

Enhancing Educational Motivation of Rohingya Students in Rohingya Community School Sungai Petani: A Preliminary Study

Noor Jannah Afi, Salfarina Abdul Gapor, Siti Maizalaizzah Akma Adnan, Afifi Nordin, Amirul Syafiq Mohd Ghazali

Albukhary International University Alor Setar, Kedah

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100400327>

Received: 13 April 2026; Accepted: 18 April 2026; Published: 08 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the determinants of academic motivation among Rohingya refugee students at the Rohingya Community School in Sungai Petani, Kedah, Malaysia. Since a vast majority of Rohingya children in Malaysia do not have proper access to formal education (Lee & Hoque, 2024; UNHCR, 2024), the identification of these determinants is crucial. This study integrates Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Resilience Theory in an attempt to evaluate the impact of autonomy, competence, social support, self-efficacy, and resilience on student motivation. This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from 40 students aged 9-17 through questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed based on the three theories: SDT, SCT and Resilience Theory. The findings indicate that social cognitive factors and resilience both play a more significant role in educational motivation compared to self-determination. It suggests that external support and a safe learning environment play a crucial role in encouraging Rohingya students towards education. The findings offer evidence for focused interventions depending on the unique challenges of Rohingya students. With the incorporation of SDT, SCT, and Resilience Theory, this study offers a multidimensional model expressing psychological needs, social learning processes, and protective resilience factors influencing educational motivation. The results can guide policymakers, NGOs, and educators in developing inclusive education policies and support systems for refugee children excluded from formal education systems, and thus improve their academic engagement and overall well-being

INTRODUCTION

Forced migration refers to the involuntary movement of people due to conflict, persecution, natural disasters, or other threats to their lives and livelihood. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 117 million people had been forcibly displaced in the world by the end of 2023, including 43.3 million refugees, 62.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and 6.1 million asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2024). Key factors include the escalating effects of climate change and the ongoing conflict in Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan and Myanmar.

A significant trend in recent years is the regionalization of displacement, where most displaced people remain in neighbouring countries, often in the Global South. Developing countries host nearly 76% of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2024). This tendency calls into question the ability of host governments and poses important issues regarding international solidarity and burden-sharing.

In Southeast Asia, forced migration is particularly visible in the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis. Over a million Rohingya have left Myanmar since 2017 as a result of systematic violence; most have taken sanctuary in Bangladesh, although a sizable portion have travelled to Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. Despite not having ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, Malaysia is home to about 198,430 registered refugees and asylum seekers, with over 100,000 of them being Rohingya (UNHCR Malaysia, 2024). Malaysia continues to be an important destination due to its relative economic stability and Muslim-majority demographic. However, refugees live in a legal grey area – lacking formal recognition, access to legal employment, or public education and healthcare (Lego, 2012). A significant trend in Malaysia is the increasing securitization of refugee issues,

where forced migrants are often framed as illegal immigrants, leading to raids, detentions, and deportations (Kudo, 2012).

Background

The Rohingya people have endured decades of systemic persecution, violence, and forced displacement. Nearly half of the total number of 111,670 registered Rohingya refugees in Malaysia which totals around 54,930 are children under the age of 18 years, and most of them are not given access to formal education due to Malaysia's non-signatory status towards the 1951 Refugee Convention and discriminatory education policies (Ismail et al., 2023; Zhooriyati et al., 2021).

In response to these challenges, the Malaysia Relief Agency (MRA) established the Rohingya Community School in Sungai Petani, Kedah. The school was established as a humanitarian initiative to address the educational void suffered by Rohingya children, otherwise excluded from accessing the national educational system. The MRA, a leading Malaysian non-governmental organization, is dedicated to delivering relief, development, and educational support to vulnerable communities, such as refugees.

The Rohingya Community School is a haven for Rohingya children, an opportunity for elementary education in a safe, supportive, and culturally responsive environment. The school is situated in the midst of the Rohingya community, and as a result, the curriculum and instruction are modified to accommodate the linguistic and cultural demands of the students. The school also serves to promote social support and resilience through its role as a community center for students and their families. The school's educational system takes into account the individual needs of Rohingya children, some of whom have experienced trauma, interrupted education, and language challenges. The general curriculum includes basic numeracy and literacy in Malay and English, religious and moral studies, and vocational training. The teaching staff generally consists of Rohingya and Malaysian personnel, some of whom serve as role models and mentors.

