



## Exploring Factors Affecting Motivation in an English Classroom in the first year at university of Tabuk

**Rahaf M. Altoweerqi**

Department of English Language Skills, English Language Institute, University of Tabuk, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

**Nadyh N. Alawfi**

Department of Languages and Translation, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Tabuk, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia

Email: [nalawfi@ut.edu.sa](mailto:nalawfi@ut.edu.sa)

### ABSTRACT

This research explores the influencing factors in motivation of first-year students to learn English at the University of Tabuk. By using a quantitative survey method, 300 first-year students at Tabuk University participated in this study by completing a questionnaire. The results show a variety of attitudes and perceptions among the students concerning their preferences for course materials, beliefs about learning effectiveness, attitudes toward academic achievement, and experiences of test anxiety.

Majority of the students have a preference on course materials that are challenging provided that they foster curiosity and deeper engagement. Most students are confident in their capability in understanding course materials through exerting maximal effort and effective study habits. However, a significant number of students experience examinations anxieties and distress, which shows that such incidents are common. Furthermore, students have shown that they are motivated to achieve academic success so that they could showcase their abilities to their social and professional peers. Students remain confidence in their ability to have high academic performance despite course difficulty and doubts of their own skills, which demonstrate that they are resilient and are very adaptive with their learning. Such findings indicate that students' attitudes are important. It also shows that their learning perception plays a central role in their motivation and engagement level within the academic environment thus providing the necessary guidance to establish effective pedagogies and necessary interventions. This will improve the motivation and engagement level of the students that are enrolled in English language courses.

**Keywords:** English language learning, Motivation, English language course.



## **1-Introduction:**

### **1.1 Motivation**

This is an interpretivism philosophy research that utilises quantitative data. It is based upon Dwight D. Eisenhower's notion where motivation is the act of enabling individuals to willingly accomplish goals according to your desire (Low, 2013).

In psychology, motivation is the act of inspiring individuals to conduct certain activities or behaviour in their own accord. There are a variety of factors that result in this complex phenomenon, which are psychological, social, biological, cultural, environmental, economic and other external stressors (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Students must be motivated in order to be academically successful as it enforces and provide a direction towards their respective academic objectives (Haque et al., n.d.; Schürmann et al., 2021; Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012).

Examples of sources of students' motivation are desired future career, personal interest and the desire to contribute positively to the society (Shkoler & Kimura, 2020; Steinmayr et al., 2019; Vo et al., 2022).

It is important to understand the multitude of theories related to motivation for the purpose of conducting analysis on the factors that influence the behaviour and to utilise those factors to reach the respective goals (Cook & Artino, 2016a). This paper reviews nine theories related to motivation learning and highlights their significance from the academia angle. The emphasise is that student motivation is essential in achieving their objective, which is a significant role in directing the students towards their academic success (Dweck et al., 2014; Pintrich & De Groot, 2003; Sethi & Scales, 2020; Van Vu et al., 2022). In summary, motivation is the foundation of human behaviour as it impacts their actions and provides the drive in achieving their desired goals and ambitions.

### **2-Research question:**

What are the factors that impact the motivation of first-year students in the learning of English language?

### **3-Literature Review**

There have been a wide range of research that investigate the factors that influence learner's motivation and reaching the objective in learning a language with a focus on the learners' perception of the tasks (Williams & Burden, 1997), their confidence in their capabilities (Bandura, 1997), and different approaches exhibited by each individual such as learning strategies (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990;



Oxford, 1990). The central theme points towards motivation theme (Dörnyei, 2001, 2005; Gardner, 2000). This is because its role in learners that have higher achievement compared with others despite possessing similar attributes and abilities (Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Sawyer & Ranta, 2001).

Latest research has a pronounced focus upon the significance of the thoughts and beliefs of learners within education, confirming that the learning process is both complex and has various dimensions involving attributes such as skills, knowledge, cognitive abilities and intelligence (Schunk, 2003). Self-efficacy is the confidence of an individual's ability to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1986). This is especially essential in determining a student's performance. The research has shown that self-efficacy is an accurate indicator of the students' performance in comparison to innate talent or aptitude (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1991). It has a significant influence over learning and motivation (Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 2003).

Individuals actively influence and mould the environment rather than just being passive recipients (Bandura, 1986). Such interactions include personal factors, environment and behaviour. Academic studies had been conducted upon self-efficacy and show that motivation is the predictor of students' interest in particular subjects and programme enrolment especially in mathematics (Pajares & Miller, 1994; Lent, Lopez, & Bieschke, 1993).

Research findings focusing on science and engineering students have shown that there is a strong correlation between self-efficacy and academic persistent, which is important to maintain high achievement (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1984). There is also a relationship between self-efficacy and, test and quiz scores (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Lastly, Schunk (1984) has also found a direct relationship between self-efficacy in mathematics with maths performance.

Studies related to learners of English as Foreign Language (EFL) has also demonstrated that their confidence in their L2 (second language) selves has a direct or indirect positive contribution towards their L2 proficiency in a classroom setting (Peng, 2015; Yashima, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). There is an increase of EFL learners' engagement with the English language outside their academic classes due to the development of digital communication, thus taking advantage of such development in L2 learning (Reinders & Benson, 2017).

In the past decade, scholars have placed an emphasis on motivation fluidity where psychological conception has a major influence upon L2 motivation theory development (Dörnyei, 2020). The initial development of the theory emphasises on students' intention on language learning, also referred to as integrative motivation.



The latest understanding to this topic includes factors that are of wider range and specificity, and they will continuously change.

#### 4-Methodology:

A quantitative research type was conducted to explore factors that influence English learning motivation. The study participants are first-year students from the University of Tabuk. The participants were given a questionnaire survey to collect their detailed responses, and as such are primary data.

#### 4.1 Participants

There are 300 participants in the study and as aforementioned, they are first year students from University of Tabuk located in Saudi Arabia. They are Saudi citizens, age between 17 to 23 years old and Arabic being their native language. The participants possess similar levels of language proficiency and educational background. This means that the study sample is homogenous.

#### 4.2 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was conducted to collect data for the purpose of analysing factors or attributes that impact English learning motivation at the University's Language Institute. The 33 questions within the questionnaire encompass a wide range of motivation aspects as detail below:

**Difficulty of Course Materials:** The purpose of such questions is to measure students' perception on the difficulty of the English course materials and if this influences their study motivation.

**Comparison amongst peers:** These questions explore students' comparison amongst themselves have any influence upon their motivation.

**Curriculum's Perceived Value:** These questions explore the students' determination of the value and significance of English curriculum have upon their academic and career aspirations.

**Grades weighting:** These questions explore the extent of the influence of grades have upon students' motivation in learning engagement

**Individual Learning Responsibility:** Questions explore the students' taking ownership of their learning and the subsequent impact upon their motivation

**Pedagogy:** Questions explore on teaching methodologies applied during instructing English and their impact upon students' motivation



### 4.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was conducted on the participants while they were attending their regular classes in order to elicit higher response rate and minimise inconvenience. The participants were informed before the commencement of the survey of the study's purpose, assurance of anonymity of their identity and provided with guidance on completing the questionnaire.

### 4.4 Data Analysis

Statistical method analyses were conducted to determine the influencing factors of the students' motivation. The responses were summarised through the use of descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics were utilised to establish the correlations between the wider range of variables and the aggregate levels of motivation.

Such methodology establishes an in-depth knowledge of the wide range of factors that influence the motivation of first year students that are studying English at University of Tabuk. The knowledge help educators to make informed decision when developing plans to improve the engagement and learning outcomes of the students.

### 5-Discussion and findings

This research investigates the self-efficacy improvement in learning English. The study sample consists of 300 participants (all female) at the Institute for English Language Teaching in University of Tabuk located in Saudi Arabia. This study applies Albert Bandura's insights with the purpose of identifying barriers of achieving goal and provides recommendations to improve self-efficacy. This research conducted survey and observation techniques to determine the students' self-efficacy factors such as their confidence, existing levels of proficiency and various strategies that they deemed useful in achieving their objectives in language learning.

The findings demonstrate the central role of self-motivation in the improvement of English language proficiency, which includes attributes such as expansion on vocabulary, accuracy, fluency and improvement on pronunciation. The conclusion of the study is that self-efficacy has a significant influence on the learning of English language. It was found that Navigate A1 coursebook is a medium for motivation. The research questions target the classroom management influence upon self-efficacy and motivation of the study participants in studying English language at University of Tabuk.

The literature review has established the significance of self-efficacy in forecasting the performance of students as well as the factors that influence language learning success, which are individual beliefs and motivation. The research methodology

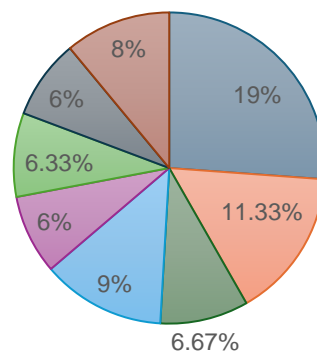


consists of a questionnaire survey, which was conducted on the 300 participants (all female students) to collect data surrounding on influencing factors such as open communication, consistency and clear classroom expectations upon motivation and self-efficacy. The following are the questions in the questionnaire.

