this study are to explore the factors that contribute to high motivation in learning History among Year 5 pupils at Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Bonus and to identify the most dominant factor in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among pupils in learning History. The participants of this study consisted of 5 pupils from year 6 primary students in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Bonus who have been selected using grades which are 3 best pupils, 1 average and 1 below average pupil in learning History. This research instrument is an adapted semi-structured question to collect narrative data which has been validated by content experts and has good reliability value. Data collected was analysed using a thematic approach. This research has applied the Gardner (2005) Motivation Theory in observing the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to high motivation of pupils in learning History. The findings show that extrinsic factors influenced students' high motivation and interest more towards learning History. Extrinsic factors are external to the student and can include rewards, praise, recognition, which can motivate students to learn History. This study has helped identify several important factors, namely personal attitude, teacher influence, friends influence and parental influence which are among the factors that can contribute to pupils' high motivation in learning History. Factor which is teachers' assistance has predominantly become the main factors in learning History. Despite the weak relationship, these findings support teachers' attention to the factors that contribute to students' high motivation in an effort to improve student performance in learning. This study found that extrinsic factors play a significant role in motivating students to learn History. Further research can investigate the specific types of extrinsic factors that are most effective in motivating students to learn History.

**Keywords:** High Motivation, Factors, Learning, History, Pupils

## Introduction

History subject was introduced in 2014 in primary schools for level two pupils to inculcate pupils' understanding of History subjects from an early stage so that pupils acquire and master the knowledge and skills of history. Yassin (2011), in his work entitled "Muhyiddin Yassin's Perspective", once stated that "Living without knowing History is like living without a country". This statement shows the government's emphasis on the subject of history where

the importance of history can produce citizens who love the country. However, there is no denying that the subject of History is less popular among the pupils because it is said to be boring and packed with facts (Ahmad et al., 2009).

Motivation is important in a pupil, especially when learning something. Motivation also drives a pupil's learning style to improve pupil achievement. This can be seen in the study of Hamid et al (2008), who explained that a pupil's learning style is strongly driven by motivation, where motivation plays a vital role in raising awareness among pupils to master their learning. The outstanding achievement of a pupil depends on how the pupil motivates himself.

Pupils' achievement is influenced by learning motivation. Without motivation, a person learns without direction. Therefore, pupil achievement is unsatisfactory. On the other hand, highly motivated pupils will have a goal at the end of their learning. This high goal will motivate the pupil to build outstanding achievements as well as will motivate them to work harder. Most pupils learn due to some impulse that leads them to continue learning. In the study by Hamdan, et al (2007), pupils learn due to several factors that motivate them to continue learning, among the factors are recognition and certification. In order to get recognition, motivation needs to be built first before going on to achieve and obtain the planned goals.

According to Noels (2002), the shaping factors of motivation are divided into two categories. The first is intrinsic orientation, which refers to satisfaction and a sense of fun either because of the expansion of knowledge, self -achievement or acquiring an exhilarating experience. Second is extrinsic orientations that occur due to external returns such as getting a degree, jobs, gifts and so on. Gilakjani, et al (2012) described the most important thing when it comes to formation of motivation is a sense of passion. Five initial attempts which can be made to nurture motivation in students include increasing their expectations of success, enhancing their goals, making learning materials related to them and forming their realistic beliefs (Gilakjani, et al., 2012).

This study is concerned with the factors that make pupils highly motivated to learn History for SK Seri Bonus school pupils. The study factors focus on external and internal factors, as well as the relationship between internal and external factors and demographic factors. In this study, there are several problems that can be associated with the level of high learning motivation of Year 6 pupils in learning History.

