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Modelling the nexus between tertiary learners' socioeconomic background, social cognitive motivation and achievement-oriented behavior

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Abstract

While several studies have examined the relationship between the achievement motivational beliefs of learners and their English achievement, studies investigating the relationship between social factors and achievement motivational beliefs are scarce. Hence, this research examines the influence of social factors and motivational beliefs on learners' approach and avoidance motivation. Under a quantitative research design, the data were collected through a questionnaire from 109 tertiary learners from a private university in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 24 and IBM SPSS Amos version 24. The results revealed that the mother's educational level and school location significantly influenced learners' self-efficacy which largely impacted their approach motivation. Also, the father's educational level influenced learners' task value and task value had the largest effect size on learners' approach motivation. In addition, approach and avoidance motivations were significantly related. Apart from adding new insights into achievement motivation literature, the implications of the findings are also discussed.

Keywords: social factors, task value, self-efficacy, approach motivation, avoidance motivation, education

Introduction

Learning a foreign language is a complicated procedure that involves various environmental, psychological, and affective factors (Ellis, 1985). Among the factors that influence learners' achievement in learning a foreign language, learner motivation, particularly learners'

achievement motivational beliefs, has gained traction in recent years (Shurovi et al., 2024). Among the motivation theories, learners' task value, self-efficacy, and achievement goals-oriented behaviour conceptualise motivation from a social cognitive perspective regarding the value of a task, learners' self-confidence in accomplishing the task, and the approach versus avoidance behaviour to do the task. Literature shows that learners' highly motivated behaviour significantly predicts their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) achievement (Hunsu et al., 2023; Nne et al., 2022).

Among the social cognitive theories of motivation, the expectancy-value theory asserts that a learner's positive expectations of accomplishing a task, the extrinsic or intrinsic value of a task, the learner's beliefs in his own competence, and the difficulty of the task influence the learner's motivation to engage in a task (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The intrinsic versus extrinsic value is analogous to the concepts of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation of self-determination theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (2015) who also emphasised the role of contextual factors in increasing or thwarting learners' motivation to engage in learning activities. According to the self-determination theory, the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, relatedness, and competence in the learning environment is crucial to enhancing learner motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2015). In this regard, how learners' task value is influenced by their social factors, namely school location and parents' education, has rarely been explored in motivation literature.

In addition, learners' task value has been associated with their self-efficacy which refers to their own perception of how competent they are to do a task. Learners' task motivation increases when they feel efficacious in completing the task. Self-efficacy has been reported to be related to learners' task value and learning goals (Mete, 2021). Learning goals are the aims learners set for completing a task. Learners may adopt an approach or avoidance behaviour based on their self-efficacy and perception of the tasks as easy versus challenging (Martin, 2016). Learners' goals direct their achievement-related behaviour in achievement situations (Cheng, 2023). Therefore, along with self-efficacy, learners' adoption of approach versus avoidance behaviours takes place in a context where they learn and perform. Since the factors of learners' social and cultural context impact their motivation in English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Gardner, 1979), a study on how social factors directly influence their self-efficacy and task motivation and indirectly impact their approach and avoidance motivations may shed new light on the complex interplay between learner psychology and the context where they learn.

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the framework of the socio-educational model proposed by Gardner (1979), who asserted the interrelation of the learning environment, e.g., social-cultural milieu and individual learner differences including motivation. In this regard, the recent surge of social-cognitive perspective to investigate learner motivation includes theories, such as task value, self-efficacy and achievement-oriented behaviours that tap into learners' cognitive understanding of the importance of the task, their competence to perform it and the aim they would like to achieve in accomplishing it. Since all this learning takes place in both formal and informal learning contexts (Gardner, 1979), how these motivational beliefs and achievement-oriented behaviours get influenced by social factors may add a new perspective to achievement motivation literature.

Rationale for Conducting the Study

In Bangladesh, among individual learner factors, learner motivation and learning strategies have been exhaustively studied. However, studies on motivation mainly focused on the dated

integrative versus instrumental motivation, the reasons behind the lack of motivation among learners and the EFL motivation among rural versus urban learners (Ahmad, 2005; Jannat et al., 2022; Tasneem, 2021). Also, other studies explored EFL classroom factors, such as lack of teacher training, studying in a large classroom, a lack of competence among teachers in rural schools, and the significance of socioeconomic factors in the Bangladeshi EFL context (Hamid & Erling, 2016; Nuby et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2019). Therefore, studies investigating learner motivation from a social-cognitive perspective and how these motivational beliefs are influenced by social factors are scarce in the Bangladeshi EFL context. Hence, this study may reveal the dimensions of the cognitive beliefs of learners and the related contextual factors of this region.