Aside from education, the school provides psychosocial care and sense of belonging, which are crucial in promoting the welfare and motivation of refugee children. The presence of the school reduces the rate of child labor and early marriage because students have aspirations for a better future and the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and marginalization. Along with its essential role, the Rohingya Community School also faces tremendous challenges: inadequate financing, non-recognition, and few resources. Nevertheless, it remains a symbol of hope for the Rohingya community in Sungai Petani, teaching children and allowing them to build resilience against adversity.

MRA's initiative of setting up this school is a traditional example of the key role that NGOs and bottom-up efforts play in correcting educational deprivation among refugees in Malaysia. It also highlights the importance of nonformal education providers in instilling motivation, resilience, and hope in marginalized youth.

Problem Statement

The recurring displacement of the Rohingya people has created a vast diaspora across Southeast Asia, with Malaysia accepting over 100,000 Rohingya refugees up to 2024 (UNHCR Malaysia, 2024). However, due to Malaysia's discriminatory education framework and lack of recognition for refugee status, Rohingya children are compelled to attend unofficial or community learning centers instead of public schools (Zhooriyati et al., 2021; Chuah, 2023; Ismail et al., 2023). While broad and broad-based scholarly work has been done on the structural and legal barriers to refugee access to education, there is relatively less known about internal and external factors that drive educational motivation among Rohingya students under these constrained circumstances.

Given that educational motivation is crucial in determining learning results, perseverance, and future goals – all of which are essential for the self-sufficiency and long-term integration of refugee youth – this gap is particularly critical. Knowing the factors that motivate refugee students to seek education provides crucial information for creating more adaptable and effective educational initiatives in environments of social marginalization,

financial hardship and legal predicament. Thus, this article explores the sociocultural, psychological, and environmental factors that influence Rohingya students' motivation for learning in Malaysia, to add to the expanding discourse on refugee education in the Global South and to help guide policy and practice in non-signatory host states.

Objectives

1. To examine the relative influence of self-determination factors (autonomy, competence, relatedness), social cognitive factors (observational learning, self-efficacy, goal-setting), and resilience factors (social support, coping mechanisms, internal control) on educational motivation among Rohingya refugee students in community-based learning centers.
2. To identify specific areas within the educational environment that require targeted interventions to enhance motivation, with particular focus on addressing autonomy deficits and strengthening coping mechanisms among Rohingya students.

Potential Contributions of the Paper

The study contributes to the theoretical integration where by synthesizing SDT, SCT, and Resilience Theory, the study offers a multidimensional framework that captures psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness), social learning processes (self-efficacy, role modeling, goal-setting), and protective resilience factors (social support, coping strategies, internal locus of control) influencing educational motivation.

There is also contribution in term of contextual insights where the study provides nuanced, context-specific knowledge about Rohingya students' educational experiences in Malaysia, a non-signatory host country with restrictive refugee policies, thereby enriching the literature on refugee education in the Global South.

Furthermore, the study also contributes to the practical implications where the findings will inform the design of targeted educational interventions and community programs that foster autonomy, build competence, enhance social connectedness, and strengthen resilience among Rohingya students, improving their academic engagement and well-being.

Another contribution from the study is the policy relevance. The study's insights can guide policymakers, NGOs, and educators in developing inclusive education policies and support mechanisms for refugee children excluded from formal schooling systems.

Finally, the study contributes in terms of advancing the refugee education discourse where by focusing on motivational factors rather than solely structural barriers, the research contributes to a more holistic understanding of refugee education challenges and potential solutions, emphasizing student agency and psychosocial support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024), as of end December 2024, there are approximately 192,240 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia. The total of 170,530 people from Myanmar are made up of about 111,670 Rohingyas, 27,700 Chins, and 31,150 other ethnic groups who are fleeing persecution or living in conflict-affected areas. The 111,670 Rohingya, the biggest ethnic group of Myanmar refugees in Malaysia, make up 65.5% of the country's overall population. Due to their inability to receive formal education in Malaysia, these Rohingyas have fewer opportunities to grow as individuals and prepare for a better future (Lee and Hoque, 2024). The Rohingyas are also denied access to free healthcare and legal employment (Hema, 2013). Out of the 111,670, nearly 50% of them are children under the age of 18. All these children lack many of the skills necessary for growth and do not get access to the formal education like other children (Lee and Hoque, 2024).