### **Problem Statement**

Since most pupils are reported to be unmotivated by the process of teaching and studying history subjects, it is evident that this is one of the problems with history education that professors frequently point out. This has led to negative opinions that history courses are uninteresting (Jamil, 2003). This issue is supported by the research of Kaviza (2019), who observed that although history is a crucial topic at the secondary school level and is tested in national exams, Form Four students only exhibit a moderate intrinsic interest in the subject. This is because internal cues like a student's motivation and other internal factors can naturally create intrinsic motivation. This is significant because internal and external sources of motivation, such as a pupil's desire to engage in an activity without anticipating a lesson, can naturally develop intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can be cultivated spontaneously, in his book *Toward A Theory of Instruction*, Bruner (1961) has connected this intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with curiosity drives and the need to acquire formable competencies through learning and experiences that can satisfy pupils. This circumstance has demonstrated that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is a

significant motivator in pupils to develop a particular strength and drive to achieve academic and personal greatness (Mok, 2008; Woolfolk, 2006). This is so that a pupil can study continuously with self-motivation, with the aid of the teacher's direction and in a self-directed manner.

However, the researcher's review of the literature found that factors such as demographics, attitudes, readiness to learn, cognitive abilities, intelligence quotient, parents' influence, teachers' influence, friends' influence and methods have an impact on how much pupils' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation increases or decreases (Kaviza, 2019). However, to what extent the aspect of motivation factors can affect the nurturing of an intrinsic and extrinsic motivation effective among pupils is still unknown.

In Malaysia, many studies on motivations among pupils have been conducted at the school level. Studies have reported that motivations among pupils at the primary school level are still low. Most primary school pupils contribute to poor academic achievement in assignments and examinations due to a lack of motivation. A pupil can achieve excellent academic achievement when they have high motivation. However, scientific byproducts and technological inventions have contributed to the decline in active learning among pupils and motivation to learn (Owusu-Achew & Larson, 2014). The existence of mass media such as television, the internet and video games has resulted in pupils no longer or less showing interest in having motivations to learn History. Pupils only read or learn History if necessary, for example, to take an exam, do an assignment or perform a task that requires us to read. Furthermore, many teachers are still unsure what factors influence pupils' high motivation in learning History. Thus, there is a need in this study to identify factors that make pupils have high motivation in learning history from pupils' perspectives.

### **Literature Review**

Motivation refers to self desire to do something. According to Siraj (1996), motivation is the motivator of the will and desire to succeed or to achieve a goal. Motivation is also said to be a plan of success for a person or a plan to avoid failure. Important aspects of motivation are that pupils can do something voluntarily to achieve their goals. Pupils are also willing to engage intensively in activities according to the goal direction and survive for a period of time to ensure that the goal is achieved. With the presence of motivation, pupils can achieve satisfaction and enjoyment in learning tasks as well aware of the importance of deep learning in their lives. However, without the willingness to learn, learning will not happen. The desire to learn depends on motivation; thus, motivation is essential to mobilise learning. Every individual can be motivated intrinsically or extrinsically.

Motivation consists of 2 types; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a motive that arises from within to do something. According to Sardiman (2010: 89), intrinsic motivation is the motive that becomes active or functions unnecessarily stimulated from the outside because within each individual they have the urge to do something. According to Ryan (1985), humans are intrinsically motivated when they perceive themselves as capable and can make their own decisions. Intrinsic individual behaviour is controlled in itself. Self directly does not allow others or external events to affect it. Motivated people intrinsically define goals and strive to reach them. There is no compulsion to make something. If coercion occurs, then perception will decrease.

Extrinsic motivation is created from external stimuli to mobilise individuals to perform an activity that brings benefits to them. Views from Gardner and Lambert (1972: 3) state that extrinsic motivation is an integrative motivation that encourages a person to learn something,

especially a language, because they are eager to communicate with the target language community. This extrinsic motivation can be stimulated in various forms such as compliments, incentives, prizes, grades and shaping the atmosphere and climate of the environment conducive to encouraging pupils to learn. For example, parents give praise to children because good action will result in the child's effort being increased. This matter creates an affirmation in the individual, an extrinsic motivation that can affect a pupil's behaviour. Extrinsically motivated people do not consider themselves capable or intelligent to make their own decisions. Their behaviour is usually controlled by others. Sometimes they equate themselves with people who are more qualified than those to benefit from those abilities. Extrinsically motivated pupils always think about the teacher's opinion if their work is unsatisfactory. Not all individuals are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.

