

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Theoretical Review

1. Theory Motivation of: Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a well-established motivational theory developed by Deci and Ryan in the 1980s to explain human behavior based on psychological needs and the quality of motivation. SDT classifies motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic forms. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for the inherent satisfaction, it brings while extrinsic motivation is influenced by external rewards or pressures (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theory is widely applied in educational research, including in language learning contexts, to understand what drives students to perform academic tasks such as thesis writing.

In the context of this study, SDT is used as the foundational theory to examine EFL students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in completing their undergraduate thesis. SDT posits that human motivation is deeply influenced by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). These three needs are essential for optimal functioning, growth, and well-being.

1. Autonomy refers to the sense of volition and willingness when engaging in an activity. In the context of thesis writing, this may manifest as students' freedom in selecting research topics or methods that align with their interests.
2. Competence relates to the feeling of effectiveness in one's actions. When students feel capable and supported during the thesis process, their intrinsic motivation is likely to increase.
3. Relatedness describes the sense of being connected and supported by others. Positive interactions with peers and supervisors can fulfill this need and enhance motivational engagement.

According to Deci and Ryan (2017), when these three needs are met, individuals tend to show higher levels of intrinsic motivation and persistence

in academic tasks. For EFL students, the challenge of writing a thesis in a second language can be emotionally and cognitively demanding. Therefore, applying SDT allows this study to explore how internal desires and external factors interact in motivating students to complete their thesis.

In this research, SDT serves as a lens to analyze interview responses and uncover what drives EFL students: whether they are internally motivated by interest and personal growth, or externally driven by grades, family expectations, or future career aspirations. The use of SDT also provides a structured framework for categorizing motivational factors into meaningful dimensions, contributing to a deeper understanding of students' academic behaviors in thesis writing.

2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations in Academic Context

The investigation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within academic contexts presents an important area of study relevant to understanding how student motivation affects academic performance. Both types of motivation are essential in educational settings, exerting significant influences on a student's engagement and ultimately their academic success. In academic settings, motivation is widely recognized as a key psychological factor that influences how students learn, persist, and perform.

Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in learning activities out of personal interest, enjoyment, or a desire for self-improvement. It is driven by internal rewards and is characterized by doing an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. Key components of intrinsic motivation include:

1. Autonomy: the sense of having control over one's own learning process.
2. Competence: the feeling of being effective and capable in one's tasks.
3. Relatedness: the sense of connection with others or with the learning environment.

These components are outlined in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and are considered fundamental psychological needs that, when satisfied, enhance intrinsic motivation.

Numerous studies confirm that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with academic performance. The framework by (Zhang & Hu, 2025) highlights how perceived teacher support can bolster students' intrinsic motivation, leading to enhanced engagement and academic success. This is corroborated by the findings of (Malkoç & Mutlu, 2018), who showed that students exhibiting high intrinsic motivation also possess greater self-efficacy, which further impacts their performance favorably. The repeated suggestion across the literature is that intrinsic motivation not only boosts academic results but also promotes a sustainable interest in learning.

Similarly, intrinsic motivation was significantly associated with higher self-efficacy and learning engagement among medical students, which further enhances their academic performance (Abdulrahman et al., 2023). Research consistently demonstrates that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with academic performance. For example, (Kotera et al., 2021) found that intrinsic motivation among UK graduate students significantly relates to greater academic achievement and higher retention rates. Similarly, (Wilkesmann & Vorberg, 2021) reported that university faculty are generally intrinsically motivated, indicating an environment that fosters enthusiasm and personal satisfaction in teaching. Recent studies emphasize the positive impact of intrinsic motivation on deep learning and academic achievement. Students with high intrinsic motivation tend to pursue knowledge for its own sake and are more likely to engage in higher-order thinking, independent research, and self-regulated learning (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2020). An illustrative example of intrinsic motivation is a student choosing to study mathematics not just to achieve high grades but because they find the subject fascinating and enjoyable. Conversely, extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards or pressures, such as grades, praise, or parental expectations. Factors or components that influence extrinsic motivation include:

1. External regulation: performing an activity to obtain a reward or avoid punishment

2. Introjected regulation: driven by internal pressure, such as guilt or obligation.
3. Identified regulation: engaging in an activity because it is personally important, even if not inherently enjoyable.
4. Integrated regulation: when external motivations are fully assimilated with one's values, becoming part of self-concept.