Literature Review

Social Factors

According to Gardner (1979), learning takes place in a social milieu which is one of the four determining factors in learning L2. The social milieu includes both formal and informal learning contexts (Gardner, 1979). The other social factors influencing learners' L2 motivation include ethnicity, gender, and education (Chou, 2021). Due to a renewed interest in examining learner motivation from a "situative" perspective (Ma et al., 2021, p. 3), several studies examined the differences in learning motivation among learners coming from rural versus urban school locations (Andrade-Molina et al., 2021; Joydhar, 2021). The study by Ma et al. (2021) revealed that urban learners outperformed their rural counterparts in L2 achievement. Another social factor, parental education, has also been examined in connection with learner motivation. Iwaniec (2018) reported that learners whose parents' educational level was lower exhibited a lower level of motivation. Likewise, in Pakistan, parents' educational level was reported to be positively related to learners' motivation. None of the above studies examined the probable impact of school location and parental educational level on learners' approach and avoidance motivations through their social cognitive motivational beliefs, namely task value and self-efficacy. By filling this gap in the literature, the current study aims to shed light on how contextual factors interact with learners' motivational beliefs to influence their goal-oriented behaviour.

Task Value

Task value refers to the reasons learners participate in certain learning activities and perceive the usefulness of doing the tasks (Bai et al., 2020). The expectancy-value theory developed by Eccles and Wigfield (2002) has its origin in Atkinson's (1964) theory of achievement performance, which is directly linked to learners' expectations of success and beliefs in task value (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010). This expectancy-value theory comprises four key components including attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost (Eccles et al. 1983).

Task value has been studied in a plethora of studies. Research suggests that learners with higher task value achieved higher scores in EFL writing (Bai et al., 2020); learners' task value was positively associated with the efforts they invested in learning (Dietrich et al., 2017); learners' task value was also significantly related to their self-efficacy (Shen et al., 2020); learners who attached more value to participating in learning activities also employed more cognitive and metacognitive strategies (Neuville et al., 2007). Unlike the Western culture where learning interest among learners is prioritized, the Asian Confucian culture emphasizes more on hard work and putting more effort to achieve higher (Wang et al., 2019) which warrants more research on achievement motivational beliefs, particularly task value of learners. In

addition, based on the literature, studies on how social factors influence learners' task value in association with other motivational beliefs have been scarce, and the current study aims to fill this gap.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is learners' confidence in their ability to execute actions necessary to accomplish certain goals (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy plays a crucial role in a person's choice of engaging in certain tasks, the amount of effort they are ready to expend, and the way they try to persist (Shih & Alexander, 2000). Expectations of success are inherent aspects of self-efficacy. These expectations are of two kinds: efficacy expectations and outcome expectations (Bandura, 1994). Efficacy expectation is learners' confidence to be efficacious in completing a task successfully while outcome expectation is their belief in their capability to achieve certain outcomes (Sekreter, 2016). Self-efficacy has been divided into two main types, namely state-like self-efficacy (SSE) and general self-efficacy (GSE). SSE is the motivation to perform an activity to meet the demands of a situation, whereas GSE is the self-confidence to perform successfully in various achievement situations (Fan et al., 2008). Two more types of self-efficacy are task self-efficacy and coping self-efficacy (Maddux, 1995). Task self-efficacy is the learners' beliefs in their capability to complete the fundamental aspects of activities effectively. In contrast, coping self-efficacy is learners' confidence to perform those activities in difficult situations (Cumming & Hall, 2004). Learners develop self-efficacy from four sources, namely previous success, others' success, feedback, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977).

In literature, self-efficacy has been studied in association with help-seeking, feedback-seeking, task value, and goal orientation (Gan et al., 2023; Mete, 2021; Xuan et al., 2020). In the study of Gan et al. (2023), learners' inclination to seek feedback from teachers was significantly predicted by their self-efficacy which exhibited their tendency to act upon teachers' suggestions. Self-efficacy also positively predicted learners' help-seeking behavior (Xuan et al., 2020). Several studies reported a significant and positive correlation between self-efficacy and learners' goals and academic achievement (Honicke et al., 2019; Karbaksh & Safa, 2020; Saks, 2024). Based on the literature, there is a dearth of studies exploring the probable effects of social factors on self-efficacy belief and the effect of self-efficacy belief on learners' approach versus avoidance motivation. Therefore, this research attempts to fill this gap in the literature and respond to the necessity for further research in investigating the role of contextual variables in influencing the motivational beliefs of learners (Neuville et al., 2007).