Kaviza (2009) carried out a study named Intrinsic Motivation Among Level Four Students in History Subject. The results of the study showed that a moderate level of intrinsic motivation among pupils who took history subjects is consistent with the study of Awang, et.al (2016), who explained that high motivation to study history is related significantly with the use of multimedia materials in the process of teaching and learning history. This is because the intrinsic motivation generated in students allows them to learn history more efficiently while enabling them to understand the content or topic in the history subject in more depth. Therefore, all constructs in intrinsic motivation that are at a moderate level indicate that pupils already have and generate aspects of interest, perception of competence, effort, stress, perception of choice, usefulness and relevance as they carry out the process of teaching and learning history. This is in line with the opinion of Ryan and Deci (2000), who suggested that an individual can be said to be motivated if they master at least three constructs in measured intrinsic motivation. This is because, with the interest and encouragement from within, the pupil will always be motivated and have high confidence in learning the subject of interest by solving all the problems and difficulties that have been encountered to achieve the desired learning goals (Brophy, 1998).

Next is the study by Ismail and Zakaria (2009) entitled Factors that influence Malay language learning motivation among students in SJKC Chung Hwa Teluk Kemang. This study identified the factors influencing Chinese students' motivation to learn the Malay language and analyzed the most dominant factors in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation based on the Chinese students studied. The results of this study show that extrinsic factors more influence the motivation and interest of students in learning Malay as a second language in school. This is because peers who often help and be a reference for students constitute a significant factor in improving Malay language proficiency among these students. A total of 93.33% of students agreed with the statement. Next, the factor that got the second-highest percentage was the teacher teaching factor. Teachers who plan and implement various activities in the classroom are a factor that attracts students to continue to follow learning in the classroom.

Apart from that, Maarof et.al (2020) conducted a study titled 'iTRACK In Teaching and Learning History: An Overview Of Student Motivation'. An adapted iTRACK (Intelligent Tracking) game from the Snake and Ladder game has been used in the classroom with the aim of see the extent to which students are motivated in studying the subject of History. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that in general the game based learning (PBL) such as iTRACK which has been used as a pilot study study) has had a positive effect on the motivation of Basic 3 and Level 2 students.

The study Factors Affecting Motivation in Language Learning conducted by Rahman et al (2019) identified the factors contributing to motivation in learning English among 80

students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Lepar Utara. The instrument of the study was a questionnaire adapted from (Amin et al., 2001). Findings showed that teachers' influence, personal attitude, and parental influence affect students' motivation to learn a second language.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the current study is as follows

- i) To explore the factors that contribute to high motivation in learning History
- ii) To identify the most dominant factor in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among pupils in learning History

### **Methodology**

The study was in the form of qualitative research and was conducted in one primary school in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur. The participants of this study consisted of 5 pupils from year six primary students in Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Bonus who have been selected using grades of 3 best pupils, 1 average and 1 below average pupil in learning History. The interview protocol questions of this study were constructed in the form of open-ended questions, i.e. study participants were free to express their views based on the questions given without restriction. The validity of the interview protocol can be seen by asking several experts to evaluate and review the constructed protocol questions. According to Yin (1994), expert validation is important to ensure that the interview protocol is reliable. To see the reliability of the interview data conducted, the researcher used the Cohen Kappa Reliability Index calculation method as proposed by (Yin, 1994). The researcher will request the services of an expert to review and comment on the interview protocol that the researcher has completed. The expert is the one who has expertise in basic and qualitative research. The questions posed are more focused on the purpose of the research. The researcher will record the entire interview of the study participants to ensure that all the details in the interview are not missed. The recording will be made using an MP3 audio recorder. Coding will be done next to the transcript to form and organize themes, subthemes, categories, subcategories, elements and sub-elements. With this, the researcher will reflect and report the study's findings. In addition, for the analysis of interview data, the researcher will make a transcript in verbatim form to make the analysis.