This form of motivation has displayed mixed impacts on academic outcomes. Some studies indicate that while extrinsic motivation can stimulate effort and performance, it may also detract from intrinsic motivation (Vlachopanou et al., 2025). For instance, (Morris et al., 2022) suggested that extrinsically motivated behaviors often arise from a desire to meet external criteria rather than a genuine interest in the subject matter. An example of extrinsic motivation is a student engaging in studies primarily to attain a scholarship or to gain approval from their family, rather than a desire to learn. Studies by (Chang & Chung, 2017) suggest that usable contexts, such as digital game-based learning, can enhance extrinsic motivation by making learning outcomes appealing. Equally, the works of (Naz et al., 2020) affirm that extrinsic rewards can significantly influence students' engagement levels, thereby affecting their academic performance. While there are concerns that extrinsic motivation might undermine intrinsic drives, appropriate framing of extrinsic incentives can ensure they complement rather than inhibit genuine interest in learning.

The interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can be complex. (Liu et al., 2019) found that while extrinsic rewards could enhance motivation in certain contexts, they particularly affect students who are already intrinsically motivated; thus, care must be taken to maintain a balance. The coexistence of both motivations often creates a multiplicative effect on academic performance, indicating that integrating extrinsic goals with intrinsic interests can optimize outcomes (Achachagua et al., 2022). This necessitates creating educational environments that promote intrinsic motivation while offering the necessary extrinsic incentives that do not undermine students'

internal drives. Recent research, including that of Wu et al. (2020) emphasizes the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in determining engagement levels and academic performance. Their findings indicate that higher levels of engagement, driven by both types of motivation, contribute positively to academic success. For many EFL students, the desire to finish their thesis on time, fulfill academic expectations, or pursue further education serves as a strong motivational force. According to Kim and Kim (2022), when extrinsic motivation is internalized such as when students see academic success as personally valuable it can positively support persistence and performance. Therefore, the balance between intrinsic enjoyment and meaningful extrinsic goals is considered beneficial in academic contexts.

In summary, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play vital roles in shaping students' academic behaviors and outcomes. Intrinsic motivation driven by internal satisfaction, curiosity, and personal growth consistently shows strong positive correlations with academic performance, self-efficacy, and long-term engagement in learning. Conversely, extrinsic motivation fueled by external rewards or social pressures can also enhance academic performance, particularly when aligned with students' personal goals or structured in meaningful ways. However, it requires careful application to avoid diminishing intrinsic interest. The interplay between both types of motivation is complex yet complementary, with research suggesting that a balanced integration of intrinsic and internalized extrinsic motivations leads to optimal academic engagement and success. In the context of EFL students working on their undergraduate theses, understanding and supporting both motivational types can help foster persistence, performance, and a deeper connection to the learning process.

3. Undergraduate Thesis Writing

The process of writing an undergraduate thesis can be an intricate and multifaceted challenge for students, particularly in countries like Indonesia, where various social, academic, and emotional factors come into play. This synthesis draws upon a range of recent studies to explore these complexities

and highlight the key elements impacting the thesis-writing experience. Academic stress and emotional engagement are significant factors affecting students' ability to complete their thesis work. Qudsyi and Fasya (2024) also found, as did Sa'Id and Dewi (2022), that stress is a common issue for final-year students under pressure to fulfill degree requirements. This academic burden can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy or fear of missing out (FoMO), which can further hinder students' psychological well-being. Stress management strategies and emotional engagement techniques are thus crucial to promoting successful thesis completion (Moesarofah & Rahayu, 2023).

Moreover, the importance of social support cannot be overstated. Cahyadi et al. (2021) highlight that guidance from supervisors and feedback from peers play a vital role in enhancing students' knowledge and motivation. This support system helps students establish clear writing goals and navigate the complexities of thesis writing. Additionally, Mbato and Cendra (2019) emphasize the importance of help-seeking behavior, where students actively seek assistance when encountering difficulties. This self-regulation and initiative in seeking help fosters a mature learning environment that is conducive to effective academic performance.

The thesis writing process is also characterized by various methodological challenges that students encounter. Many students struggle with structuring their theses effectively, which includes difficulties in developing coherent arguments and maintaining grammatical cohesion throughout their work (Utami & Kuswandon, 2023). Given this, it is essential that educational programs focus on developing students' writing skills early in their academic careers. This approach would better prepare them for the demands of crafting a thesis, where complex ideas must be communicated clearly and cohesively (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2022). Through structured coursework aimed at enhancing critical thinking and scientific reasoning, students can develop the foundational skills necessary for composing a compelling thesis. In contrast, without adequate preparation and training, students often find themselves unprepared for the nuances of academic writing,

which can lead to frustration and decreased performance (Prameswara & Hapsari, 2023). Finally, the alignment of expectations among students, supervisors, and institutions is crucial for a successful thesis experience. Stappenbelt and Basu (2019) discuss how mismatches in expectations can create barriers to effective communication and progress. Ensuring that all parties are on the same page regarding goals, responsibilities, and feedback mechanisms can foster an environment where students feel supported, motivated, and capable of achieving their academic objectives.