Approach & Avoidance Motivations

Learner goals are components of achievement motivation defined in terms of future-oriented cognitive objectives that direct learners towards a competence-related final phase that the individuals previously aimed to avoid or approach (Karbaksh & Safa, 2020). The more recent goal orientation theory classifies learner goals into two main types: mastery and performance goals. These are further categorized as mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). The mastery goal is conceptually closer to the learning goal in the initial goal orientation theory. The mastery-approach goal encourages a learner to put greater effort into mastering the material and enhancing skills, whereas the performance-approach goal indicates learners' intention to outperform others. In contrast, the mastery-avoidance goal indicates the learners' goal to avoid failure to understand the material while the performance-avoidance goal shows learners' intent to avoid demonstrating poorer capability in competitive situations (Karbaksh & Safa,

2020). The new dichotomy between approach and avoidance goals adds a new dimension to the original concept of goal orientation. These concepts of achievement goals were termed "motive to achieve" versus "motive to avoid" in the theory of achievement motivation (Argyle & Robinson, 1962, p. 107).

Research indicates that approach goals were related to higher intrinsic motivation, task value, and self-efficacy, whereas avoidance goals were positively associated with lower intrinsic motivation and higher test anxiety (Elliot, 2005; Frumos et al., 2024; Palos et al., 2019). Another motivational belief, self-efficacy, has been reported to be directly linked to goal orientation where self-efficacy has been positively associated with approach goals (Mete, 2021). Cheng (2023) investigated the extent to which goal setting influenced learners' choice of learning strategies. Other studies identified a positive association of goal setting with academic performance and achievement (Hunsu et al., 2023; Karbaksh & Safa, 2020). Based on the literature, there is a scarcity of studies examining the direct and indirect effect sizes of other factors on approach and avoidance motivations separately. In particular, how social factors may impact learners' approach and avoidance motivations through their other motivational beliefs like task value and self-efficacy has rarely been studied. To fill this gap in the literature, this research aims to examine the dynamic interactions between contextual and individual learner factors in EFL situations.

Methods

Research Questions

This research aims to examine the effects of social factors on learners' approach and avoidance motivations through their task values and self-efficacy beliefs. For this, touching upon theories of expectancy-value, self-efficacy, and achievement goals, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the level of learners' approach and avoidance motivations?
2. To what extent are the social factors related to learners' approach and avoidance motivations?
3. To what extent do learners' social factors influence approach and avoidance motivations through their task value and self-efficacy?

Participants

A total of 109 tertiary learners taking a Composition and Communication Skills course in their first year participated in this study. A minimum of 30 participants is required for a correlation study (Creswell, 2012), suggesting the sample size of this study was sufficient. According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), their English was at A2 B1 level at that stage. There were 79 male and 30 female participants who participated in the research based on the purposive sampling technique. Since English is a foreign language in Bangladesh, participants rarely had opportunities to interact in English with native English speakers. However, they had 12 years of experience in learning English as a compulsory subject in schools and colleges.

Instruments

The data were collected using a four-part questionnaire comprising question items on learners' demographic information, task value, self-efficacy, and approach and avoidance motivations. Prior to administering the questionnaire, participants were briefed about the purpose of the

research. They were informed of their voluntary participation, assured that their participation would remain anonymous, and that the information would be used solely for the purpose of the research. The participants were encouraged to sign a consent form before filling out the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect the participants' demographic information including gender, age, school location, and father's and mother's educational level.

The second part of the questionnaire was adapted from Wigfield and Eccles (2000) which was designed to measure learners' task value in terms of the value of the task to the learners and their interest in doing the task. This part of the questionnaire consisted of 6 items measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all useful/important) to 5 (very useful/important). Some of the items include *"Compared to most of your other activities, how useful is what you learn in English?"* and *"Compared to most of your other activities, how important is it for you to be good at English?"* (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000, p. 70). The term 'Math' was replaced in the questionnaire with 'English' to serve the purpose of this research.

The third part of the questionnaire was adapted from Martin (2016) to measure the self-efficacy of learners. These items were also measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Some of the items include *"I can write simple sentences with good grammar"* and *"I can get ideas across in a clear manner by staying focused without getting off-topic"* (Martin, 2016, p. 125). A total of 7 items were adapted in this part.

The last part of the questionnaire was adapted from Elliot and Murayama (2008) and it was designed to measure learners' approach goals and avoidance goals. A total of 12 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were adopted. Examples of the items are: *"My goal is to learn as much as possible"; "My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn";* and *"My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to others*" (Elliot & Murayama, 2008, p. 617).

Reliability & Validity

The reliability of the questionnaire was ensured by conducting Cronbach's Alpha tests using IBM SPSS version 24. The alpha values of the items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha value of the variables

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Task value	8	.79
Self-efficacy	7	.90
Goal orientations	12	.80

The reliability scores of the questionnaire items were adequate. According to Hair et al. (2010), the acceptable threshold for a research instrument should be .60–.70.