Analysis was conducted on the data collected from the questionnaire. Insights were provided subsequently upon the influencing factors on motivation upon the participants, which are first year students learning English in University of Tabuk. The following are the findings for each of the three primary questions within the questionnaire:

**Question 1: I prefer challenging course material in English learning for the purpose of learning something new.**

The responses encompass a wide opinion range amongst the 300 participants:

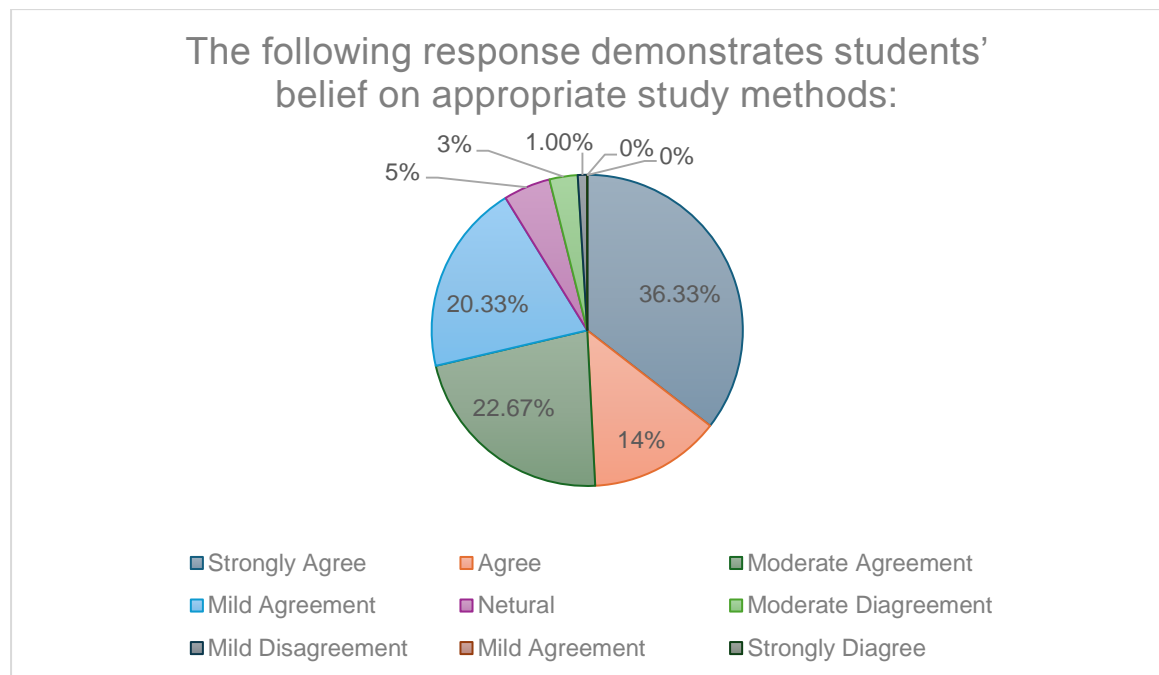


■ Strongly Agree      ■ Agree      ■ Moderate Agreement  
■ Mild Agreement      ■ Neutral      ■ Mild Disagreement  
■ Moderate Disagreement      ■ Strongly Disagree

The results have shown that the students prefer course materials that are challenging with the highest response within “strongly agree” and “moderately agree” category. It is important to also highlight that few responded with “disagree” and “neutral”. This shows the existence of wide range of attitude on contents that are challenging. This also means that course material must strike a balance in difficulty level to fulfil the various attitudes and to maximise student engagement.



**Question 2: I will learn the materials as intended by the course if I apply the appropriate study methods**

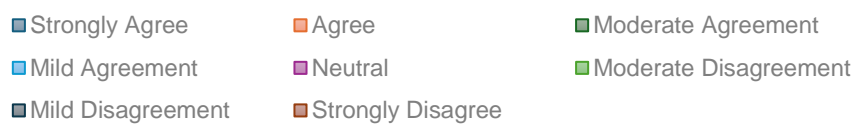
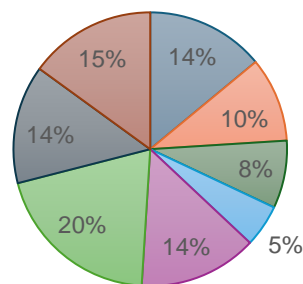


The following response demonstrates students' belief on appropriate study methods:

A significant majority of the students strongly agree and agreeing (70%) that appropriate study methods have a significant contribution upon their learnings of course material. This demonstrates that effective study strategies should be included in the curriculum to improve the confidence and academic performance of the students. There are few students that remain neutral or disagree, which demonstrates decreased confidence in their study skills or they require further assistance.

**Question 3: While resting, I think I perform less compared with my peers**

The responses show the extent of the students' belief on their own ability compared with their peers when taking tests:

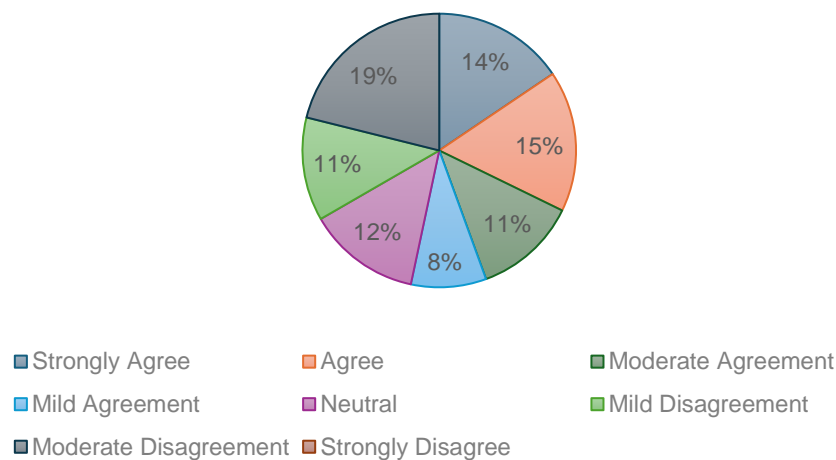


The responses indicate that a significant number of students have a negative belief in their test performance when comparing themselves with their peers at 37%. 29% of the students disagree with such notion and they rather focus on their respective progress. The rest of the students remain either neutral with mild to moderate disagreement. Such findings indicate the extent of psychological pressures experienced by students when taking tests. It is therefore essential to encourage an academic environment that is supportive and promote self-improvement rather than comparing with peers.



**Question 4: I may apply my learnt knowledge of this course on other courses.**

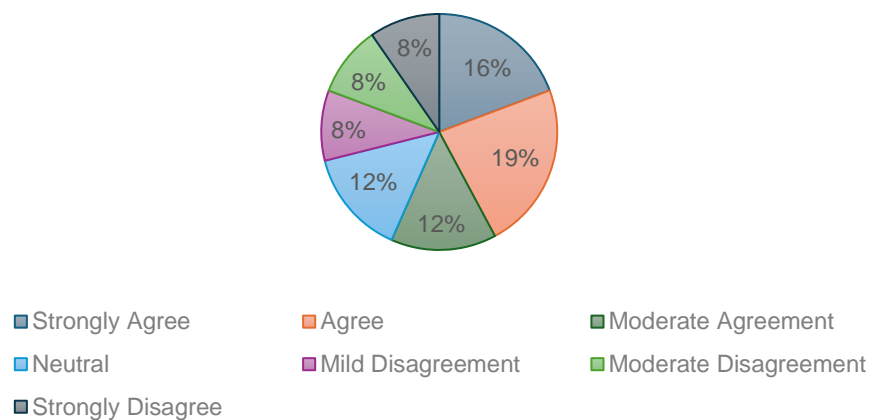
The responses demonstrate the attitudes of the students towards the application of English language that they have learnt upon other courses:



The collected responses show a significant number of students held the belief that they are able to apply their English language learnt in this course on other courses with at 29% indicating strongly to moderately agree. There is also a significant number of students (19% moderately disagree) that feel this may not occur. Students on neutral stance are at 12%, demonstrating their uncertainty in the application of the learnt language. This demonstrates that educators need to highlight that knowledge gained from English course have an interdisciplinary value for the purpose of improving the students' perception of this issue.

**Question 5: I am confident that I will achieve a high grade in this course?**

The responses demonstrate the confidence level of the student in achieving higher grade with a wide range of optimism:



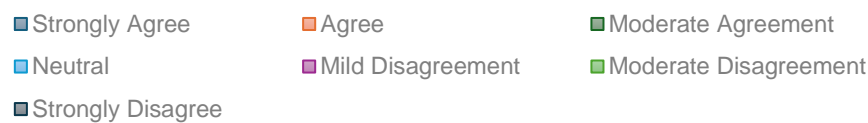
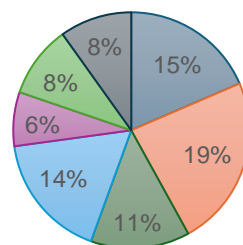
The responses demonstrate the confidence level of the student in achieving higher grade with a wide range of optimism:

Majority of the students at 35% are confident that they will achieve higher grades while 16% have doubts. 12% of the students are neutral demonstrating uncertainty with their academic performance. These responses demonstrate the necessity in promoting a growth mindset and having appropriate assistance in order to improve the confidence in the students with their abilities.



**Question 6: I can understand materials that are difficult in the reading section of this course**

The responses demonstrate a wide range of confidence levels of the students in understanding the difficult part of the course materials.

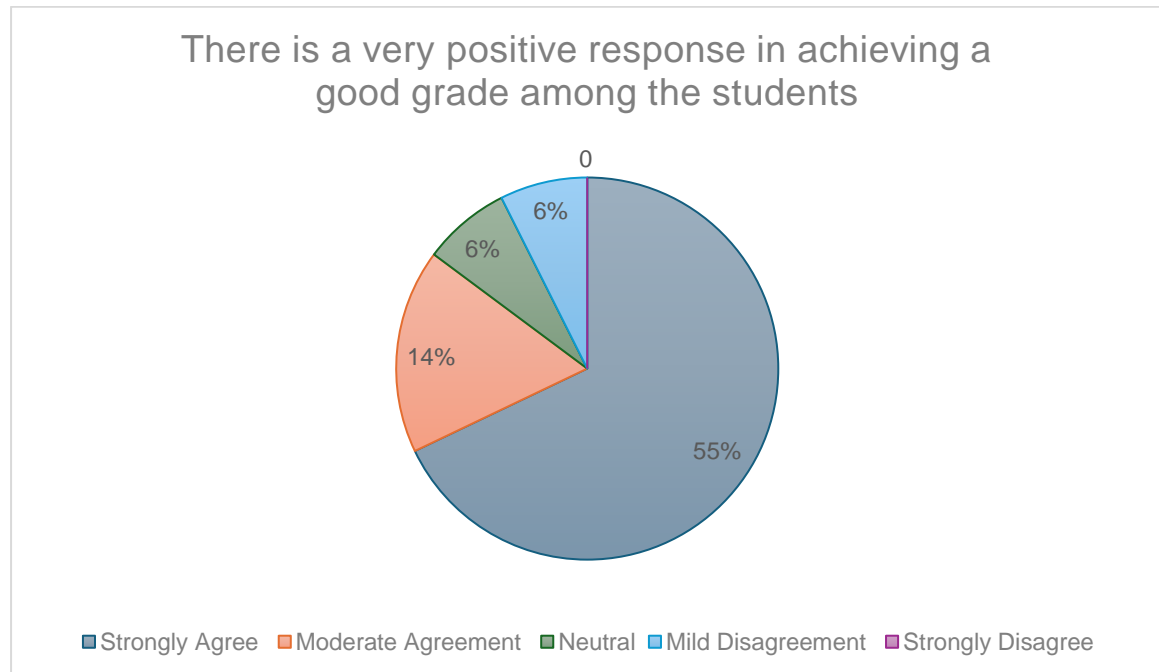


The responses demonstrate a wide range of confidence levels of the students in understanding the difficult part of the course materials.