In recent years, the discourse around refugee education has shifted from structural obstacles to the psychosocial

and motivational factors that shape the educational engagement among displaced populations. Since Rohingya children in Malaysia are denied access to formal public education, informal learning centres become crucial spaces for them, not only for academic learning but also as the place to cultivate hope and resilience (Ismail et al., 2023). In these secure and culturally sensitive environment centres, which are often run by NGOs and supported by UNHCR, students might regain a sense of normalcy (Lee & Hoque, 2024).

Motivation is severely influenced by a confluence of personal goals and social-environmental elements, especially in times of crisis. Shohel (2022) suggested that students' perceptions of future opportunities, trauma experiences, and community support are all deeply intricately with their feeling of purpose in education-for-emergencies settings. Despite limited resources and uncertified curricula, Rohingya children who see education as a medium to achieve social mobility and dignity are more likely to be persistent and more engaged in class.

Gender also played an important element in understanding educational motivation. Research conducted by Education Inquiry (2022) revealed that girls usually encounter distinctive motivational challenges due to sociocultural norms, safety concerns, and domestic expectations. Nevertheless, when education programs include specific interventions—such as female teachers, menstrual hygiene support, and gender-sensitive facilities—girls' attendance and engagement significantly increase (Shohel, 2022). These findings have important implications for learning centres like the Rohingya Community School in Sungai Petani, where most of the students are female and where inclusive strategies could clearly improve learning outcomes.

Additionally, the sense of belonging, an attachment feeling to peers and teachers, has been identified as a motivating reason for refugee students. Lerch and Buckner (2020) suggested that classroom environments that foster mutual respect, peer mentoring, and empathy can hinder students against dropping out. This supports the integration of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in the current study, specifically about its focus on relatedness and competence as key drivers of motivation in difficult situations.

Another significant factor is the role that self-efficacy and observational learning play. Mahruf Shohel (2022) argued that the majority of these Rohingya students are driven by the academic achievement of their friends or individuals who desire to enjoy bright futures. Having friends as role models encourages one to believe more in his or her ability to withstand hardships and prosper in the midst of struggle. This is in line with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the influence of self-belief and social modelling on behavior.

As a final note, the resilience approach provides a critical standpoint. Based on research conducted by UNESCO (2021), children of Rohingya are likely to show increased persistence in studies if they are hopeful, committed to their religious and cultural practices, and supported through psychosocial interventions. Resilience-based motivation requires flexible models of learning that include life skills integration and trauma-informed education (Lerch & Buckner, 2020). These are pertinent to Malaysia, considering that schools such as the Sungai Petani one are utilized on a daily basis as safe public spaces.

These findings suggest the need for universally applicable, context-aware strategies that put refugee children's social and psychological life first. This research investigates the educational motivation of Rohingya students according to an integrated model of SDT, SCT, and Resilience Theory, within a knotted web of institutional exclusion, community politics, and internal resilience.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To investigate the determinants of educational motivation among Rohingya students, this study integrates three inter-related psychological theories that are: Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Resilience Theory. Theories allow us to explore not only individual psychological needs but also environmental adversity and social modelling effects on persistence in education.

Deci and Ryan (1985) developed Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which theorizes that human motivation is derived from the fulfillment of three inherent psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In refugee learning environments, these needs are much more imperative. For example, Rohingya

students may feel that when their voice matters in the classroom (autonomy), they have competence to acquire new things (competence), and they receive nurturance and support emotionally by peers and instructors (relatedness), therefore their fundamental motivation to learn increases (Lee & Hoque, 2024). This is most proper in informal learning centers, where classroom practices are much more inclusive and supportive than in traditional systems.

Conversely, by analysing how social processes influence learning behaviours and self-efficacy, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) provides a supplementary perspective. Bandura (1997) stated that students will be more engaged in learning when they observe peers or role models succeed—particularly those who share similar backgrounds or challenges. In Rohingya communities, where educational attainment is rare and symbolic, the success of a few can spark hope among many. Shohel (2022) emphasized that peer modelling and encouragement play an especially powerful role in sustaining motivation in displaced learners who may otherwise lack access to formal mentors or structured pathways.

Resilience Theory provides the fundamental component of how students overcome and prosper in the face of adversity to further deepen our understanding. Rohingya students typically carry the burden of trauma, displacement, and social and political exclusion. Even though, the majority of them still exhibit remarkable resilience. In the theory of resilience, protective factors such as religion, a purpose, and social support can facilitate learning engagement and serve as a defense against these problems (UNESCO, 2021; Lerch & Buckner, 2020). In informal learning centres in Malaysia, the persistence of students who have not been officially recognized yet but still attend on a daily basis, is an important part of their educational journeys.