The validity of the questionnaire was established by conducting Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using IBM SPSS Amos version 24. The factor loading estimates and model fit indices are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Model fit and factor loading estimates of the variables

Variables	*P*	*df*	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Range of estimates
Task value	.67	8	.99	.94	1.0	1.0	.00	.03	.52–.95
Self-efficacy	.30	2	.99	.91	.99	.99	.04	.01	.61–.78
Goal orientations	.11	30	.95	.87	.98	.96	.05	.04	.54–.91

Note: GFI = Goodness-of-fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker Lewis Index, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, and SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

The factor loading estimates and the model fit indices are acceptable for education research (Awang, 2012; Tavakol & Wetzel, 2020). Therefore, the reliability scores and CFA coefficients show that the reliability and validity of the 3-factor model are adequate.

Results

What is the Level of Learners' Approach and Avoidance Behaviour?

A descriptive analysis was conducted to answer the first research question. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Level of learners' approach versus avoidance goals

Variables	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	*N*	Std. Deviation
Mastery-Approach	12.50	5.0	15.0	109	2.03
Performance-Approach	12.30	5.0	15.0	109	2.03
Mastery-Avoidance	10.42	4.0	15.0	109	2.60
Performance-Avoidance	11.53	4.0	15.0	109	2.50

Table 3 shows that the mastery-approach motivation has the highest mean score followed by the performance-approach motivation which emerges as the second highest motivation. This indicates that most learners have a goal of mastering the material in the best possible way followed by the goal of outperforming others in an achievement situation. Among all goals, the mastery-avoidance motivation has the lowest mean score, demonstrating that this is the least prevalent motivation among EFL learners. Learners' approach and avoidance motivations are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that learners exhibited a higher level of both mastery- and performance-approach motivations compared to both mastery- and performance-avoidance motivations. Therefore, approach motivations are more prevalent among learners compared to avoidance motivations.

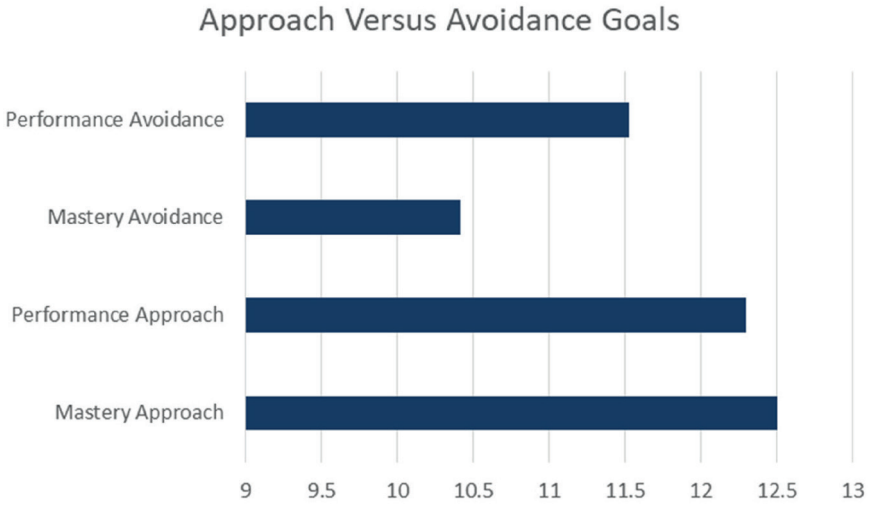

Figure 1. *EFL* learners' approach versus avoidance motivations

To What Extent are the Social Factors Related to Learners' Achievement Motivation Behaviour?

A correlation analysis using IBM SPSS was conducted to answer the second research question. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation coefficients among variables of interest

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. School Location	___						
2. Father's Education	.166	___					
3. Mother's Education	.165	.563**	___				
4. Self-Efficacy	.339**	.049	.247**	___			
5. Task Value	.162	–.019**	.133	.542**	___		
6. Approach Motivations	.144	.049	.031	.485**	.573**	___	
8. Avoidance Motivations	.122	–.150**	.033	.370**	.376**	.408**	___

Note: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 shows that a strong significant and positive correlation exists between learners' fathers' and mothers' educational levels. Among the motivational beliefs, learners' self-efficacy is moderately and positively related to their school location (r = .339, p < .001). There is also a weak and positive correlation between learners' mothers' educational level and their self-efficacy (r = .247, p = .004). These estimates show that learners' self-efficacy is likely to increase if their school location and mothers' educational level increases. Next, there is a weak negative correlation between learners' fathers' educational level and their task value (r = –.019, p = .005), whereas learners' task value is strongly and positively related to their self-efficacy