Majority of the students are confident that they will understand the difficult parts of the course at 34% whereas few are doubting their ability at 14%. Students with neutral stance are at 14% indicating uncertainty. Such findings show the significance in the provision of additional resources and support in assisting students to comprehend difficult materials in the course in order to boost their confidence and comprehension.



### Question 7: The most satisfying aspect is to receive a good grade

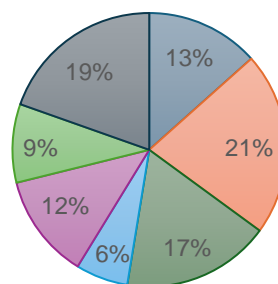


There is a very positive response in achieving a good grade among the students

The responses show that majority of the student feel that the most satisfying aspect of the course is to achieve a good grade at 69%. This demonstrates the students prioritise academic success by achieving higher grades. Educators should take this opportunity to provide additional support and resources for students to achieve good grades. However, they must also instil the view that learning is more than just receiving good grades.

**Question 8: While taking a test, my thoughts are on the parts that I am unable to answer**

The responses indicate the extent of the distraction for students' thoughts on unanswered parts of the test



Strongly Agree

Agree

Moderate Agreement

Neutral

Mild Disagreement

Moderate Disagreement

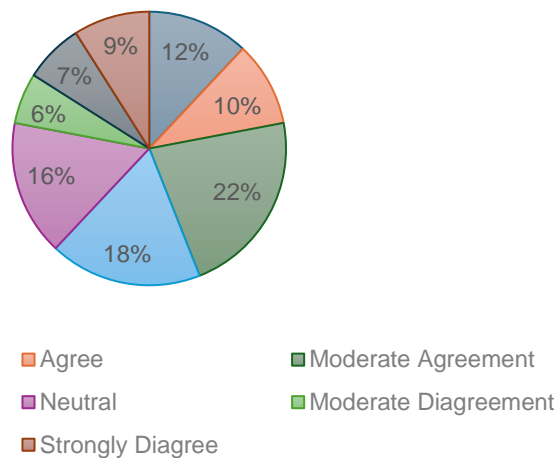
Strongly Disagree

The responses indicate the extent of the distraction for students' thoughts on unanswered parts of the test

Majority of the students (34%) indicate that they experienced distractions during tests on parts that they could not answer, which has an impact on their focus. This demonstrates the need for strategies in assisting the students to manage anxiety and concentration levels during examinations.

**Question 9: I blame myself for failing to learn the necessary course materials**

The responses indicate the extent of their ownership of the learning outcomes:

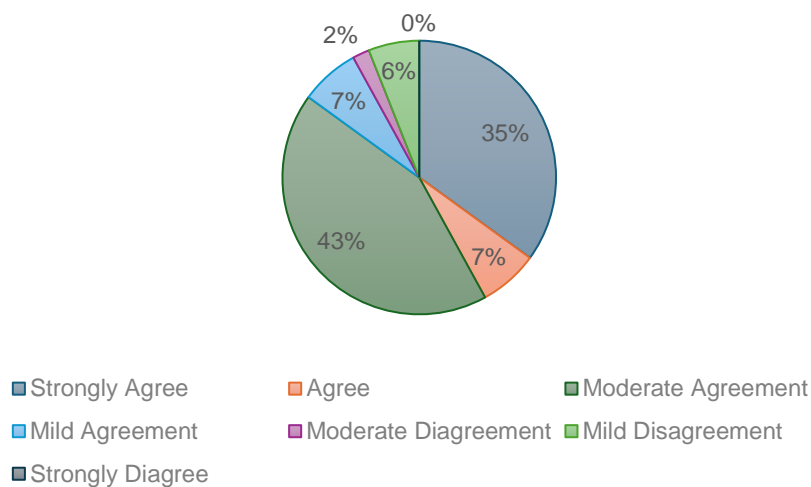


The responses indicate the extent of their ownership of the learning outcomes:

Majority of the students take ownership of their learning outcomes at 34%. It is therefore important to promote self-reflection and growth mindset in order for the students to demonstrate responsibility in their learning and attempt to improve on a constant basis during the course.

**Question 10: It is essential to learn the course materials**

The responses indicate the level of recognition of the students in learning the course materials:



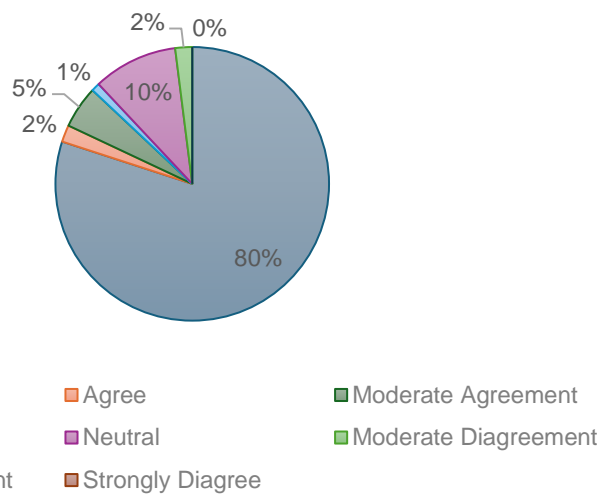
The responses indicate the level of recognition of the students in learning the course materials:

A significant number of students at 78% stated that it is of paramount importance that they learn the course material. Such large proportion of the responses indicate the students' strong commitment in achieving good grades in the course, which demonstrates the importance of a motivating and engaging learning environment



**Question 11: Improving my overall grade is the most significant task at the moment and therefore my highest priority is to achieve a good grade.**

The responses indicate the level of recognition of the students in learning the course materials:



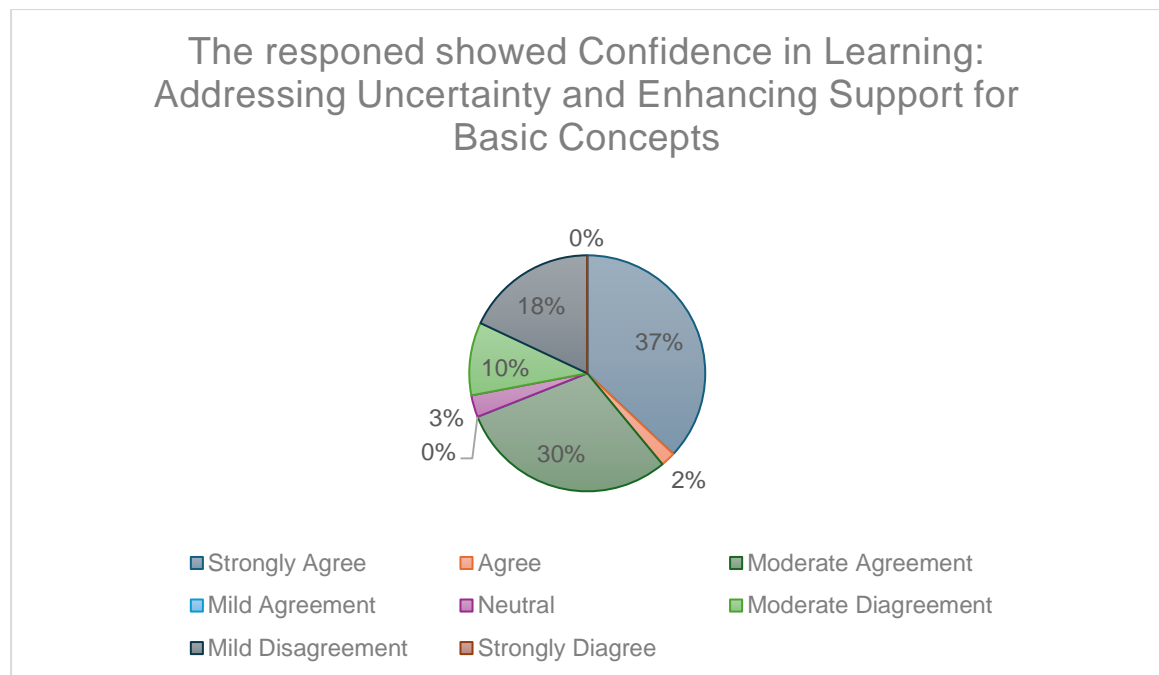
The responses demonstrate students have a strong desire to improve their aggregate GPA:

Significant proportion of the students at 80% show that their highest priority is improving their overall GPA. This shows that they view academic success as of utmost importance. Such responses highlight that the students are fully committed to achieve higher grades and improve their current academic position.