This research delves into how the factors that contribute to motivational Rohingya students are not merely personal traits but also their relations, challenges, and aspirations. The research discusses how such children remain optimistic, learn from others, and move ahead by integrating ideas from Resilience Theory, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). This approach provides us with greater insight into what drives the Rohingya Community School students in Sungai Petani to pursue further schooling.

Integrated Framework

A global paradigm for comprehending the educational motivation of Rohingya students is provided by the combination of SDT, SCT, and Resilience Theory:

Theory	Key Concepts	How It Helps Rohingya Students
Self-Determination Theory	Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness	Gives students choice, boosts confidence, and fosters belonging.
Social Cognitive Theory	Observational Learning, Self-Efficacy, Goals	Promotes learning through role models and builds belief in abilities
Resilience Theory	Social Support, Coping, Internal Control	Helps students overcome adversity and persist despite hardship.

This multifaceted method considers both the outward social environment and interior psychological requirements, which is an important viewpoint for researching children who have experienced trauma or displacement. By using this approach, the study not only pinpoints the factors that drive these pupils, but it also sheds light on how responsive teaching methods might foster motivation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to identify and analyze the factors influencing educational motivation among Rohingya refugee students attending the Rohingya Community School in Sungai Petani, Kedah. The quantitative approach enables the systematic collection and statistical analysis of data to

examine relationships between motivational factors and students' educational engagement.

Population and Sampling

Population of the study includes all Rohingya refugee students enrolled at the Rohingya Community School (Sungai Petani). Sampling method applied is the purposive sampling method where researchers select students who meet the study criteria (Rohingya background, currently enrolled, aged 9–17. Based in the study criteria, a total of 40 out of 80 students were taken as samples.

Data Collection

The research instrument in this study includes a survey instrument which is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was run with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26's reliability analysis and the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.727 was obtained which indicated that the instrument was reliable.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.687	.727	27

The developed structured questionnaire drew on validated scales, and items were aligned with SDT, SCT, and Resilience Theory. The questionnaire consisted of the following sections.

Section A	Demographics:age, gender, and class
Section B	Self Determination Theory (SDT): Autonomy, competence, and relatedness
Section C	Social Cognitive Theory (SCT):Self-efficacy, observational learning, and goal-setting
Section D	Resilience Theory (RT):Social support, coping mechanisms, and internal control

All items in the questionnaire assessed students' attitudes, persistence, and aspirations regarding education motivation. The survey had been administered in person at the school by trained research assistants and teachers familiar with the students' language and culture. All participation are voluntary, and informed consent were obtained from students and their guardians.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic characteristics and responses to each motivational factor. The paper also uses an independent t-test analysis to compare the mean between the main domains with age, gender, and grade.

The respondents were divided into two categories for each age, gender, and grade. As for age, first category is the students aged 9 - 12 year old. The second category includes students aged 13 - 17 year old. In terms of gender, the respondents were divided into male and female category while in terms of grade, respondents were divided into grade A and B.

Ethical Considerations

Considering the ethical aspect of the study, all students and their guardians were notified of the survey. Verbal consent were obtained from all participants and their guardians before the survey was conducted. All responses are kept confidential and anonymized in reporting to ensure confidentiality and the study also adhere to ethical guidelines for research with vulnerable populations.

Limitations

Among the limitations in this study is that the use of purposive sampling and the focus on two schools may somehow limit the generalizability of findings to all Rohingya refugee students in Malaysia. Another limitation is that the self-reported data may be subject to social desirability bias depending on the respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic profile

The study involved 40 respondents, all of whom are students from the Rohingya Community School (RCS), managed by the Malaysia Relief Agency (MRA). These students are categorized into two academic levels: Grade A (advanced level, based on top academic performance regardless of age) and Grade B (intermediate level, reflecting moderate academic performance). The average age of the participants is 12 years, with ages ranging from 9 to 17. Most of the students are 11 years old. Most respondents are male, with females making up only 30% of the group. Additionally, most students are at the intermediate level, while only 35% are in the advanced category.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=40)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Age	—	—	—	12.3	12	9	17
Gender	Male	28	70%	—	—	—	—
	Female	12	30%	—	—	—	—
Grade	Advanced	14	35%	—	—	—	—
	Intermediate	26	65%	—	—	—	—

Drivers of Educational Motivation Among Rohingya Students

The findings will investigate the main motivational drivers of Rohingya students' motivation to learn based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and Resilience Theory. This consolidation of theories offers a comprehensive picture of educational motivation that addresses students' intrinsic motivation to study, the influence of the outside environment for example, quality of teaching, learning resources, classroom environment, support from teachers and classmates, and parental support, and the resistance of the students in the face of their socio-economic and personal challenges. Examples of these resiliencies include maintaining regular attendance at school despite unstable homes, continuing education in the face of language barriers or limited resources, adapting to new school environments, and demonstrating persistence following trauma.