(r = .542, p = .001). Learners' approach motivations are strongly and positively related to their self-efficacy (r = .485, p < .001) and task value (r = .573, p < .001). This indicates that learners' approach motivations increase if their self-efficacy and task value increase. Finally, there is a small negative correlation between learners' fathers' educational level and their avoidance motivations (r = –.150, p = .040). However, learners' avoidance motivations are moderately associated with their self-efficacy (r = .370, p < .001), task value (r = .376, p < .001), and approach motivations (r = .408, p < .001). This implies that both approach and avoidance motivations increase if learners' other motivational beliefs, such as task value and self-efficacy increase. Among social factors, school location has the strongest positive relationship with learners' self-efficacy. In addition, among the motivational beliefs, task value has the highest correlation with learners' approach motivations.

To What Extent do Learners' Social Factors Influence Approach and Avoidance Goals Through their Task Value and Self-Efficacy?

To answer this research question, a path model analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Amos version 24. The model fit indices are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Fitness indices of the model fit to the data

	χ2	*df*	χ2/*df*	SRMR	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Fit indices	8.803	5	1.761	.0401	.992	.995	.08
Good fit indices			≤3	0 ≤ SRMR ≤ 0.05	≥0.90	≥0.90	≤0.05
Acceptable fit indices			≤5	0.05 ≤ SRMR ≤ 0.01	≥0.85		≤0.08

Note: p > .05 (Şimşek, 2007).

Table 5 shows that the standardized coefficients of the model fit were adequate (Awang, 2012). The results of the path model are presented in Figure 2.

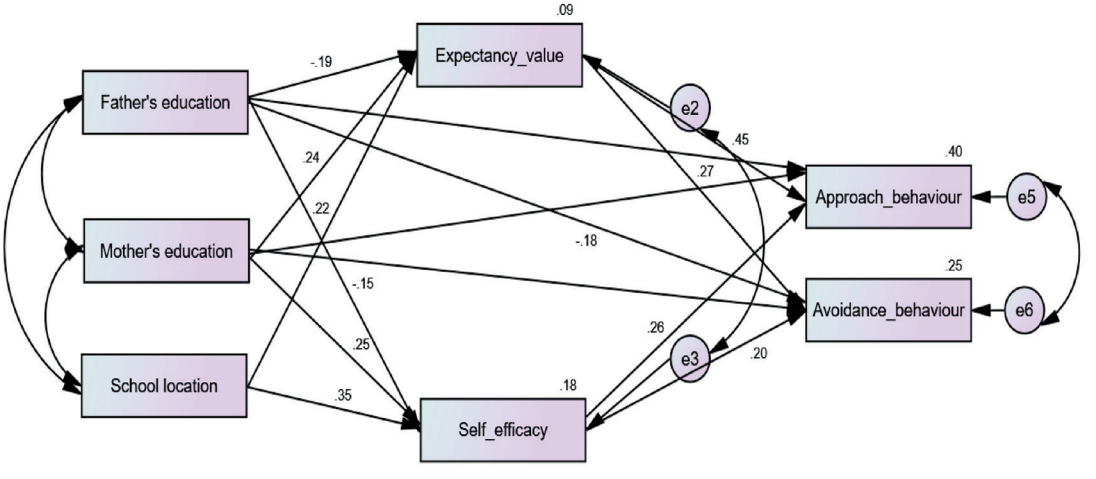

Figure 2. *Path model with standardized estimates*

Figure 2 shows that learners' social factors significantly influenced their approach and avoidance motivations through their task value and self-efficacy. In this model, the mother's educational level ($\beta = .25$, $p < .005$) and school location ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) had positive effects on learners' self-efficacy beliefs. This implies that if learners' mother's educational level increases by 1 standard deviation, their self-efficacy increases by .25 standard deviations, and their self-efficacy increases by .35 standard deviations if their school location goes up by 1 standard deviation. This means that learners coming from a more urban school location and with mothers having higher educational levels are likely to have a higher level of self-efficacy. In contrast, the direct path from the father's educational level to avoidance motivations was significant, showing a negative effect of the father's educational level on learners' avoidance motivations ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .035$). This indicates that learners' avoidance motivations go down by .18 standard deviations if their father's education increases by 1 standard deviation.

Among motivational beliefs, task value has a direct positive effect on both approach ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$) and avoidance motivations ($\beta = .27$, $p < .010$). Likewise, self-efficacy also exerts a significant positive impact on both approach ($\beta = .26$, $p < .006$) and avoidance motivations ($\beta = .20$, $p < .054$). Therefore, learners' approach and avoidance motivations are likely to increase if their task value and self-efficacy do so. This means that if learners' task value goes up by 1 standard deviation, their approach motivations increase by .45 standard deviations and avoidance motivations increase by .27 standard deviations. Likewise, if learners' self-efficacy goes up by 1 standard deviation, their approach motivations increase by .26 standard deviations and avoidance motivations go up by .20 standard deviations. Notably, the effect sizes of these motivational beliefs are larger on approach goals than avoidance goals.