**Question 12: I am confident with my ability in learning the basic concepts that are taught.**

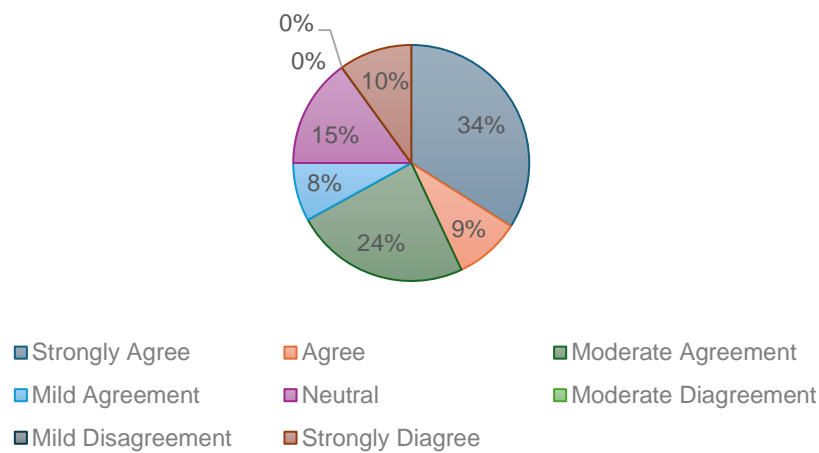


The responses show the various students' confidence level in understanding the basic concept of the courses.

Despite a majority of the students are confident in understanding their learning capabilities at 67%, some has demonstrated uncertainty or doubts at 18%. This shows the necessity for educators to provide further resources and support to improve the confidence of the students to understand the basic concepts of the course.

**Question 13: I would like to achieve better grades than my peers if possible**

The responses demonstrate the level of students' desire to achieve better grades in comparison to their peers.

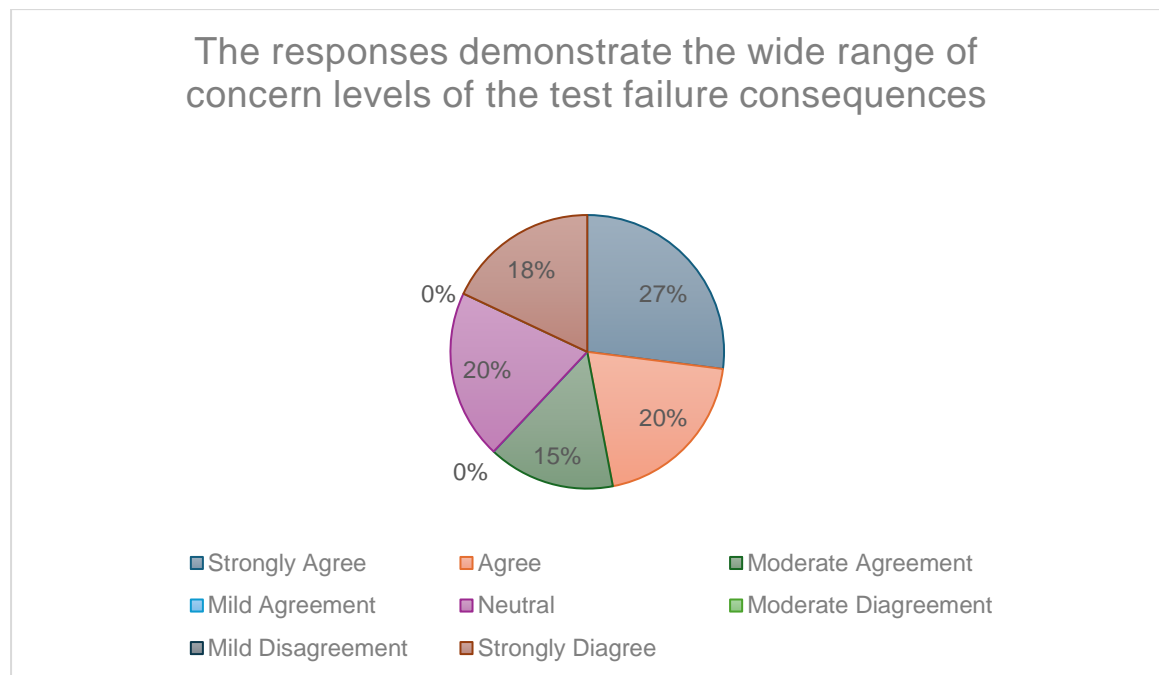


The responses demonstrate the level of students' desire to achieve better grades in comparison to their peers.

The findings show that majority of the students have a strong desire to perform better compared to their peers. This demonstrates that students are very competitive with their academic achievements.



**Question 14: I thought about the consequences of failing the course while taking tests.**



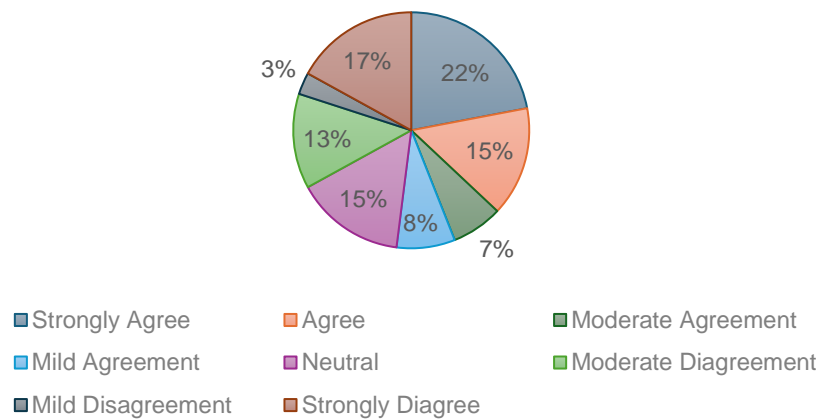
The responses demonstrate the wide range of concern levels of the test failure consequences

The responses indicate the wide range of attitudes and concerns that the students may fail their tests.



**Question 15: I am confident with my ability to understand the hardest part of the materials given by the course instructor.**

The responses indicate the various level of confidence level in understanding complex materials provided by the course instructor



The responses indicate the various level of confidence level in understanding complex materials provided by the course instructor

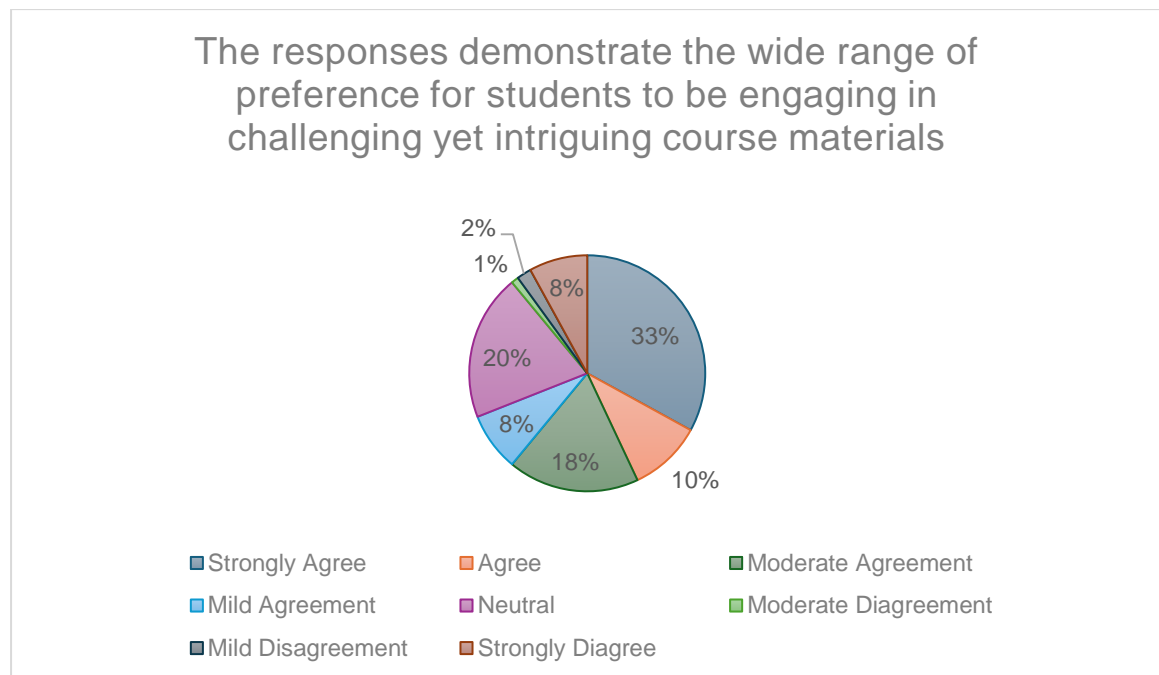
Strongly Agree (Rating 7): 22%

Strongly Disagree (Rating 1): 17%

The findings demonstrate a wide range of confidence levels exhibited by the students in their capability of understanding the complex materials being presented in the course.



**Question 16: I prefer course materials that stimulate my curiosity regardless of the level of difficulty.**

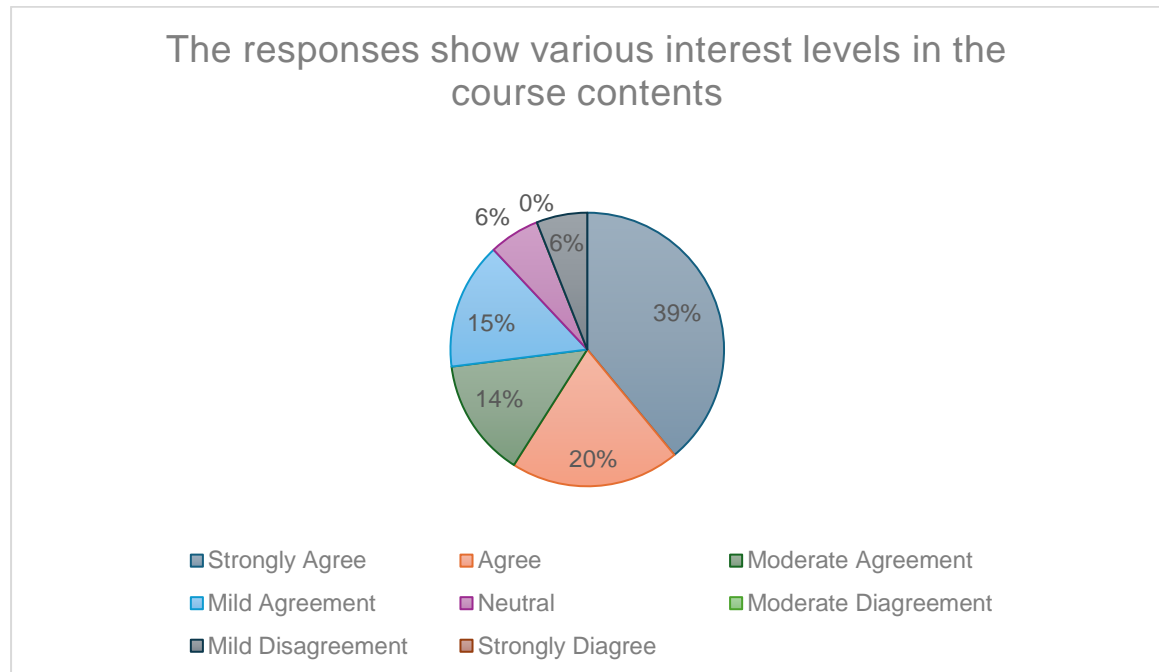


The responses demonstrate the wide range of preference for students to be engaging in challenging yet intriguing course materials

Strongly Agree (Rating 7): 33%

Strongly Disagree (Rating 1): 8%

The responses indicate a mixture of preference for course material with different level of difficulty that stimulate the students' curiosity.