### **Findings and Results**

This qualitative study involved five samples (3 male students, 2 female students) aged 12 years old. The results will be divided into four themes which are personal attitude, teachers' influence, friends' influence and parents' influence.

### **Informants' Profiles**

Informant 1 is a Malay male student. He is an active student in the school and has a good achievement in all subjects. Informant 2 is a Malay female student. She is a good performer in her studies and extracurricular activities. Informant 3 is an Indian male student. Informant 4 is a Malay female student. Finally, informant 5 is a Malay male student.

**Theme 1: Personal Attitude***Pupils' Motivation*

The study found that Year 6 pupils were motivated to learn History because they had a positive attitude toward the subject. In addition, pupils discover that they are interested and motivated to learn History if they listen to historical stories. Pupils' motivation in learning History also can be seen when they are always present during History classes, raise their hands to answer questions and focus during teaching. This statement can be detected through the results of interviews with pupils as follows

"I learn History out of curiosity." (S5)

"I like to listen to historical stories." (S2)

"I wonder how historical events happened in the past. For example, the war...ahh...um...how we got independence." (S4)

"... I'll always raise my hands to answer questions related to History subject in class... " (S3)

Pupils find that understanding the History contents will only occur if the pupils learn History throughout the stories. Learning History facts was also found to enable pupils to remember them better in stories, as detected through the results of interviews of pupil study participants:

"If we like to listen to stories, we can understand well about History." (S3)

"... if I learn History through stories, it will set in my mind." (S2)

*Time table*

Another finding of this study is that the strategy of making a study timetable is closely related to having high motivation to learn History among pupils. Pupils who once had and followed a study timetable found that they did not miss studying or learning. This timetable serves as a reminder to study History among pupils.

"If I make a schedule to study, ah .. I will not miss learning History." (S2)

The study found that when pupils make a timetable, they will choose the appropriate and correct time to study. This act can avoid the obstacles pupils may encounter in learning History. For example, Year 6 pupils who sit for examinations will have many additional classes and tuitions to attend. In this overly busy time, they have less time to learn History. If they make a timetable, they will determine the right time to study calmly and freely without hindrance. The pupil participants explained through the following interviews:

"This timetable will encourage me to ... to study at the right time." (S3)

"If I make a schedule, I'll know what to do at a certain time." (S4)

*Environment*

Study participants of Year 6 pupils were very sensitive to the choice of the learning environment in ensuring that the learning takes place effectively. For example, S1 and S5 pupil participants argued that a distracted environment would disturb their composure to focus on learning History. A pupil should not be confronted with television that broadcasts a particular film. Pupils should study in a relatively quiet place with no disturbances such as noise, television, or radio. This is because such disturbances will interfere with the smooth understanding of learning the subject.

"... if we study in front of the television..for example, the topic...the formation of Malaysia..we will lose focus to study... focus will drop." (S5)



"...If you are in a noisy environment, that time... ahh .. the focus on studying will be disturbed. Ah. Can't focus to study History." (S1)

On the other hand, a quiet environment, less disturbance of people, and good ventilation will motivate pupils to study History and create a productive learning atmosphere. If a pupil can learn History in a comfortable sitting environment, they can concentrate fully on their study. This was acknowledged by the study participants when interviewed; he said: "If we study History in a quiet environment, we will have the motivation to study History." (S1)

"... an environment where there are no people" (S5)

## Theme 2: Teachers' Influence

Teachers play an important role in motivating and guiding pupils to learn History. The teaching and guidance provided by the teacher allow the pupil to strive to learn History. Pupils can improve their learning in History when the teacher provides better teaching and guidance for pupils. In addition, the teacher's guide will enable pupils to understand the historical facts to improve their academic achievement. This statement is found in the following interview results