In addition, among social factors, mothers' educational level and school location significantly and positively influenced learners' approach and avoidance motivations through their self-efficacy. Learners with a higher level of mothers' educational level reported a higher level of self-efficacy ($\beta = .25$, $p < .005$) and they, in turn, reported a higher level of approach ($\beta = .26$, $p < .006$) and avoidance motivations ($\beta = .20$, $p < .054$). Also, learners with a more urban school location reported a higher level of self-efficacy ($\beta = .35$, $p < .001$) and they, in turn, reported a higher level of approach ($\beta = .26$, $p < .006$) and avoidance motivations ($\beta = .20$, $p < .054$). In addition, the level of the father's education exerted a negative impact on learners' task value ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .04$); however, learners with a higher level of task value reported a higher level of approach ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$) and avoidance motivations ($\beta = .27$, $p < .010$).

Among the social factors, school location has the largest positive effect on self-efficacy and the father's educational level has the smallest negative effect on avoidance motivations. Among motivational beliefs, task value has the largest positive effect on approach motivations and self-efficacy has the smallest positive effect on avoidance motivations. Overall, social factors and motivational beliefs explained a 40% variance in the approach goals and a 25% variance in the avoidance goals of EFL learners.

This study demonstrated a model of social and motivational factors contributing to both approach and avoidance motivations, implying that a favorable social environment and higher motivational beliefs including self-efficacy and task value lead to more adaptive achievement behavior, namely approach motivations. These key implications are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3 shows that a conducive social environment including mother's higher educational level and a more facilitative school location, such as that of an urban setting, are more likely to induce a higher level of self-efficacy and task value in learners, which more likely leads towards a higher adaptive achievement-oriented behavior, namely approach motivation among learners.

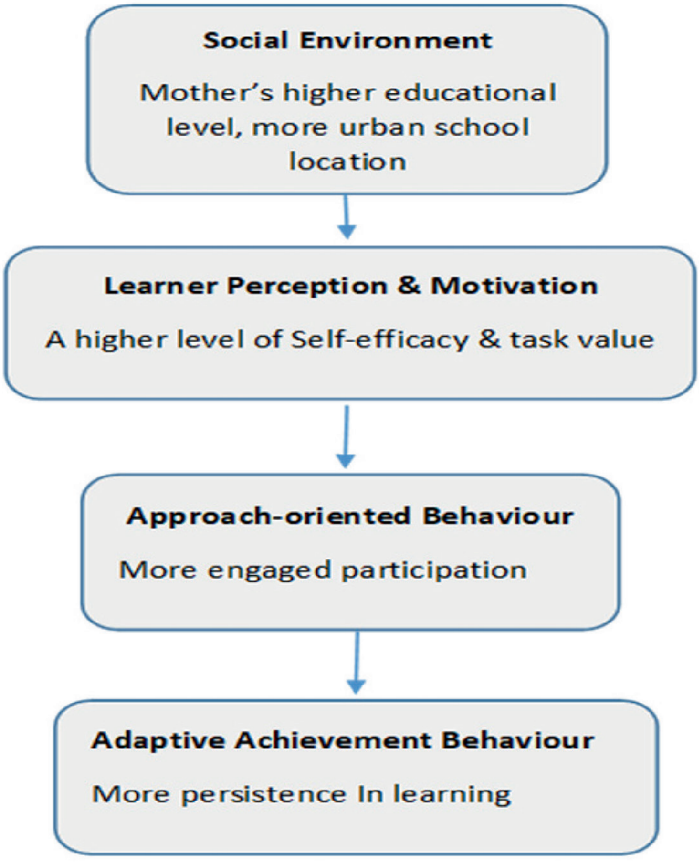

Figure 3. Achievement behavior in context

Discussion

The first research question was answered with a descriptive analysis which revealed that mastery- and performance-approach motivations were predominating compared to the avoidance motivations among EFL learners. This finding is in accord with that of Fan et al. (2008) who also reported that learning goals and performance goals which were similar to approach goals were higher compared to avoidance goals among Chinese tertiary learners. Likewise, Moghimi (2020) also reported that Iranian EFL learners had a higher level of performance-approach goals in comparison with the performance-avoidance goal. This tendency to adopt approach motivations over avoidance motivations could be attributed to the Asian Confucian culture of teaching and learning, where outperforming others in achievement situations is highly expected by the learners' guardians and teachers. Therefore, unlike the Western culture where individual choice is given preference, a lot of hard work is encouraged among learners due to high parental expectations of their children's success (Bai et al., 2020). Since learners with approach motivations focus mainly on mastering the materials and performing better than others, these orientations have been positively associated with academic success (Moghimi, 2020).