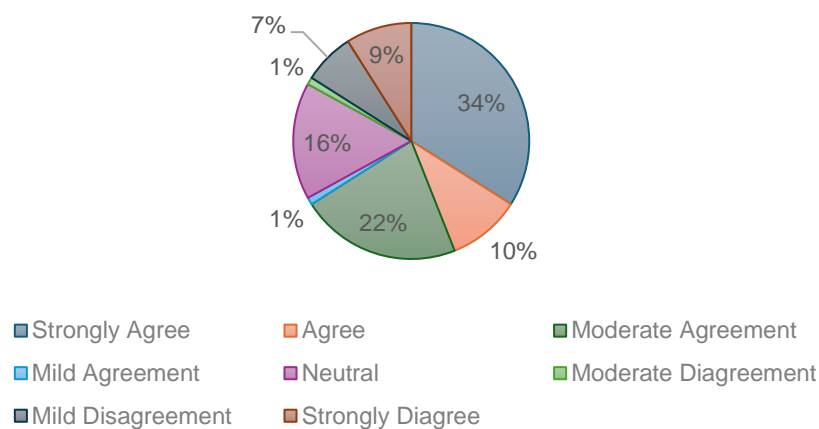
**Question 17: I am fully engaged with the course's contents**

The responses show various interest levels in the course contents

The responses indicate a wide range of interest with significant number of students stated that they have a strong interest at 53%. Educators could take advantage of such notion to fulfil the various preferences, promoting enthusiasm and underlying motivations among the students.

**Question 18: I will understand the course material with maximal effort**

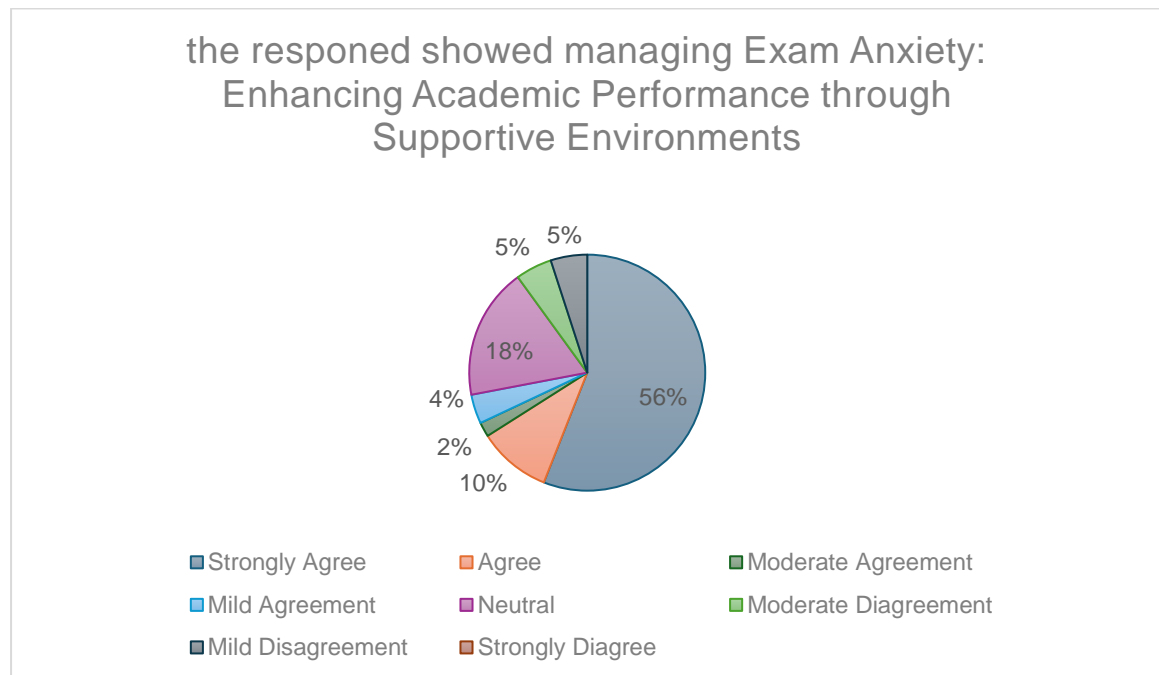
The responded showed Striving for Understanding:  
Empowering Students with Effective Study Skills for  
Academic Success



The responses indicate significant number of students that they will understand the materials if they exert maximal effort through diligence and perseverance at 56%. Students should be empowered with appropriate study skills to improve their academic performance.



**Question 19: I have the feeling of anxiety when taking an exam.**

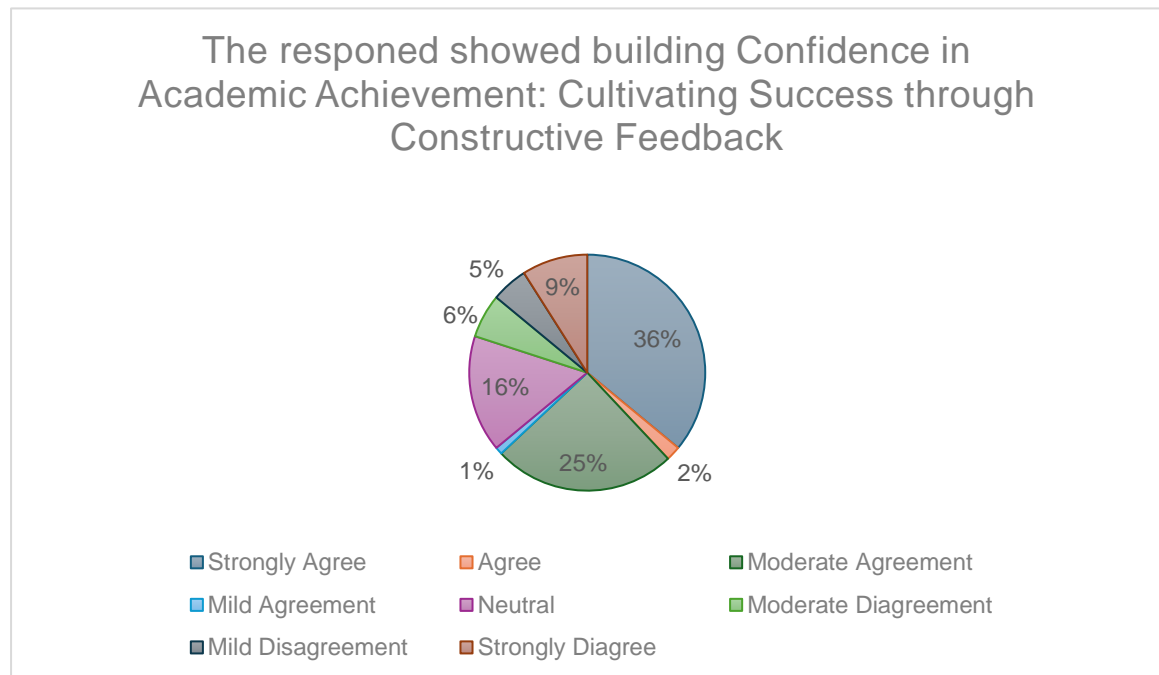


Majority of the students at 56% indicate that they exhibit nervousness or anxiety when taking examinations. Therefore, educators should establish appropriate stress management measures and foster a supportive exam environment to reduce such negative experiences, which in turn will improve academic performance.





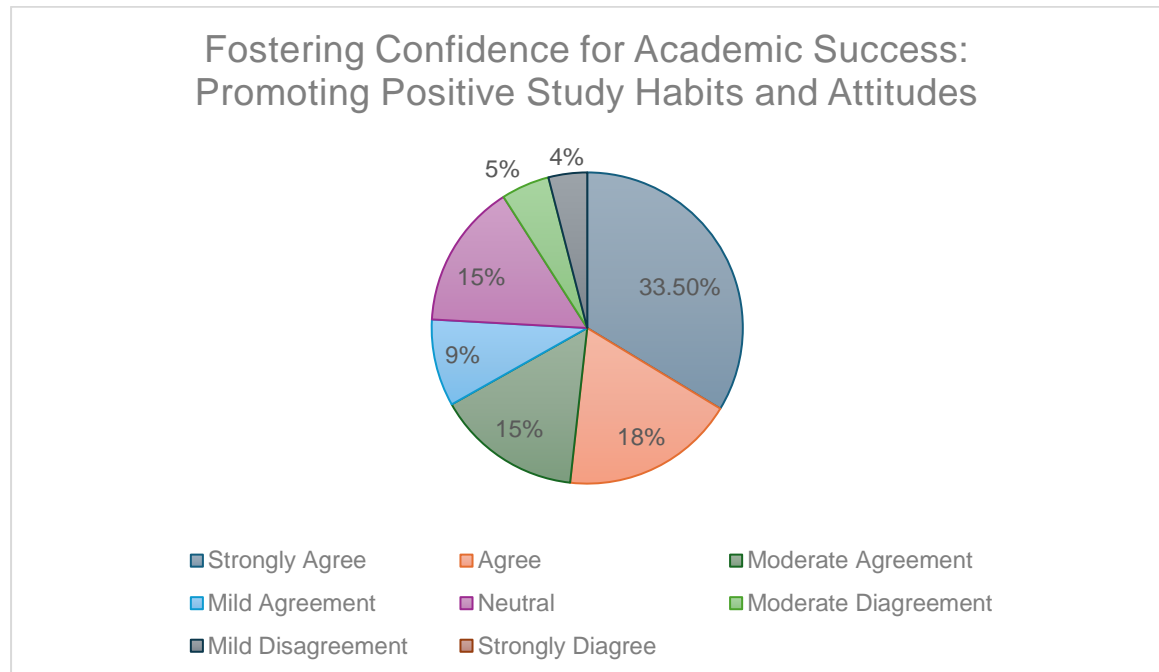
**Question 20: I have the confidence to complete assignments and exams to a high standard**



The responses indicate a majority of the students are very confident that they could complete the assessments and tasks to a high standard at 61%. This demonstrates the importance in cultivation students' confidence by providing constructive feedback to improve their academic performance.