Self-Determination of the Students

In this context, self-determination is divided into 3 parameters – autonomy, competence, relatedness. Autonomy is the need to feel in control of one's actions and decisions. On the hand, competence is the need to feel capable and effective in one's activities, while relatedness in this context means the need to feel connected to others (peers, teachers, community).

Social Cognitive of the Students

The context of social cognitive is categorized into 3 parameters - observational learning, self efficacy, and goal setting. Observational learning is the modeling approach where people learn by watching others (role models). The second parameter which is self-efficacy, refers to the belief in one's ability to succeed while the last parameter is goal setting where clear and achievable goals enhance motivation to study.

Resilience of the Students

The third theory is the Resilience Theory that covers 3 parameters namely social support, coping mechanisms, and internal control. Social support is the strong family or community buffer against stress. Coping mechanisms are the adaptive strategies such as problem-solving or religious faith and others, that are used to help managing hardship. Finally, internal control is the belief that one can influence their outcomes and not helpless.

Comparison on the Framework’s Parameters

Table 2 presents the overall findings related to educational motivation. The highest scores were observed in the area of social cognitive factors, followed by resilience, while self-determination recorded the lowest score. Although the standard deviations are relatively small and all mean values exceed 4, the differences remain meaningful.

These results suggest that external support from both parents and schools is strong, creating a conducive environment that encourages Rohingya students to pursue their education. However, the main challenge appears to lie within the students themselves—specifically, their willingness and passion to continue their studies.

Notably, resilience scored relatively high at 4.4, which may be attributed to the unique setting of the RCS school. Since it exclusively serves Rohingya students and is not integrated with the mainstream Malaysian student population, it likely provides a safer and more supportive environment, shielding students from potential bullying or discrimination.

Table 2 Educational Motivation Based on Parameters

	Mean
Social Determination	4.3
Social Cognitive	4.5
Resilience	4.4

Table 3 provides a detailed analysis of the Social Determination parameters, revealing that among the three core dimensions—competence, relatedness, and autonomy—competence scores the highest. This suggests that students feel most positively about their abilities and achievements in learning environments. The competence dimension includes indicators such as; confidence in acquiring new skills; enjoyment in tackling learning challenges and; a sense of pride in academic accomplishments.

Then comes relatedness, which implies that students are inclined to feel supported and connected within their learning environments. Relatedness dimension indicators encompass dimensions of social capital and networking such as; bonding with fellow students; support from instructors and; belonging to the school.

Autonomy is the lowest with a mean of 3.8, implying students may not feel as autonomous in deciding or taking charge in the learning process. Autonomy variables include measures of choice, freedom, empowerment and trust such as: choice in learning; teacher respect of opinion and ideas and freedom to make decision about learning. This shows an area requiring improvement in promoting student autonomy and self-directed learning.

Table 3 Social Determination Parameters and Items

SD Parameters and Items	Mean
Autonomy	3.8
1. I feel like I have a choice in how I learn	4.0
2. I feel like my teacher respects my ideas and opinion	3.9

3. I am allowed to make decisions about my own learning	3.6
Competence	4.6
1. I feel confident in my ability to learn new things	4.6
2. I enjoy the challenge of learning new skills	4.4
3. I feel proud of my accomplishment in school	4.7
Relatedness	4.5
1. I feel connected to my classmate	4.5
2. I feel supported by my teachers	4.5
3. I feel like I belong at school	4.5

The analysis in Table 3 of the Social Determination parameters offers useful insights into educational practice and policy. The high competence scores signal that students believe predominantly that they have confidence in their ability to learn and are most likely to be proud of their accomplishment. This is a welcome indication that current teaching practices are effective in building core abilities and motivation.

But the relatively low autonomy score of only 3.8 on average identifies an area of policy priority. It appears that students have hardly any chance to make decisions, express their own ideas, or take control of their own learning. Such limited autonomy runs the risk of crushing self-managed learning, creativity, and deep involvement.