The second research question was answered with a correlation analysis. The result revealed that mothers' level of education positively and significantly influenced learners' self-efficacy.

This finding is in agreement with that of Han et al. (2014) who also reported that learners' socioeconomic status (SES) was positively associated with their self-efficacy. In that study, one of the SES factors was the learners' parents' educational degree (Han et al., 2014). This could be explained in terms of more positive parenting by more efficacious mothers that inspires their children towards positive response and behavior (Mouton & Roskam, 2014). This parental involvement heightens children's motivation and self-efficacy (Wulandari & Mukhlishah, 2022). Due to inadequate research on this, more comparison with other studies seemed difficult which warrants more research on the interaction between specific social factors and learners' motivational beliefs.

This study also reports a positive correlation between school location and the self-efficacy of EFL learners. This finding concurs with that of Ma et al. (2021) who also observed that learners from a more urban school exhibited a higher self-efficacy level. This discrepancy in motivation among learners coming from rural versus urban school locations has been studied by several researchers (Andrade-Molina et al., 2021; Endriyati et al., 2019; Lamb, 2012). This may have to do with more opportunities in urban schools for availing teacher training, advanced materials and resources, and implementing effective teaching methods on the part of urban school teachers to create a more supportive learning environment that contributes to enhancing learners' motivation and self-confidence (Ma et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017).

This study reveals a positive association of avoidance motivations with approach motivations. This finding is in accord with Frumos et al. (2024) who also reported a high positive correlation between avoidance and approach goals. One explanation could be that learners adopting approach goals may also have a tendency to adopt avoidance goals with the aim of avoiding appearing incompetent to others. In this regard, the theory of collectivistic versus individualistic cultures may influence learner psychology (Hofstede Inside, 2020). In Asian countries where collectivistic cultures prevail, both approach and avoidance goals may coexist as adaptive achievement-oriented behavior (King, 2016). Collectivistic cultures promote obedience to authorities in schools and learners abide by the socially approved behaviors in learning (Ali et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to achieve collective goals, learners may adopt approach motivations, and in order to fulfil social expectations of being competent to perform in achievement situations, they may adopt avoidance goals as well.

The third research question was answered with a path model analysis. The model shows a moderate positive effect of school location and a small positive effect of mothers' level of education on learners' self-efficacy which in turn exerts a moderate positive effect on learners' approach motivations and a small positive effect on learners' avoidance motivations. In addition, the father's educational level had a negative effect on learners' avoidance motivation, indicating that if learners' father's educational level increases, their avoidance motivation decreases. Notably, the effect sizes of favorable social factors and motivational beliefs were larger on more adaptive motivations, namely approach motivations. Due to the scarcity of such models in previous studies, the possibility of comparing this result to previous research becomes slim. This model also exhibits that having a conducive learning environment in school and at home, including parents having a higher level of education and getting schooling from a more urban school location, enhances learners' motivational beliefs like self-efficacy which in turn heightens their more adaptive achievement motivations.

Pedagogical Implications

There are some significant pedagogical implications of this study. This study reveals that social factors like school location and mother's educational level positively influence learners' self-efficacy beliefs. Educated parents tend to consciously support their children's education directly or

indirectly (Butler, 2014). In this regard, school authorities may undertake initiatives for parental counselling to increase parental involvement in the child's study. This may encourage parents to enquire about the child's school activities and remain informed of the child's performance by communicating with schools and helping with homework or assignments. Studies confirm that parental involvement augments children's beliefs in their own academic ability and this self-confidence significantly impacts their educational outcomes (Bubic et al., 2021).

Regarding school location, more research delving into the factors related to teaching and learning facilities and environments that differentiate rural and urban schools is needed. According to Hu (2003), due to the advanced facilities and more opportunities in urban areas, many qualified English teachers are being attracted to serving city schools instead of rural schools. Apart from being more qualified, urban school teachers have more facilities for acquiring teacher training, and accessing enriched resources and technology which helps them to create more enjoyable learning experiences for EFL learners (Ma et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2017). Learning a language is particularly facilitated when learners receive comprehensible input that is also enjoyable and engaging to them (Ounissi et al., 2025). Additionally, positive achievement emotion including learning enjoyment has been found to contribute to learners' persistence in their efforts (Alzaanin, 2025). Regarding this, educational policymakers may offer adequate teacher training in rural schools to increase teacher efficacy which will increase the instructional quality and patience of teachers with slower learners (Mehmood, 2019). In this era of technology, more innovative and responsive teacher training has been called for in order to equip teachers in navigating diverse learner needs, incorporating digital materials to ensure optimum classroom learning (Xerri, 2025).

