

A Phenomenological Study of Motivation in Online Learners and Its Relationship to Self-Awareness.

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Abstract

Online learner enrollment continues to rise every year, but the retention rate of these students is significantly lower than those enrolled in face-to-face courses. Some of the primary factors that impact online learner retention are motivation and self-regulation. This concept development research was a qualitative inquiry to explore motivation in online learning through the lens of the learner's experiences. As the object of the study is the lived experience of the participant, a phenomenological paradigm was employed to guide the research. Additionally, the emphasis of this study was to investigate the role self-awareness (cognizance) plays in motivation. An effort to refine this broad topic was exercised focusing on three specific influential motivators which included interest, metacognition, and inspiration. The goal was to consider the concept of motivational awareness, or cognizant motivation (CM), to determine if online learning is positively impacted and whether this phenomenon is exceptional, universal, or intentional. The conclusions of this study may provide a foundation for future studies to utilize the concept of cognizant motivation (CM) beyond the online learning medium. Future research may include face-to-face learning, industry training, and behavioral science.

Keywords: Cognizance, Awareness, Motivation, Metacognition, and Phenomenology.

1. Introduction

Tzelgov (1999) described awareness as the nonautomatic or monitored processing of an individual. His research on automaticity emphasized implicit learning without awareness of the process. The activity of learning he described includes the processing of information without simultaneous involvement. He saw awareness as nonautomatic information processing. Conversely, Endsley (1995) approached the topic of awareness situationally. She focused more on how awareness was related to the

environment. Her theory of situational awareness (SA) explained the concept of awareness as more than monitored processing but included the individual's comprehension and integration of valuable information useful for decision making. A founding researcher of awareness was Flavell (1976) who first associated awareness with metacognition. He described metacognitive awareness as a person's knowledge of their own cognitive processes and what they produce. His focus was on the learner's intrinsic experience rather than their relationship to the environment.

A recent study building on Flavell's work described the relationship between metacognitive awareness and motivation. This study focused on the listening skills of L1 (first language) learners and examined the relationship of metacognitive awareness to their motivation to learn both intrinsically and extrinsically. Their study concluded that the relationship between metacognitive awareness and motivation was a key factor in the improvement of listening skills among L1 learners (Bourdeaud'hui et al., 2021). Another theoretical framework used in the listening skills study included Zimmerman's (2008) theory of self-regulated learning (SRL). SRL provides another perspective on the relationship between motivation and awareness focusing on learner self-efficacy and self-reflection.

Chen & Jang (2010) suggest that self-determination theory (SDT) could be another appropriate framework for investigating motivation in online learning. There are facets of this theory that were beneficial to this current study including the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. However, the focus on basic human needs could lend more to a case study that emphasizes participant well-being and satisfaction, which could have convoluted this research. However, SDT does share similarities with SRL regarding the categories of regulation in extrinsic motivation. It is within these shared concepts that both SDT and SRL were utilized in this study.

Therefore, this study was primarily built upon the works of Flavell and Zimmerman, as well as Deci and Ryan, but focuses on the relationship between awareness and the motivation to excel in online learning. Pintrich et al. (2000) described this relationship as metacognitive monitoring. They explain that metacognitive monitoring is an awareness of cognitive operations before, during and after completing a task. Applying this awareness or cognizance to an online learning environment provided insights into how successful students are motivated to complete tasks.

2. Significance of the Study

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), around 75% of undergraduate students in 2020 were enrolled in at least one online course and 44% of all undergraduate students were enrolled in exclusively online courses. This was a significant increase from the previous year, with a 97% increase in undergraduate students enrolled in at least one online course, and 186% increase of those exclusively online in 2019. While these numbers are likely inflated due to the coronavirus pandemic, the shift toward online education is not likely to show an equal decline. While this trend appears to be optimistic, the retention rate of fully online students compared to traditional face-to-face learners is not as flattering. According to Muljana and Luo (2019) online learner retention rates are significantly lower than traditional learners. Prior studies have shared similar outcomes. Herbert (2006) reported an online course failed retention rate 10% to 20% higher than traditional courses. As with the increase in enrollment, there is no indication that retention rates are going to change in the future. This trend represents the surmounting problem facing online learning. If enrollment continues to rise, while retention and learner persistence decline, then the value of a quality post-secondary education will decline right along with it. The notions and valor associated with becoming a graduate, the merit of achievement, and the ethical maxims of hard work and commitment will be lost in future generations. The symptoms associated with this phenomenon have been thoroughly studied, and while several factors may be to blame, one study by Lee et al. (2012) concluded that the lack of metacognitive self-regulation skills had a significant negative influence on retention rates of online learners. The motivational factors of self-regulation and metacognition were shown to have a significant impact on online learner retention in multiple recent literature views including those by Bawa (2016), Meneses & Marlon (2020), Muljana and Luo (2019),

and Shaikh & Asif (2022). The combined volume of their research and others makes a strong case for investigating the important role of motivation in the successful completion of online courses.

