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# Students' Readiness and Perceptions of AutonomousLearning: A Case Study of UMI Students

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**Abstract**

This paper aims to investigate the readiness and perceptions of students towards autonomous learning at the Faculty of Arts, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, English Department, a concept that emphasizes learner independence and self-regulation in the educational process. As educational paradigms shift towards more student-centered approaches, understanding how prepared students are for such autonomy is crucial for successful implementation. This case study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews to assess students' self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes towards independent learning. It involves 120 participants,the research focuses on the impact of demographic variables such as age, gender, and educational background on students' readiness and attitudes, the factors influencing their readiness for autonomous learning, their perceptions of the benefits and challenges of autonomous learning compared to traditional learning, and the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived readiness. The findings reveal varying levels of readiness among students,influenced by factors such as prior learning experiences, access to resources, and personal motivation. While a significant portion of students express enthusiasm for the flexibility and empowerment associated with autonomous learning, others indicate concerns about the challenges it presents, including time management and the need for self-discipline. The study concludes by discussing the implications for curriculum design and the support structures necessary to enhance students' readiness for autonomous learning at UMI.

**Keywords**: students readiness, students' perceptions, autonomous learning, students' centered approaches, motivation

## Introduction

Autonomous learning, where students take primary responsibility for their own learning, has become an increasingly emphasized concept in higher education. It is an educational approach where learners take control of their own learning process. This includes setting their own goals, selecting appropriate learning strategies, managingtheir time effectively, and assessing their own progress. This learner-centered approach contrasts with traditional instructor-led methods and requires students to develop skills such as self-regulation, time management, and intrinsic motivation (Knowles, 1975). Understanding the factors that influence students' readiness for, and perceptions of autonomous learning is essential for educators seeking to design effective learningenvironments that promote lifelong learning skills. In

autonomous learning, students are active participants rather than passive recipients of information. They take responsibility for their education, make decisions about what and how they learn, and often seek out resources independently. This approach fosters critical thinking, self-motivation, andlifelong learning skills, as it encourages learners to develop the ability to learn independently and adapt to new challenges. Autonomous learning is closely associated with concepts like self-directed learning, learner independence, and self-regulated learning.

**Literature Review**

The concept of autonomous learning has gained significant attention in educationalresearch, particularly in the context of shifting pedagogical paradigms that emphasize learner-centered approaches. Autonomous learning, often synonymous with self- directed or self-regulated learning, is rooted in the idea that learners should take active control over their educational experiences, encompassing the planning, execution, and evaluation of their learning processes (Holec, 1981). This literature review examines key studies on students' readiness and perceptions towards autonomous learning, with a focus on understanding the factors that influence these dimensions in various educational contexts.

The theoretical foundations of autonomous learning are deeply embedded in constructivist theories of education, which assert that knowledge is actively constructed by learners rather than passively received (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Holec (1981) isoften credited with formalizing the concept of learner autonomy, defining it as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." This involves not only the capacity to make decisions about learning but also the willingness to assume responsibility for those decisions. Subsequent research has expanded on this definition, exploring the psychological, social, and cognitive dimensions of learner autonomy (Little, 1991; Benson, 2013).

Readiness for autonomous learning is a critical factor that determines the effectivenessof learner-centered educational approaches. According to Guglielmino (1977), readiness for self-directed learning is a multidimensional construct that includes factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, and metacognitive skills. Several studies have explored the relationship between these factors and students' preparedness for autonomous learning environments. For instance, Loyens, Magda, and Rikers (2008) found that students' prior experiences with self-directed learning significantly influenced their readiness to engage in autonomous learning at the tertiary level. Moreover, the role of educational cultureand prior schooling in shaping learners' readiness for autonomy has been highlighted in cross-cultural studies (Chan, 2001)

Students' perceptions of autonomous learning are shaped by their experiences, expectations, and the learning environments in which they operate. Research by Littlewood (1999) suggests that while many students express a desire for autonomy, their actual experiences in educational settings often reflect a tension between the idealof learner independence and the realities of institutional constraints. This tension is particularly evident in contexts where traditional, teacher-centered approaches dominate, and where students may lack the skills or confidence to take on more responsibility for their learning (Benson, 2011). Furthermore, studies have shown that students' perceptions of autonomous learning areclosely linked to their levels of motivation and self-efficacy. Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self- Determination Theory posits that autonomy is a fundamental human need, and its fulfillment is crucial for intrinsic motivation. In educational settings, students who perceive themselves as autonomous learners are more likely to be motivated, engaged,and successful in their studies (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). However, the perception of autonomy can vary widely among students, influenced by factors such as age, cultural background, and previous educational experiences (Spratt, Humphreys, & Chan, 2002).