To facilitate students' autonomy effectively, some policy changes could be implemented, such as curriculum reform, teacher professionalization, building a positive school culture, integrating technology, and establishing effective monitoring and evaluation systems. Curriculum reform has to prioritize student-centered learning by providing choice, voice, and personalized learning paths. The professional development for teachers has to target practices that will assist in building autonomy-supportive classrooms, such as encouraging student participation and adaptive learning options. Student autonomy, trust, and empowerment are central to positive school culture in building an environment in which students feel challenged and respected. In addition, the use of technology in instruction can give students increased ownership of what, how, and when they learn using digital tools. Finally, regular monitoring of indicators of autonomy is necessary to track progress and areas for improvement and additional support.

Table 4 Social Cognitive Parameters and Items

SC Parameters and Items	Mean
Observational Learning	3.9
1. I learn by watching and imitating others	2.8
2. I am inspired by successful students	4.8
3. I learn from the experiences of others	4.3
Self-efficacy	4.4
1. I believe I can succeed in school	4.5
2. I set challenging but achievable goals for myself	4.1
I am persistent when I face difficulties in learning	4.6

Goal setting	4.5
1. I have clear goals for my education	4.2
2. I work hard to achieve my educational goals	4.4
I feel motivated to reach my academic goals	4.8

Table 4 shows a summary of Social Cognitive dimensions with the observation that goal setting was exhibited with the highest average of 4.3, followed by self-efficacy, while observational learning had the lowest rate at 3.9. It is shown through these findings that students possess high capability to set specific, purposeful goals and are highly motivated to achieve them. Their strong self-efficacy is a positive belief in their ability for achievement, and perseverance in the face of trouble—both of which are vital to ongoing academic participation and resilience.

The findings also extend to the autonomy factor, which encompasses elements like choice, freedom, empowerment, and trust. The powerful influence of goal setting and self effectiveness corresponds to a learning environment that supports autonomy, i.e., students are likely being assisted by conditions for the learners to become self-managing. The decreased emphasis on observational learning might however indicate more structured peer learning practices or mentorship strategies that can enable social learning without threatening individual autonomy.

From the findings, part of the following suggestions can be made to enhance learning experiences and achievement of students. Firstly, schools must provide students with greater opportunities to learn from one another in order to address the relatively low score in observational learning. This is achievable through peer mentoring programs, group assignments, and classroom activities that encourage sharing of strategies and experiences. Inviting successful alumni or guest speakers to share their journeys can also provide relatable role models and inspire students through real-life examples.

Building on the efficacy of goal setting, educators need to introduce structured goal-setting instruments, such as SMART goals, to allow students to specify and refine their goals. Providing tools like goal-monitoring journals or websites can help students monitor progress and stay on track. Teacher feedback on a regular basis will once more enforce students' compliance with goals and allow them to implement the changes necessary.

To further enhance self-efficacy, learning contexts must be organized that build confidence by gradually challenging the student and continuously reinforcing the student. Recognition and feedback of small achievements can strengthen the belief by the student in their abilities. Encouraging self-reflection will also allow students to identify useful learning strategies and recognize their own progress with time.

Finally, an autonomy culture needs to be developed. This involves giving students more voice and choice in the learning process, for example, allowing them to choose topics on projects or how they demonstrate what they know. Teachers need to be empowered with autonomy-fostering practices that are centered on empathy, flexibility, and student empowerment. Creating a classroom culture of trust and respect will motivate students to become more invested in their own learning and become self-directed, motivated learners.

Table 5 Resilience Parameters and Items

Resilience Parameters and Items	Mean
Social Support	4.4
1. My family encourages me to do well in school	4.4
2. I have friends who support my education	4.4
3. I have entrusted adult who I can talk to about school	4.5

Coping Mechanisms	4.2
1. I know how to manage stress related to schoolwork	4.2
2. I can overcome challenges that I face in school	4.3
3. I can ask for help when I need it	4.0
Internal Control	4.4
I believe that my own effort and hard work will determine my success in school	4.7
I feel in control of my own learning	3.9
I am responsible for my own education	4.5

Table 5 gives a clear picture of the breakdown of the resilience parameters among students, and it can be seen that Social Support and Internal Control had the highest mean values, while Coping Mechanisms had the lowest mean value of 4.2. Although the value is also high, it is significantly lower than the other dimensions. The results indicate that students have good support networks like family, peers, and adults they trust, and they also possess a good sense of internal control—assuming that effort and hard work are integral to success. They also assume a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning.