As previously discussed, studies currently exist where the topics of awareness, motivation, and online learning have been thoroughly addressed. However, the combination of these elements into a qualitative phenomenological study has not been adequately examined. The study by Pintrich et al. (2000) was designed to be used as a theoretical framework on assessing metacognition and self-regulated learning for future research. Since their work was based on some of the primary researchers of these topics including Flavell and Zimmerman, it seemed prudent to also utilize their work in the theoretical framework, combining the relevant principles in self-regulated learning, self-determination theory and the concepts of motivational awareness. Examining the phenomenon of motivational awareness through the lived experiences of online learners provided sufficient data that was coded thematically to reveal iterative practices that could be applied to other online learners. If such a beneficial relationship exists between cognizance (awareness) and motivation, then this study may provide a basis for further research, perhaps utilizing a quantitative or mixed-method approach. Throughout the study the terms awareness and cognizance were used interchangeably as they related similarly to motivation. The designation cognizant motivation (CM) was also employed to package this concept.

3. Research Questions

Brophy's (2004) definition of motivation proposes that it is a theoretical construct used to explain how goal-directed behavior is initiated and directed. Hartnett (2018) expands this definition to link motivation to the individual's cognitive and affective processes. She explains that as a theoretical construct, motivation cannot be observed directly, but must be inferred from actions such as effort and achievement. This reality created challenges in this study on motivational awareness as both concepts need to be examined in a manifested fruition. For a phenomenological study it was necessary to elicit responses from the interviewees that linked their experiences in online learning to possible motivations. The interview questions needed to be provocative, but simple, and built upon the research questions this study endeavored to answer. The following research questions were the focus of this study on motivational awareness in online learning:

1. How is motivational awareness a factor in online learning?
2. How does motivational awareness improve the cognitive and affective state of online learners?
3. How can cognizance of what motivates an online learner be universally applicable?

4. Methods

Creswell & Poth (2018) describe phenomenological research as examining how the phenomenon of the lived experiences of individuals share a common meaning. The goal being to refine the lived experiences of the individuals and their relationship to the phenomenon until a “universal essence” emerges (p. 75). In the case of this research, the phenomenon investigated was the motivational awareness of online learners. Or simply asked, are online learners aware of what motivates them to succeed? This phenomenon could be investigated using various quantitative and qualitative paradigms including case studies, narrative research and possibly a grounded theory approach. However, due to the specific emphasis on the phenomenon itself and how it may be a relevant factor in online learner success, the methodology of this study was based in the theoretical framework of self-regulated learning and self-determination theory but administered through the paradigm of phenomenology. The method of facilitating this paradigm was accomplished by interviewing three ($n=3$) individuals that have taken online courses. Moustakas (2013) guide to phenomenological research methods was used to ensure the methodology adheres to the principles of this paradigm.

The sampling method for the study was primarily purposive sampling but could also be considered convenience and criterion sampling. Alase (2017) described this purposive sampling method as a priority in a phenomenological study. He explains that purposive sampling is necessary for the selection of the best candidates for the research. However due to time constraints a convenience sample was also utilized which resulted in three ($n=3$) participants that had relational history with the researcher. This is an acceptable situation in a phenomenological study as the time needed to build rapport and trust with the participant is already established. Intersubjectivity can take considerable time to develop with strangers (Manen, 2007). In future studies should a challenge arise in acquiring enough participants, then snowball sampling can be utilized to increase the sample. Alase (2017) explains that snowball sampling can be helpful when there are few who are willing to participate in the study.

Snowball sampling gives the current participants the opportunity to invite people they personally know would be good candidates for the study.

Moser and Korstjens (2017) suggest “criterion sampling” as the most fitting process for selecting candidates for a phenomenological study (p. 10). Ultimately, the small number of participants selected for this study shared the life experience of online learning but in different fashions, which was a proper method for criterion sampling. As this was the preliminary study of a new concept the sample size should be acceptable, whereas later research will follow the higher end of Alase’s (2017) recommendation, which is two to twenty-five participants for a phenomenological study.