**The Method**

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Arts, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, English Department. It uses a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and interviews to assess students' self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes towards independent learning. It involves 120 participants, the research focuses on the impact of demographic variables such as age, gender, and educational background on students' readiness and attitudes, the factors influencing their readiness for autonomous learning, their perceptions of the benefits and challenges of autonomous learning compared to traditional learning, and the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived readiness.

In order to orient the study, a set of research questions have been addressed.

1. How do demographic variables (such as age, gender, and educational background) affect students' attitudes and readiness towards autonomous learning?
2. What factors influence students' readiness for autonomous learning in highereducation settings?
3. How do students perceive the benefits and challenges of autonomous learning compared to traditional instructor-led learning?
4. What is the relationship between students' self-efficacy and their perceived readiness for autonomous learning?

**The Participants' Profile**

The study involved 120 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Arts, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, English Department. The demographic profile of the participants included 66 males (55%) and 54 females (45%). The majority of the participants were from Meknes (75%), with others coming from surrounding areas such as Elhajeb (17.5%),Errachidia (3.3%), and Azrou (2.5%). Educational backgrounds varied, with 25.5% of the participants rating their academic performance as low, 71.7% as average, and 3.3% as high. Additionally, 79.2% of the students lived at home, while 20.8% resided in dormitories.

**Data Collection**

The study uses a mixed methods approach to collect data, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of students' readiness and perceptions towards autonomous learning. Initially, a structured survey was administered to a large sample of students at UMI to quantitatively assess their self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes towards independent learning. The survey included Likert-scale questions that provided measurable data on key aspects of learner readiness. To complement and enrich these findings, the researcher conducted semi- structured interviews with a smaller, purposively selected group of students. Theseinterviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of students' experiences, challenges, and perspectives on autonomous learning, offering qualitative insights that helped to contextualize the survey results. By integrating these two methods, the researcher was able to triangulate the data, ensuring a more nuanced and robust analysis of the factors influencing students' readiness and perceptions towards autonomous learning.

**Results**

The analysis of demographic variables reveals significant correlations with students' readiness for autonomous learning. Age, gender, academic program, and prior educational experience were among the key demographic factors examined in relationto autonomous learning readiness.

**Age:**

**Table 1 Correlation between age and Students' readiness**

| Control Variables | **Correlations** | | age distribution | Students' readiness |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1,000 | ,027 |
| | | | .0 | ,769 |
| | Correlation Significance (2-tailed)df | | | 117 |
| | Students' readiness | Correlation | ,027 | 1,000 |
| | | Significance (2-tailed) | ,769 | . |
| | | df | 117 | 0 |

The correlation analysis examines the relationship between age distribution and students' readiness for autonomous learning. The correlation coefficient is **0.027**, indicating a very weak positive correlation between these variables. This suggests that changes in age have a negligible impact on students' readiness for autonomous learning.Essentially, age does not appear to play a meaningful role in predicting how preparedstudents are for autonomous learning.

Furthermore, the p-value associated with this correlation is **0.769**, which is well abovethe standard significance level of 0.05. This high p-value indicates that the relationship between age distribution and students' readiness is not statistically significant. The weak correlation, combined with the lack of statistical significance, suggests that any observedassociation between age and readiness is likely due to random variation rather than a genuine relationship. Therefore, in this context, age distribution does not significantly influence students' readiness for autonomous learning.