"I like my History teacher. Because she teaches well. She tells stories a lot about History." (S2)

"My history teacher uses different methods in teaching History. She uses story telling, shows photos and videos, conducts games,...aa... group works... and many more.... this really motivates me to learn more about History" (S1)

In addition, teachers also use positive reinforcement such as gifts to encourage and motivate pupils to learn History. Gifts are a strategy often used by teachers to increase learning activities among pupils. This gift serves as an encouragement to pupils to study well so that they can get the gift. The implications can be seen when pupils expand their knowledge through learning History and achieve good exam results. This was acknowledged by the S3 and S4 pupil participants:

"If the teachers give gifts... ahh.. It motivates me to learn History... I'll start learning for sure." (S3)

"My teacher will give gifts if we answer questions correctly... ahh... for best group works, get high marks in exams. It motivates us to learn History." (S4)

## Theme 3: Friends' Influence

The findings of the study found that the study participants of Year 6 pupils had a group of pupils to study and discuss the topics in History. When pupils are involved in an active group of pupils studying, it is easier for them to get motivated and understand the topics better. In addition, they can share their thoughts with their friends. This statement was also acknowledged by the S1 pupil participant, who stated that:

"... once discussed... I can share my thoughts or ideas with them. For example, about such higher-order thinking skills questions. These questions are very hard to answer. So...if I discuss with my friends, it's easier to answer them. Ahhh... I'll get motivated to learn History from this." (S1)

Through this group of pupils, pupils can expand their knowledge and information about the History subject through their peers. In this group of pupils, pupils chose their peers

to study together or have a discussion because of similar age factors. As a result, they are more comfortable asking or discussing History topics with their peers, as identified in the interview:

"If I study History... I will learn from my friends. They will also study together. Like ...discuss stories together... History is fun to learn if we study together in group" (S3)

#### **Theme 4: Parents' influence**

##### *Parents As Role Model*

Parents play an important role in motivating and encouraging their children to cultivate learning History. According to the study participants, parental encouragement can be seen in various ways, such as teaching History at home and telling their children the importance of learning history. This clearly shows that this parental encouragement cultivates interest and motivates pupils in learning History. This can also be supported by pupil study participants when interviewed:

"My mother always encourages me to learn History... My mother also a History teacher. So she will teach me history topics and tell stories that happened in past... So, I also like to learn history. " (S1)

"... They will teach me when I have History subject homework. They motivate me a lot. " (S3)

This statement shows that parents are the primary motivators in cultivating learning habits among their children. This encouragement can be given when parents become learning models by reading or learning History at home. When a child observes the behaviour of a learning parent, then they follow the parent by studying or leaning on their own. With this, pupils are aware of the importance of learning habits that influence their academic achievement. This statement was acknowledged by the study participants of S1 pupil when interviewed:

"My parents will also study History. But they didn't ask me to study. I will study myself ... Maybe I study myself because..ahh..already..already used to seeing my parents always studying at home. Therefore, I will also sit and study History. " (S1)

##### *Book Buying Habits*

Parents are the main support to their children by buying books for their children to learn History. Through this, pupils can be exposed to History books that allow them to study History. Pupils' motivation and interest in learning History can also be seen when their parents encourage their children to buy books that motivate them. This was stated by pupil participants during the interviews:

"... if I want to get a History book, my father will buy it." (S5)

"... if I go to the store, I will not buy just one book. I will buy 2 books. Because my mother is also a History teacher. So she will give many History books " (S1)

#### **Discussion**

Motivation plays a vital role in pupils' learning habits for History subject. Without motivation in learning, a pupil cannot concentrate fully on the learning process. Year 6 pupils show interest in learning History due to many factors. The findings shows that intrinsic motivation positively affects perceived learning History among Year 6 pupils. Having high motivation in learning History is closely related to personal attitude towards learning. Attitudes toward learning increase the interest and motivation in learning History, which in turn forms learning habits among pupils. This statement is supported by Ismail and Zakaria