In this study, undergraduate thesis writing is viewed not only as a formal academic requirement but also as a cognitively and emotionally demanding process that reflects students' autonomy, competence, and persistence. The term undergraduate thesis writing in this research specifically refers to the final research project written by EFL students at one university, conducted as part of their academic obligation for graduation. The process typically involves several key stages, including:

1. Topic selection, where students choose a research area that aligns with their interests and academic goals.
2. Proposal writing, in which students formulate research questions and design their methodology.
3. Conducting the research, involving data collection and analysis.
4. Drafting and revising, where students write their chapters, receive feedback, and refine their work, and
5. Final submission and defense, which marks the culmination of the thesis journey.

Each stage presents unique cognitive and emotional challenges that require persistence, self-discipline, and support. Throughout these stages, students' motivation, both intrinsic (e.g., interest in the topic, desire to grow) and extrinsic (e.g., graduation, academic recognition), plays a central role in maintaining momentum and engagement.

The quality of the thesis writing is not evaluated solely based on structural or linguistic accuracy, but is viewed through the lens of motivation, particularly how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence the students' engagement, commitment, and perseverance in completing their academic writing. This study thus highlights the significance of understanding undergraduate thesis writing as a motivationally driven process, where students' internal and external drives play a pivotal role in shaping their academic outcomes.

B. Study of the Relevant Research

In recent years, research has increasingly focused on understanding the factors that influence EFL students' motivation in academic writing, particularly in the context of undergraduate thesis completion. Prameswara and Hapsari (2023) conducted a qualitative study involving interviews with EFL students engaged in thesis writing. Their findings revealed that students experienced varying levels of amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation throughout the thesis process. Notably, external support from parents, peers, and lecturers played a significant role in enhancing students' motivation. Additionally, a strong interest in the research topic contributed to increased intrinsic motivation among students.

The study of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the context of undergraduate thesis writing among EFL students has garnered significant attention in recent years. Research indicates that intrinsic motivation, characterized by a genuine interest in the subject matter and a desire for personal growth, plays a crucial role in enhancing students' writing skills and overall academic performance. For instance, Alharbi (2024) found that EFL learners who are intrinsically motivated tend to engage more deeply with their thesis topics, resulting in higher-quality work and a more fulfilling academic experience. This intrinsic drive is often linked to the autonomy students feel when selecting their research topics, which fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to their work.

Moreover, extrinsic motivation, which includes factors such as grades, recognition, and external validation, also significantly influences EFL students' thesis completion. Hidayati and Rahmawati (2023) emphasized that while intrinsic motivation is crucial, extrinsic factors can provide the necessary impetus for students to meet deadlines and achieve their academic goals. The interplay between these two types of motivation suggests that a balanced approach may be most effective in supporting students throughout the thesis writing process. For example, Chen (2024) emphasized the importance of integrating both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies in academic writing courses to enhance student engagement and performance.

A follow-up study by Sari (2025) examined the motivational factors influencing EFL students in an academic writing class, highlighting the critical role of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in shaping students' attitudes toward their thesis work. The study found that students who perceived their writing tasks as meaningful and relevant were more likely to exhibit intrinsic motivation. In contrast, those motivated by external rewards tended to focus on completing their tasks to meet academic requirements. This underscores the necessity for educators to create supportive learning environments that cater to the diverse motivational needs of EFL students, ultimately leading to more successful thesis completion.

In addition, recent studies have explored the specific motivational factors that drive EFL students in completing their theses. Zhang and Wang (2023) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the motivations impacting EFL students' English language learning, revealing that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations significantly affect their academic outcomes. Their findings suggest that fostering an environment that nurtures intrinsic motivation, while also acknowledging the importance of extrinsic rewards, can lead to improved thesis writing experiences for students. This dual approach aligns with the principles of Self-Determination Theory, which posits that satisfying students' psychological needs can enhance their motivation and engagement in academic tasks.

In conclusion, the literature on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in undergraduate thesis writing among EFL students reveals a complex interplay of factors that influence academic performance. By understanding these motivational dynamics, educators can develop strategies that effectively support students in their thesis writing endeavors, fostering both intrinsic interest and extrinsic accountability. Future research should continue to explore these motivational factors to enhance the academic experiences of EFL students in higher education.