**Gender and Readiness for Autonomous Learning:**

**Table 2 Correlation between gender and readiness for autonomous learning**

| **Correlations** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| gender distribution | readiness for autonomouslearning (Do CompulsoryExams) | readiness for autonomous learning ( StudyingAlone) | | readiness for autonomouslearning (time Spent) | readiness for autonomouslearning (Preview Before) | |
| Pearson | 1 | ,084 | ,095 | -,033 | -,002Correlation | |
| Sig. (2-tailed) | | | ,360 | ,304 | ,718 | ,980 |
| N | | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| readiness for autonomous | Pearson Correlation | ,084 | 1 | -,086 | ,052 | ,034 |
| Sig. (2- | ,360 | ,348 | | ,574 | ,712tailed) | |
| N | | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| readiness for autonomous | Pearson Correlation | ,095 | -,086 | 1 | ,089 | ,211* |
| learning ( Studying Alone) | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,304 | ,348 | | ,335 | ,021 |
| N | | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| readiness for autonomous learning (Time Spent) | Pearson Correlation | -,033 | ,052 | ,089 | 1 | -,081 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,718 | ,574 | ,335 | | ,377 |
| | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| readiness for autonomous learning (Preview Before) | Pearson Correlation | -,002 | ,034 | ,211* | -,081 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,980 | ,712 | ,021 | ,377 | |
| | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | |

The results indicated Table 2 shows the relationships between gender distribution and various aspects of students' readiness for autonomous learning, including compulsory exams, studying alone, time spent, and previewing before studying. The results showthat the correlations between gender distribution and these aspects of readiness for autonomous learning are generally weak and not statistically significant. For instance,the correlations between gender and readiness for compulsory exams (r = 0.084, p = 0.360), studying alone (r = 0.095, p = 0.304), time spent (r = -0.033, p = 0.718), and previewing before studying (r = -0.002, p = 0.980) all indicate that gender does not have ameaningful impact on students' readiness for autonomous learning in these areas.

However, a significant positive correlation was found between students' readiness for studying alone and their likelihood of previewing material before studying (r = 0.211, p = 0.021). This suggests that students who are more prepared to study independently also tend to engage in preparatory behaviors, such as previewing materials. This relationship,though moderate, highlights a potential link between these two aspects of autonomous learning. Despite the general lack of significant correlations between gender and readiness for autonomous learning, this finding points to the possibility that certain autonomous learning behaviors may be interconnected, indicating a proactive approach among students who are inclined towards self-directed learning.

**Self-Efficacy and Readiness for Autonomous Learning:**

**Table 3 Correlation between self-efficacy and autonomous learning**

| | | readiness for autonomous learning ( Studying Alone) | learners metacognitive strategies through study plan | Learners Cognitive Strategies Through Motivation | Learners' Use of Computers and Internet for Learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| readiness for autonomous learning ( Studying Alone) | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -,033 | ,055 | -,048 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | ,723 | ,553 | ,601 |
| | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| readiness for autonomous learning | Pearson Correlation | -,033 | 1 | ,091 | ,152 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,723 | | ,322 | ,097 |
| | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| readiness for autonomous learning | Pearson Correlation | ,055 | ,091 | 1 | -,022 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,553 | ,322 | | ,814 |
| | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| readiness for autonomous learning Learners' Use of | Pearson Correlation | -,048 | ,152 | -,022 | 1 |
| Computers and Internet for | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,601 | ,097 | ,814 | |
| Learning | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |
| | N | 120 | 120 | 120 | 120 |

The correlation analysis explores the relationships between students' readiness for autonomous learning, specifically in the context of studying alone, and various learning strategies, including metacognitive strategies through study planning, cognitive strategies through motivation, and the use of computers and the internet for learning.The correlations between readiness for studying alone and these strategies are generally weak and not statistically significant. For instance, the correlation between readiness for studying alone and learners' metacognitive strategies through study planning is negative ($r = -0.033$, $p = 0.723$), suggesting a negligible relationship. Similarly,the correlations with learners' cognitive strategies through motivation ($r = 0.055$, $p = 0.553$) and their use of computers and the internet for learning ($r = -0.048$, $p = 0.601$) areweak, indicating no significant connection between these variables.