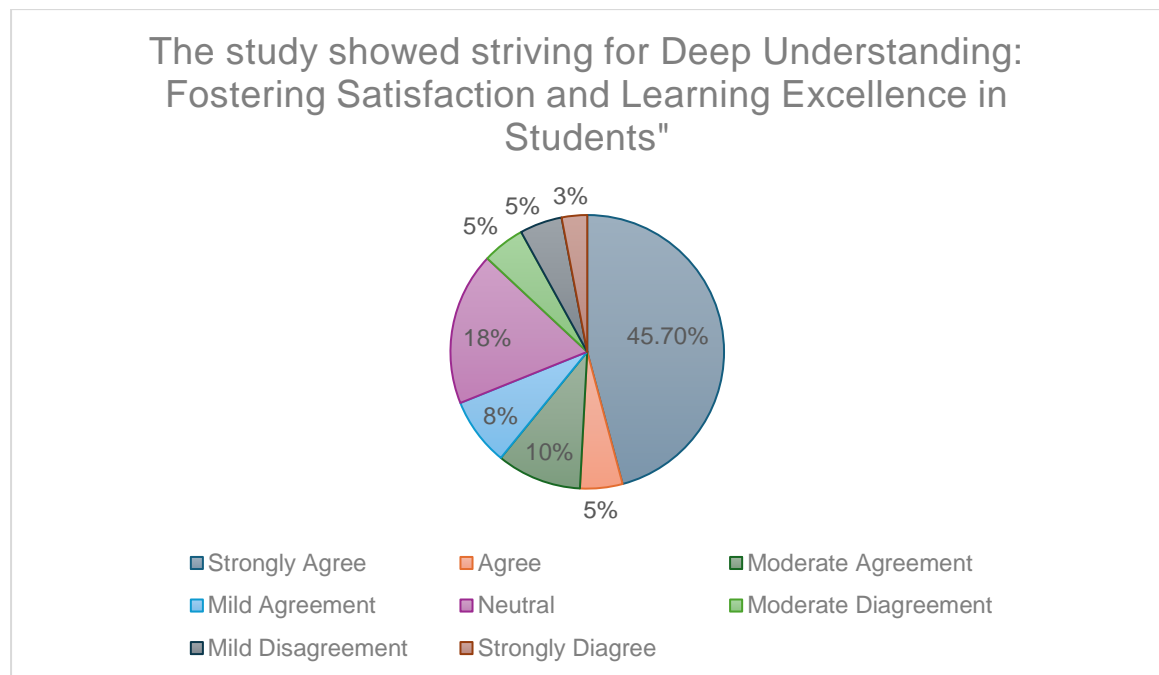
**Question 21: I am confident that I will perform well in class.**



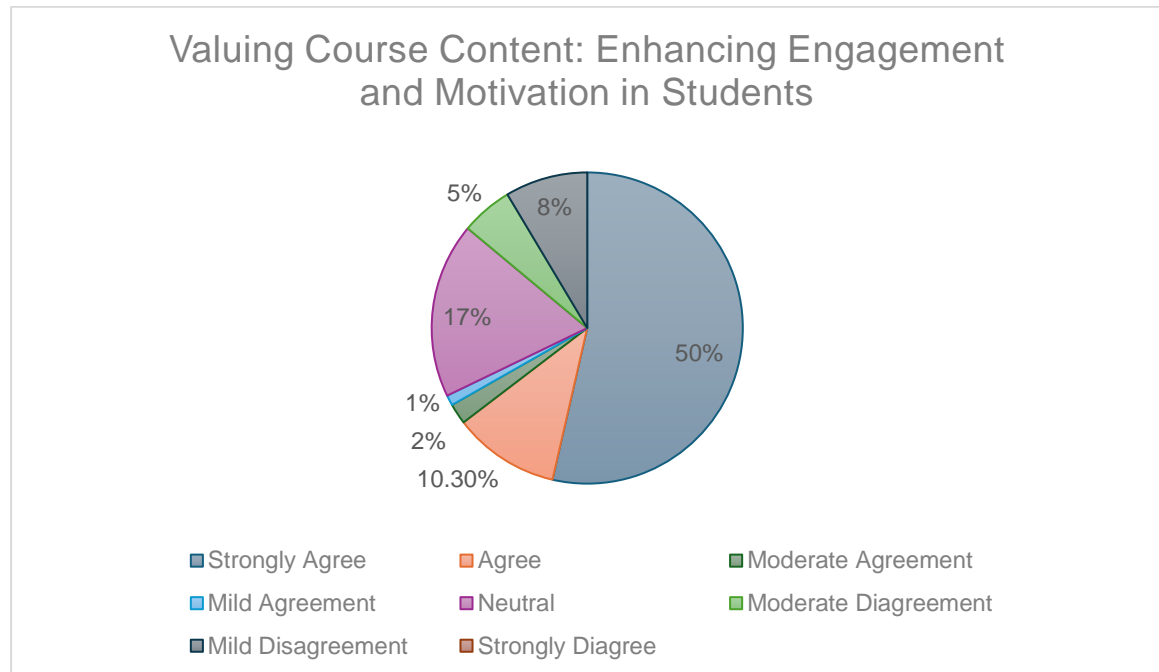
33.5% of the students that they could perform well in class, which demonstrate a positive attitude in achieving academic and learning success. Such attitudes should be promoted with measures such as encouraging positive study habits to increase the probability of students in **achieving their academic goals**.



**Question22: I am most satisfied when attempting to have a detailed understand of the course's content**



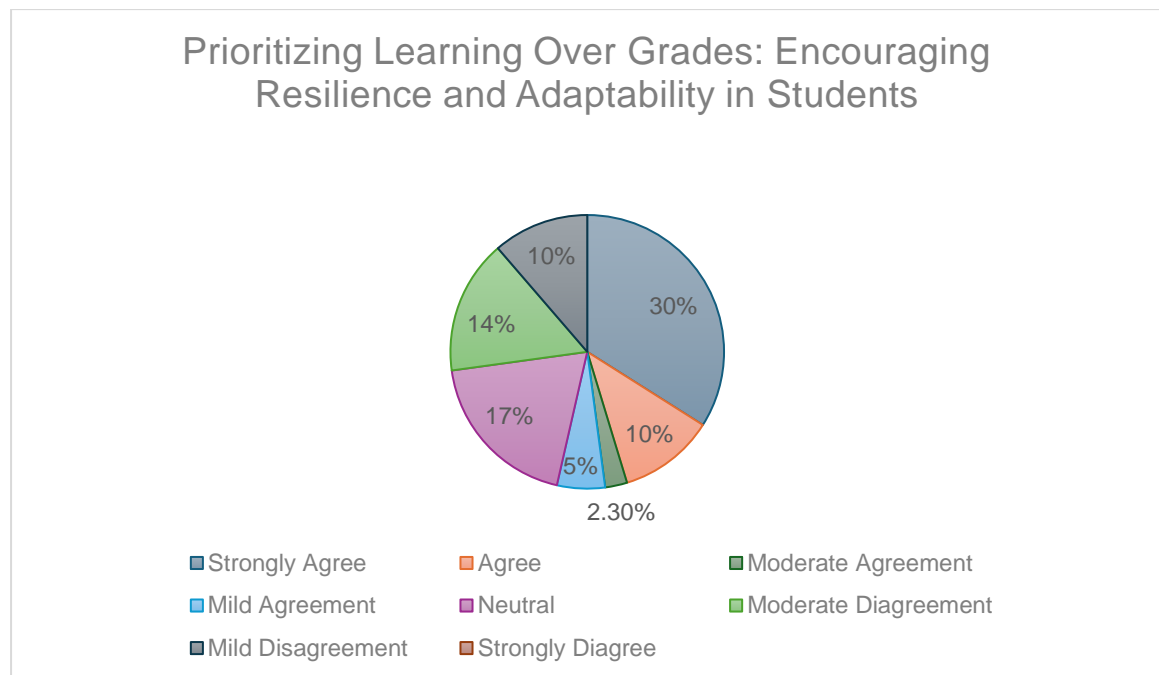
Responses indicate that students are very satisfied if they could have an in-depth understanding of the course content at 45.7%. This demonstrates a strong desire for learning and curiosity in understand the subject thoroughly. Such notion should be encouraged by having the appropriate environment for the students to have a deeper understanding of the contents in order to achieve a positive learning experience.

**Question 23: I think it is useful for me to learn the course material**

Majority of the students think that the course content is very useful at 63.7% towards their academic pathway. This encourages increased engagement and bolster motivations amongst the students.