The high marks for Social Support and Internal Control show that students are firmly grounded in their social and personal contexts. Students are likely to be motivated, self-directed, and resilient in the face of academic challenge due to the support and guidance they receive from their support networks. Their belief in personal effort as a driver of success also shows a growth mindset, something that is critical for long-term personal and academic development.

However, the comparatively lower score in Coping Mechanisms is a concern. It indicates that while students may feel controlled and supported, they may lack effective means to deal with stress, anxiety, or pressure from academics. Such inconsistency can lead to burnout, lower academic achievement, or emotional suffering, especially during high-stakes periods such as exams or transitions.

To address the imbalance in coping skills, schools must implement targeted interventions that enhance students' emotional resilience. This includes integrating stress management workshops, mindfulness, and emotional regulation skills into the school curriculum. Having safe rooms or counseling services where students can receive support confidentially is also imperative. Teachers and school staff need to be trained to recognize signs of stress and provide appropriate support or referrals.

In addition, promoting peer support groups and resilience-building programs can allow students to share experiences and learn coping mechanisms from one another. Implementing these practices into school culture will not only enhance students' ability to cope with adversity but also build on the solid foundations of social support and internal control already in place.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This pilot study of learning motivation among Rohingya refugee students at the Rohingya Community School in Sungai Petani provides valuable insights into complex factors underlying learning engagement among displaced groups. Through the integration of Self-

Determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Resilience Theory, the research exhibits a high level of understanding of the way in which psychological needs, social learning processes, and adaptive resilience interact to influence learning motivation in constrained environments.

The findings demonstrate that social cognitive factors ($M = 4.5$) are the strongest predictor of educational motivation, followed by resilience factors ($M = 4.4$), while self-determination factors recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 4.3$). The pattern demonstrates that external support systems, modeling, and goal-setting mechanisms are more effective in motivating Rohingya students than internal psychological needs alone. The saliency of

social cognitive factors indicates that students are highly attuned to observational learning opportunities, have high self-efficacy beliefs, and benefit strongly from clear goal-setting mechanisms.

Within the self-determination domain, competence emerged as the strongest factor ($M = 4.6$), indicating that students are confident of their learning abilities and proud of their achievements. Autonomy, on the other hand, recorded the lowest score of all parameters tested (M

$= 3.8$), indicating a wide disparity between students' perception of control over their learning experiences. This finding is particularly interesting given the lack of choice refugee students have within non-formal education systems.

The resilience analysis reveals that students benefit from robust social support networks ($M = 4.4$) and possess strong internal control beliefs ($M = 4.4$), yet show relatively weaker coping mechanisms ($M = 4.2$). This suggests that while students have supportive environments and believe in their ability to influence outcomes, they may lack specific strategies for managing academic stress and challenges.

These findings have important theoretical implications, demonstrating that educational motivation among refugee populations cannot be understood through a single theoretical lens. The integrated framework employed in this study captures the multidimensional nature of motivation in crisis-affected contexts, where external support and social learning processes may compensate for limited autonomy and formal educational opportunities.

The research contributes to the growing body of literature on refugee education by shifting focus from structural barriers to internal motivational processes. It demonstrates that despite facing significant legal, economic, and social constraints, Rohingya students maintain strong educational aspirations and benefit from community-based learning environments that provide safety, cultural sensitivity, and social support.

However, the study also reveals critical areas requiring intervention. The relatively low autonomy scores suggest that current educational approaches may not adequately foster student agency and self-directed learning. Similarly, the lower coping mechanism scores indicate a need for targeted psychosocial support to help students manage academic and life stresses effectively.

The unique context of the Rohingya Community School, serving exclusively Rohingya students in a culturally sensitive environment, appears to provide protective factors that enhance resilience and social learning. This finding underscores the importance of community-based educational initiatives in supporting refugee children's motivation and well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this research, it is recommended that educational practitioners and NGOs enhance the independence of the students through the application of flexible curriculum design with various routes for students to take vocational, academic, and religious education. It is also recommended that student voice mechanisms be implemented by educational practitioners and NGOs, such as learning councils in which students participate in classroom policy and activity decisions, to provide project-based learning opportunities where students are able to select topics of interest and relevance, and to also equip teachers with training on autonomy-supportive instructional practices emphasizing student choice and ownership.

Besides that, education professionals and NGOs can also focus on the strengthening of coping skills through the inclusion of stress management and emotional regulation workshops as part of normal curriculum, organizing peer support groups using counselors or community workers trained to work with such students, integrating mindfulness and relaxation activities as part of a school's everyday operations, and providing trauma-informed educational strategies that respect and confront the impact of displacement experiences.