In addition, teacher feedback may play a crucial role in increasing the self-efficacy of learners in their early years. Therefore, teachers may be trained to provide constructive and positive feedback, and offer more opportunities to do group work for weak learners to increase their self-efficacy (Hajmohammadi & Aghayani, 2022). This study reveals that self-efficacy contributes more to adaptive goal orientation. To increase learners' self-efficacy, learners of rural schools may be familiarized with technology-based language learning which offers possibilities of interacting live with native English speakers, accessing more engaging resources, and being a student in a flipped classroom which has been reported to enhance learners' self-efficacy (Zhang, 2022). Akter (2020) reported a lack of self-efficacy among Bangladeshi EFL learners. Therefore, this study calls for remedial measures, especially in rural areas, where the government needs to take steps to ensure optimal learning with a facilitative school environment for enhancing positive emotions and self-efficacy.

This study reveals that a father's educational level negatively influences learners' task value. More research is advocated on the parenting trend and home environment of learners. To ensure a facilitating home atmosphere for EFL learners, parental counselling sessions may be arranged by the school authorities. This way, parents having occupied work schedules may be encouraged to spend more time with their children for the transmission of intergenerational learning and values. This interconnectedness will further inspire busy parents to be more involved with their children's education. Baumrind (1971) contended that the parent-children relationship could be made more effective by increasing autonomy for children at home. In contrast to authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive parenting, Baumrind (1971) advocates for harmonious parenting that has control over the child but does not exercise the control. Therefore, the child cares to please their parents which helps them to bring out the expected academic outcome at school (Baumrind, 1971). Parents' involvement in children's studies has to be viewed as beneficial and helpful by the learners and this belief is likely to positively impact their learning behavior (Bubic et al., 2021).

Approach motivation has been associated with more enjoyable learning experiences leading to more desirable learning outcomes, whereas avoidance motivation has been linked to more stressful learning experiences leading to more undesirable learning outcomes (Elliot, 2006). Therefore, in both school and at home, a more autonomous and pleasant learning atmosphere is essential for inculcating more adaptive motivational beliefs among learners in their early years. Also, both approach and avoidance goals have been found to be strongly correlated, which suggests that they may be adopted simultaneously by learners. Hence this study advocates further research into the discriminant validity of different types of achievement goals.

Conclusion

This study examined the effects of social factors on EFL learners' motivational beliefs and how these factors impact learners' approach and avoidance motivations. The results have shown that, among social factors, a more urban school location and the mother's higher educational level significantly and positively impact learners' self-efficacy which, in turn, largely impacts their approach motivations. Learners' socioeconomic factors may not be altered. However, parents at home and teachers at schools in rural areas may consider fulfilling learners' three basic psychological needs to increase learners' task value. At the same time, policymakers and school authorities need to ensure that teachers receive teacher training to inculcate more adaptive achievement motivations among learners. Trained teachers may also play a pivotal role in enhancing learners' self-efficacy through a more supporting classroom atmosphere that would facilitate their experiences of receiving positive feedback from teachers and peers, and these experiences would augment their confidence in their abilities. As efficacious teachers are more patient with learners, have greater job satisfaction, and establish a more conducive learning atmosphere, more research is needed to explore teacher self-efficacy in rural schools.

In addition, this research exhibits a close association between approach and avoidance motivations along with mean scores for avoidance motivations closer to approach motivations adopted by learners. As avoidance motivations are associated with more anxious learning experiences, more detailed qualitative studies on learners' EFL experiences are called for. Since avoidance motivations may also positively interact with other motivational beliefs (Karakus, 2016), policymakers, researchers, and EFL practitioners may consider capitalizing on learners' avoidance motivations and introducing effective interventions in situations where learners exhibit maladaptive orientations and tailor their pedagogy to cater to individual learning goals and motivations.

Most notably, this study sheds new light on the intricate relationship between learners' school location, parental educational level, self-efficacy, task value, and achievement behavior and to what extent achievement behavior is influenced by these factors. The path model in this study reveals that facilitative contextual and motivational beliefs positively contribute to adaptive achievement behavior. Based on these results, more experimental research into developing effective teaching strategies and more enjoyable learning materials to heighten self-efficacy of the poorly efficacious learners is advocated. Future researchers may also integrate other cognitive emotions like attribution beliefs and basic psychological needs in their studies to explore how these motivational beliefs interact with contextual and psychological factors to contribute to learners' English learning success.

Declarations

Availability of Data & Materials

The datasets used in the study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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