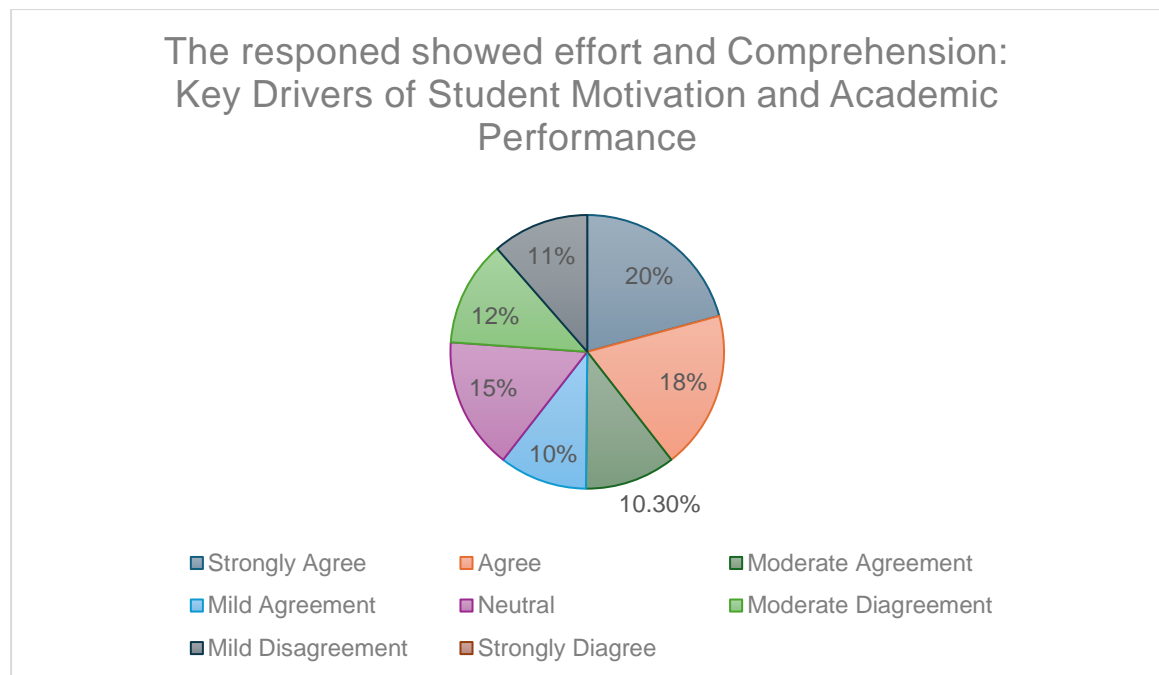
**Question 24: I will always choose challenging course assignment where I could learn despite no guarantee of receiving a good grade**



Responses show that around 42.3% of the students places importance in learning rather than the final grade. This shows that they strive for academic and personal development thus necessitate support in promoting resilience and adaptability.



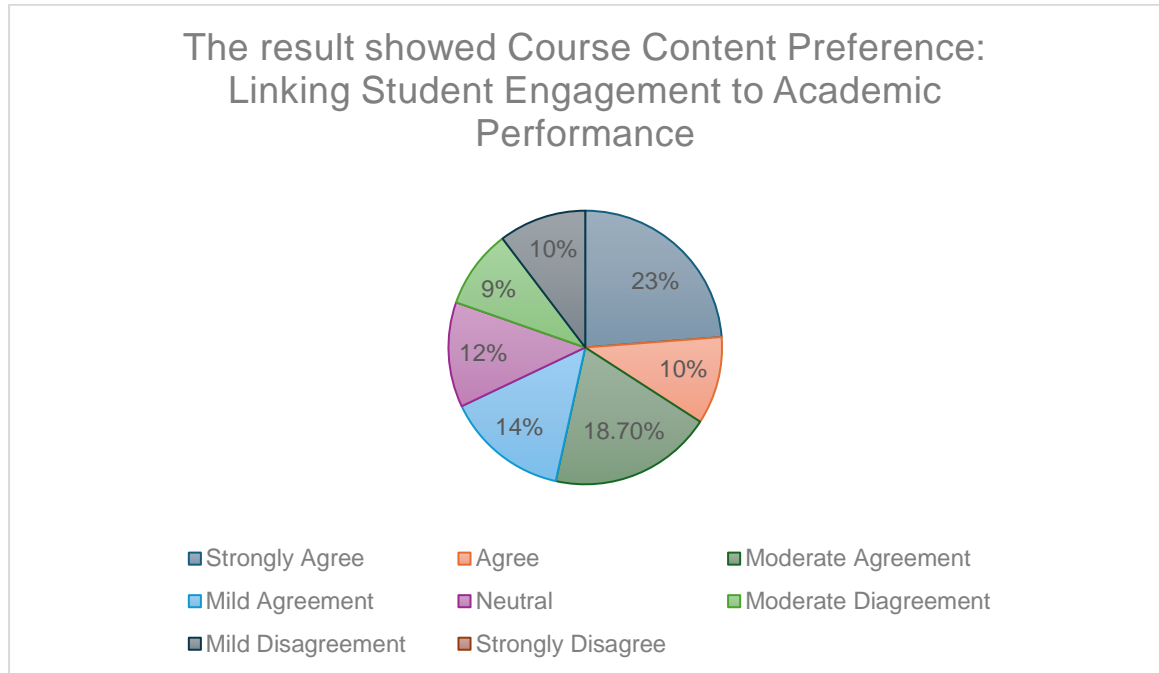
**Question 25: Not understanding course material demonstrates minimal effort on my part**



Around 48.3% of the students places a correlation between effort and comprehension. This demonstrate that effort influences students' motivation in achieving their academic performance.

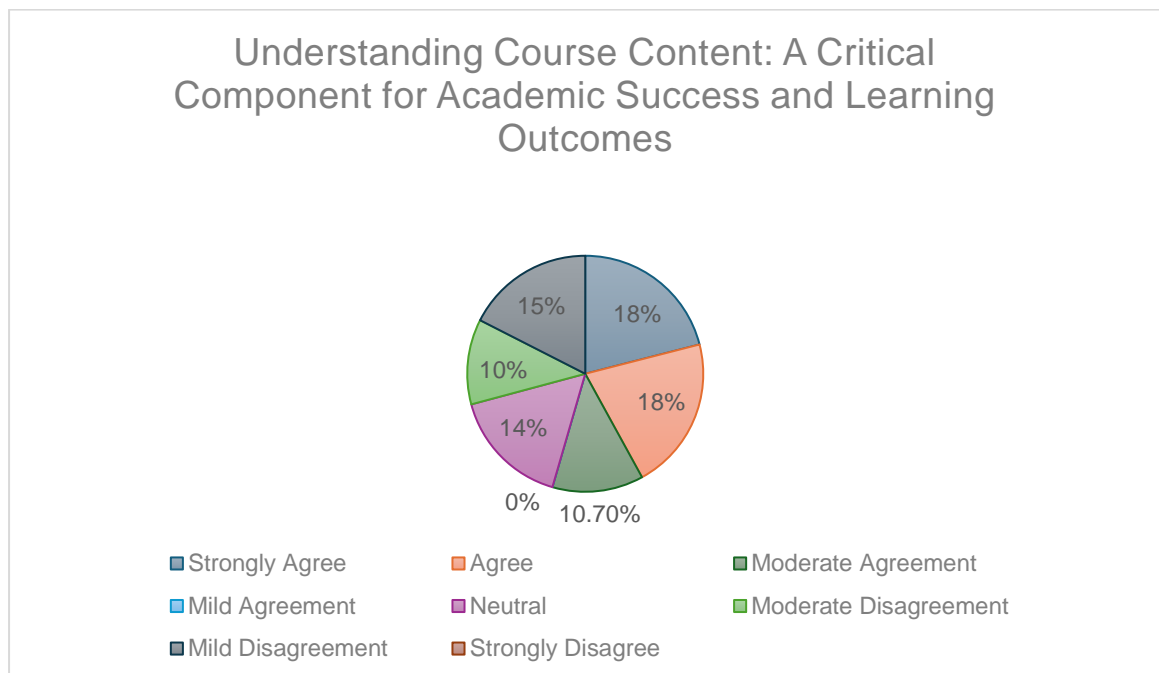


**Question 26: I have a preference with the course’s subject.**



Students demonstrate preference with the course content at 48.7% indicating a correlation between engagement levels and improved academic performance.

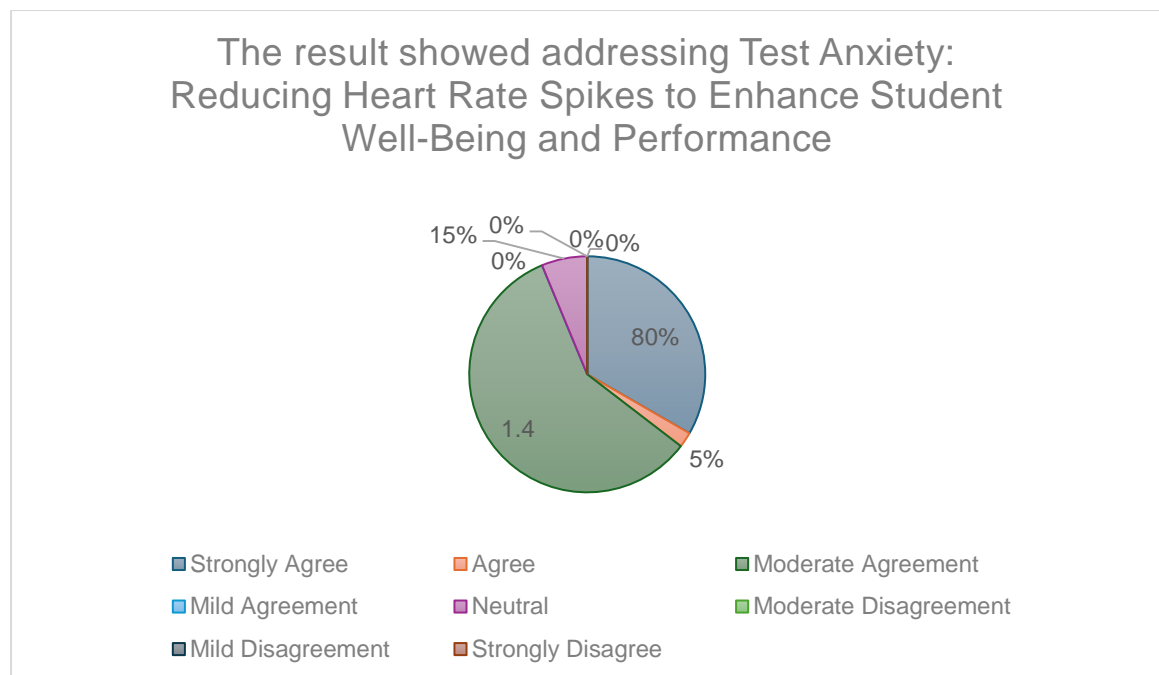
**Question 27: It is essential for me to understand the course content**





Around 47.7% of the students feel it is essential for them to understand and master the content of the course as it is an important component in their academic success and learning outcomes.