Moreover, education practitioners and NGOs are recommended to involve social cognitive factors by developing intensive mentorship schemes whereby students are paired with successful Rohingya community

members, creating platforms for success story sharing and academic achievements among the community, instituting peer tutoring schemes that capitalize on observational learning preferences, and having specific achievable short-term goals in addition to long-term education objectives. Looking forward from the lenses of policymakers and government agencies, it is recommended that the policymakers and government agencies recognize and support community-based education by developing formal recognition frameworks for community schools serving refugee populations, providing financial and technical support to established informal education providers, creating pathways for certification or accreditation of learning achieved in community schools, and establishing partnerships between community schools and formal education institutions.

Moreover, policymakers and government agencies is recommended to address systemic barriers by advocating for policy reforms that enable refugee children's access to formal education systems, developing bridging programs that facilitate transition from community schools to formal education, creating vocational training opportunities with recognized certification for older refugee students, and establishing scholarship or support programs for academically gifted refugee students.

Finally, as for the academicians and researchers, it is recommended that expand research scope by conducting longitudinal studies tracking educational motivation changes over time, comparing the motivational factors across different refugee populations and host country contexts, investigating the long-term outcomes of community-based education on refugee integration, and exploring the role of technology in enhancing educational motivation among displaced populations, can actually contribute more to this issue. Furthermore, academicians and researchers can also develop Intervention Models, design and test evidence-based interventions targeting specific motivational deficits, create assessment tools adapted for refugee and crisis-affected populations, develop teacher training curricula incorporating findings from refugee education research, and build theoretical models that integrate cultural and contextual factors in educational motivation.

These recommendations recognize that educational motivation among refugee populations requires comprehensive, multi-level interventions that address individual psychological needs, social learning processes, and community resilience factors. The success of such interventions depends on collaborative efforts between educational practitioners, policymakers, communities, and the international development community.

The ultimate goal is to create educational environments that not only provide academic knowledge but also foster the autonomy, competence, resilience, and hope necessary for refugee children to envision and work toward better futures despite the constraints of their current circumstances.

REFERENCES

1. Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
2. Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W.H. Freeman.
3. Chuah, F. L., Tan, S. T., Yeo, J., & Legido-Quigley, H. (2018). The health needs and access barriers among refugees and asylum-seekers in Malaysia: A qualitative study. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 17(1), 120. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-018-0833-x>
4. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer.
5. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01
6. Hema, M. (2013). Denied access: Refugees and the right to health and education in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 41(4–5), 459–475.
7. Ibrahim, A. (2013). Myanmar's Rohingya refugees in Malaysia: Education and the way forward. *Jebat: Malaysian Journal of History, Politics & Strategic Studies*, 40(2).
8. Ismail, S., Awang Hashim, R., & Ramli, A. (2023). Educational challenges among Rohingya refugee children in Malaysia: Access and motivation. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 42(3), 45–57.

9. Kudo, M. (2012). Securitization of migration in Malaysia: Refugees and irregular migrants. *Journal of International and Area Studies*, 19(1), 93–113.
10. Lee, H., & Hoque, M. (2024). Education in exile: Rohingya children's learning in Malaysian community schools. *Journal of Refugee Education Studies*, 6(1), 15–34.
11. Lego, J. (2012). Refugees and the right to education: Malaysia's stance and practices. *Migration and Human Rights Review*, 8(2), 45–62.
12. Lerch, J., & Buckner, E. (2020). Refugee education and resilience: Global trends and local practices. UNESCO Policy Paper.
13. Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
14. Nah, A. M. (2020). Poverty and precarious employment: The case of Rohingya refugee construction workers in Peninsular Malaysia. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00559-2>
15. Shohel, M. M. C. (2022). Education in emergencies: Exploring refugee children's motivation for learning. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 92, 102635. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102635>
16. UNESCO. (2021). Building resilience in refugee education: Policy guidelines for host countries. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
17. UNHCR. (2024). Global trends: Forced displacement in 2023. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
18. UNHCR Malaysia. (2024). Figures at a glance. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Malaysia.
19. UNHCR Malaysia. (2024). Education support for refugee children. Retrieved from <https://refugeemalaysia.org/support/education/>
20. Zhooriyati, N., Rahman, A. A., & Aziz, F. (2021). Refugee education in Malaysia: Policy gaps and community school responses. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 18(2), 201–223.