(2019); positive reinforcement shapes motivation and the ability to discipline pupils. So, Year 6 pupils were found to have positive attitudes such as attending History classes, knowing the purpose of learning History, wanting to improve self-development and being interested in learning History without instructions and coercion from any party such as parents and teachers. Linsah & Mahamod (2018) explained that the pupil's acceptance of activities in the classroom could create interest deep in the learning of a subject. This clearly shows that positive and motivated pupils can increase their desire to learn History. This statement is supported by Chapman & Vagle (2011), who said students motivated to learn would have an exciting attitude to knowledge, that is, wanting to know something in depth. With this, pupils can form learning habits for History by getting good academic results. This is supported by Ainun's study (2017), who stated that pupils who are actively involved in learning have high motivation and lesson achievement in a subject can be improved. A pupil will not have the desire or initiative to learn without interest and motivation in learning. This prevents pupils from doing well in exams. This has similarities with Annamalai's (1994) study of pupils' interest in learning and its relation to academic achievement. According to him, pupils with high motivation in learning can display good academic achievement. Thus, pupils with a higher level of intrinsic motivation are more likely to evaluate themselves as learning a great deal in the course and having more positive feelings toward learning History.

Findings also shows that teachers are one of the extrinsic factors that stimulate pupils to have high motivation in learning History. The presentation techniques and strategies used by the teachers are able to attract pupils' interest in continuing to learn History. The capacity of teachers to pique the attention of and encourage participation from pupils in their education generally (Klem & Connell, 2004) is thought to be crucial for a sustained academic achievement (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Teachers strive to motivate their pupils so that they will be interested and engaged during class and will continue valuing the material well into the future (Gibbens, 2019). Moreover, awards and positive reinforcement such as gifts helped to engage pupils' motivation in learning History. These findings are consistent with the findings obtained by Azizi and Jaafar (2006) who said that teachers should always give positive reinforcement to students in learning process. This statement is also supported by a study by Mardian and Marniyati (2011) who say teachers play an important role in determining the learning process goes on conducive and effective atmosphere. According to Sternberg & William (2002), who agreed with the study's findings, pupils are not motivated to learn when their teachers resort to traditional methods of teaching. They need to create a positive environment and develop fun activities that allow pupils to learn History.

The results of the study showed that friends have a moderate influence on pupils' motivation towards learning History. Pupils' are motivated to learn History if they discuss the topics with their friends. This is evidenced by Ismail and Zakaria (2019), who stated most students like to ask friends and ask help from their friends to complete assignments in the classroom. This matter has also been identified by Ahmad and Kamaruddin (2019), who in their study found that pupils who are interested in learning Malay love to ask a friend if they do not understand the content of the lesson.

As for parental influence, findings shows that parents did provide high levels of motivation and support by encouraging pupils to learn History by teaching them at home and buying History books for them. They are role models for attitudes and behaviour that could assist in future success, as well as the development of interests in learning History. The findings of this study are similar to a study by Jeynes (2005) which showed that parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement and that it emerged consistently

regardless of measures. From here we can conclude that pupils with highly involved parents in their education had significantly higher academic achievement scores than students with less involved parents.

### Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that factors that influence the motivation of student learning are divided into intrinsic factors and extrinsic factors. In this study, the most dominant factor affecting students' motivation in learning History is the intrinsic factor. That factor is peers who diligently learned History subjects often the reference and focus of students forget help, as most respondents agree with the statement. Next, the factor that makes pupils have high motivation in learning History is teachers' teaching. The teacher who plans and performs various activities in the room degree is a factor that interests students to continue learning in the room degrees. Next, this study suggests that subsequent studies must be more similarly focused on external or internal factors.

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