### Question 28: My heart beat faster during an exam

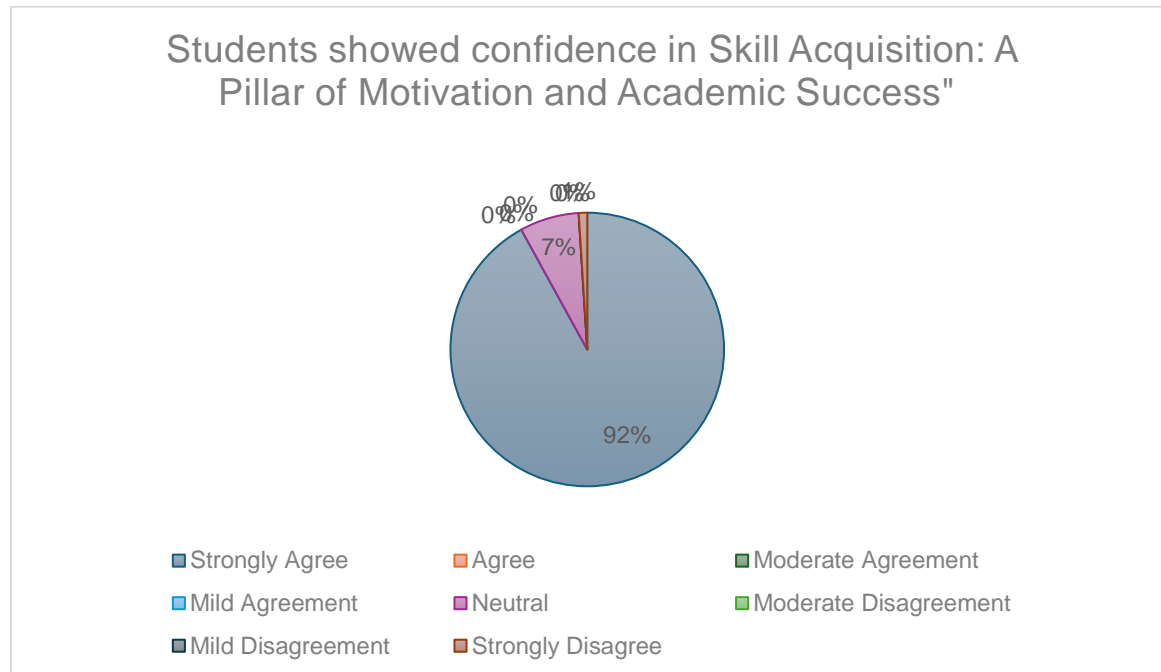


Students feel that their heart rate increases during examination. This shows that measures are needed to reduce test anxiety to promote students' well-being and academic performance.





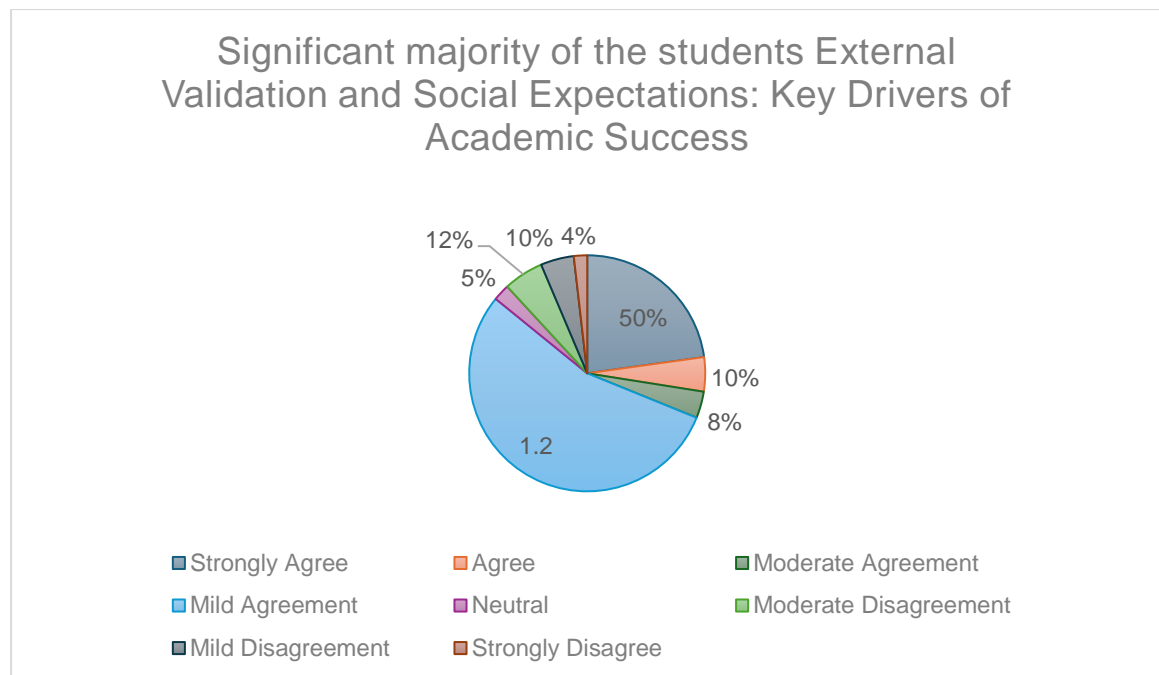
**Question 29: I am confident that I could acquire the skills being taught.**



Majority of the students are confident that they could master the skills being taught, which promotes motivation and resilience. Both of which are important components for academic success.



**Question 30: Good performance demonstrate that I am capable and this is important when facing my family, peers, employers and other individuals.**

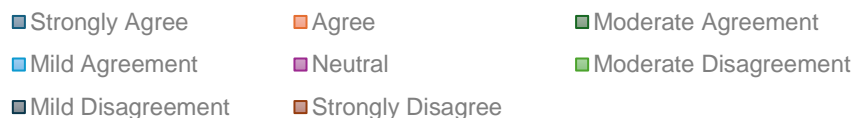
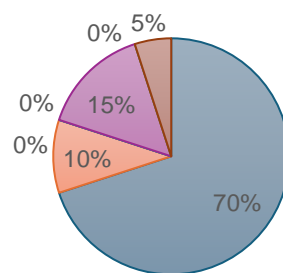


Students felt that external validation is important at 68.3%. This means that social expectation and career ambitions play an important role in their academic success.



**Question 31: I am confident of my performance despite the course's difficulty, the teacher and my skills.**

Significant majority of the students are confident of their performance, which shows a positive mindset in overcoming challenges.



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Such findings act as a guidance for educators in crafting the appropriate strategies to improve the motivation and engagements of students. It will promote a supportive learning environment where students will be successful in their academic journey.

The findings from the survey provide essential knowledge in the factors that influence the first-year students' desire to study English in University of Tabuk. The findings indicate a wide range of attitudes and perceptions of the students' academic journey including course content preference, perspective on effective learning methods and their desire for academic success.

#### **Preference for Difficult Course Content:**

Majority of the students indicate that they prefer challenging course content that arouse their curiosity and it motivates them to learn the subject on a deeper level. Such preference for challenging course content indicates the importance to have an environment that fosters inquiry led learning and developing critical thinking abilities. Educators should benefit of such findings by employing pedagogy that could fulfil the



various students' learning styles. It will ultimately boost the students' learning desire and engagement

#### **Belief in Learning Effectiveness:**

Majority of the student are confident that they will understand the course material through persistent effort and having positive study habits. It shows that growth-oriented attitude has a central role in realising the importance of effort and perseverance in academic success, which is demonstrated with the learning efficacy conviction. Teachers could improve students' learning confidence through providing the necessary tools and advice. This will optimise their academic performance and increases their success in fulfilling their learning objectives.

#### **Effects of Test Anxiety:**

Notable number of students felt anxiety and distress during tests. Such anxiety should be addressed to improve the students' academic success. This could be addressed through creating a relaxed exam atmosphere in addition to positive intervention such as stress management during the course. Such actions will improve the learning environment, which will increase the students' academic performance.

#### **Motivation for Academic Achievement:**

Many students expressed a motivation to excel in their studies, driven by a desire to display their capabilities in their various social and professional spheres. This external drive underscores the influence of societal norms and career aspirations on students' academic pursuits. By acknowledging and supporting students' craving for external validation, educators can assist them in aligning their academic aspirations with broader personal and professional objectives, thereby improving their motivation and engagement in the learning journey.

#### **Confidence in Academic Success:**

Majority of the students are very confident with their ability to have a high academic achievement despite various barriers such as difficulty in course content. Educators should establish flexible and adaptive learning method to support such positive notion in order to foster successful learning and academic outcomes. This includes providing constructive feedback, building a safe and encouraging learning environment where risk taking is valued along with personal development.



To summarise, this study findings indicate that importance of understanding the attitudes and perspective of the students in terms of learning for the purpose of boosting their motivation and involvement in their academic journey. Educators need to create a supportive learning environment to assist the student with their academic journey. They should also encourage the students to understand that learning is a lifelong journey through various methods such as reducing test anxiety, promoting learning efficacy and the desire to learn. The University of Tabuk could boost students' motivation and engagement in learning English through establishing the recommended teaching pedagogies and methods with considerations of the findings in this research.

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