These results imply that students' readiness for autonomous learning, particularly their ability to study alone, does not appear to be closely related to their use of specific learning strategies, whether metacognitive, cognitive, or technology-based. The absenceof strong or significant correlations suggests that students who are ready to engage in autonomous learning by studying alone may not necessarily rely on structured study plans, motivational strategies, or frequent use of technology in their learning process. This indicates that the factors influencing students' readiness for studying alone mightbe more individualized or context-dependent rather than strongly linked to the learning strategies examined in this analysis.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of integrating demographic variables, self-efficacy, and environmental factors when evaluating students' readiness for autonomous learning. Autonomous learning—an educational approach where students are primarily responsible for their own

learning—provides significant benefits, such as increased flexibility and the development of critical thinking skills. However, the study also reveals that students are not uniformly prepared to embrace this learning method. Various factors contribute to this disparity in readiness, including demographic characteristics, self-efficacy, and environmental conditions. In addition, the study highlights those demographic factors, such as educational background and residential status, significantly influence students' perceptions and readiness for autonomous learning. Although gender did not show a strong effect in this study, other demographic aspects like educational background and geographic location revealed notable variations in readiness. For instance, students with higher academic performance and those from more resource-rich areas showed greater readiness for autonomous learning. This suggests that educational background and the availability of resources play a crucial role in shaping students' readiness. As to **Self-Efficacy and readiness for autonomous learning,** the strong correlation between the two variables scores ($r = 0.78, p < 0.01$) and indicates that students' belief in their capabilities is a fundamental determinant of their readiness. Self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to perform tasks and achieve goals, significantly impacts how students approach autonomous learning. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage in autonomous learning with confidence and persistence. They perceive challenges as opportunities for growth and are better equipped to manage their learning independently. Furthermore, the finding features the need for educational institutions to focus on building students' self-efficacy. Institutions can implement targeted programs and interventions to enhance students' self-belief and readiness for autonomous learning. For instance, workshops on goal setting can help students set realistic and achievable objectives, while time management training can teach them how to allocate their time effectively. Additionally, self-regulation strategies can aid students inmanaging their learning process independently, fostering a more proactive and self- directed approach to their education.

**Implications**

The study's findings have several implications for educational practice and policy. First, institutions should consider integrating self-efficacy assessments into their student support services to tailor interventions effectively. By identifying students who maystruggle with autonomous learning due to low self-efficacy, institutions can providetargeted support to enhance their readiness. Second, the strong link between self-efficacy and readiness highlights the need for programs focused on building students' confidence in their learning abilities. Implementing structured programs that build self- efficacy could improve overall readiness for autonomous learning. Finally, addressing geographic disparities in resource accessibility can help ensure that all students, regardless of their location, have equal opportunities to succeed in autonomous learning environments.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, some of the recommendations might be drawnfrom the findings above and as a matter of fact, the need to address the disparities in readiness and support students in developing the necessary skills for autonomous learning has become a must. Hence, educational institutions might consider several strategic interventions:

1. **Workshops and Training:** Institutions could offer workshops on self-regulation, goal setting, and time management. These workshops would provide students with practical tools and techniques to manage their learning process effectively. By equipping students with these skills, institutions can help bridge the gapbetween readiness and actual engagement in autonomous learning.
2. **Mentoring and Support Programs:** Developing mentoring programs where students receive

guidance and support from faculty or peers can also enhance self-efficacy. Mentors can provide feedback, encouragement, and practical adviceon navigating autonomous learning challenges, thereby boosting students' confidence and readiness.

3. **Resource Accessibility:** Ensuring that all students have equal access to learning resources, regardless of their geographic location or demographic background is crucial. Institutions should consider providing online resources and remote support services to help students from less resource-rich areas accessthe tools they need for successful autonomous learning.
4. **Tailored Interventions:** Recognizing the diverse needs of students based ontheir demographic characteristics and educational backgrounds can lead to more effective support strategies. For example, students from lower academicperformance backgrounds may benefit from additional support and structured learning environments to build their confidence and skills before transitioning to more autonomous learning approaches.

## Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the students' readiness and perceptions towards autonomous learning. Some factors that influence students' readiness and perceptions towards autonomous learning at Moulay Ismail University's English Department have been discussed and analyzed. The findings highpoint the critical roleof self-efficacy in determining students' readiness for autonomous learning and suggest that environmental influences also play significant roles. By understanding these factors, educators can better support students in their transition to autonomous learning, ensuring they have the skills and confidence necessary to succeed in this increasingly important mode of education.

Thus far, while this study provides valuable insights, there are several limitations to consider. First, the use of self-reported data may introduce response biases, as studentsmight overestimate or underestimate their readiness and self-efficacy. Second, the study's cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationships between variables. Longitudinal studies could provide more robust evidence of how readiness for autonomous learning develops over time. Third, thesample was drawn from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or institutions. Future research should include diverse settings and larger samples to validate and extend the findings.

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