The interviews questions were created to support a hermeneutic approach to textual interpretation. This is so the transcripts of the interview data could be carefully analyzed to accurately interpret the textural nuances and relevant context surrounding the participant’s answers and comments. Manen (2007) describes hermeneutics as a tool that relies on a qualitative science that is used to interpret the meaning of complex human experience. The hermeneutic phenomenology combination results in a methodology that was both an interpretive skill as well as a philosophical paradigm. This categorized the paradigm in what Manen describes as an “interpretive-descriptive phenomenology” (p. 26). The aptitude for both careful interpretation as well as accurate descriptions of the participant’s expressed sentiments were an essential mandate of this study.

5. Description of Purpose

The study of motivation in online learning has existed since around 1980 (Ng, 2019). Attempting to understand what learners possess or need to possess to remain engaged in their online coursework is a perpetual goal of content creators and schools worldwide. This pursuit has resulted in a myriad of proposals and motivational theories intended to address this need. Perhaps the ancient Greeks understood the nature of what drives people to excel when they carved the words “Know Thyself” (Plato et al., 2002) on the temple of Apollo in Delphi. Did they discover a relationship between self-awareness and motivation?

The purpose of this study was to investigate the phenomenon of self-awareness and its relationship and effect on online learner motivation. To understand the association between motivation and self-awareness, a clear definition of cognizance was necessary as well as how this study explored the phenomenon of awareness. According to American

Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (n.d.), cognizance is defined as conscious knowledge or recognition; awareness. This sense of awareness can be described as knowing or can also be considered a feeling. According to Thesaurus.plus (2016) cognizance and feeling can be used synonymously as they are semantically related. Therefore, a case can be made that cognizance can relate to an awareness that is both cognitive and affective.

Within the context of cognizance, this study examined specific cognitive and affective influences that have been proven to motivate learners. Three motivational factors that were investigated were metacognition, interest, and inspiration. The purpose of using these topics is in how each relates to motivation. According to Flavell (1977) metacognition is primarily a cognitive construct, while inspiration lands more in the affective domain (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Interest can be a motivational factor in both cognitive and affective domains (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). While many other factors related to motivation are worthy of consideration, the range and academic support represented in these topics give them prominence when viewed in tandem. With metacognition and inspiration landing on opposite ends of the spectrum and interest taking a centrist position, a comprehensive study on motivational influences was covered at least in a general sense.

Another significance relates how cognizant motivation affects instructor's course creation and pedagogy. Hartnett et al. (2011) explained that instructors must rely on cognizance to understand the relevance of their role in developing learning activities that influence motivation. If instructors are aware of what motivates their interest in their subject area, then the potential to transfer this passion to their students could be another benefit of this research. This transfer could be accomplished by fostering greater student interest by relating content to previous experiences, inspiring student success by connecting content to future career opportunities or promoting greater awareness of the present benefits of participation in the course activities (Bundick et al, 2013).

6. Data Collection Method

The data collection method utilized was interviews with open-ended questions in a semi-structured format. Moustakas (1994) provides examples of questions that were modified to align with the goals of this study as well as protocol guidelines to facilitate what he describes as, "rich, vital, substantive descriptions" of the participant's lived experience (p. 116). The location of the interviews was also an important factor. Van Manen (2007) explained the

importance of providing options for a location that will make the participant comfortable sharing their life stories. He suggested informal options be offered such as the participants home or a setting that "feels right" to the interviewee (van Manen, 2007, p. 315).

A predetermined list of optional sites was made available to the participants including the researcher's private office, the interviewee's home, a conference room at a local university, or a private meeting room at a local library. The interviews were conducted at the participant's location of choice. These locations were suggested in the interview protocols article by Jacob and Furgerson (2015). The option to conduct the interview in-person or as a Zoom call was also made available to the participants. The goal of the setting was to help the interviewee feel comfortable and willing to discuss personal experiences and provide a quiet location for a clear recording.

Alase (2017) explained that it is the role of the researcher to investigate the factors in the study that relate to the phenomenon and then interpret these factors through the lived experiences of the participants. Initially the role of the researcher was that of the interviewer. Jacob and Furgerson (2015) proposed that when there is a clear rapport established with the participant and they feel they are understood, they are more likely to openly share their personal experiences.

The interviewees chose a Zoom interview. During which, I took field notes which consisted of short selections that entailed direct quotes from the interviewee that I intended to use for coding during analysis. Additionally, notes were taken that reflect a specific thought or concept that I conceived during the interview. The field notes were organized with the interview protocol and once the interview was concluded, the digital data was saved on a private drive and along with any written or printed documents was stored in a secure location at my office.

It was important to maintain the phenomenological philosophy when conducting the interviews. Moustakas (1994) described several philosophical approaches to this type of methodology. One specific approach used throughout this study was that of heuristic inquiry. While hermeneutics was employed regarding the interpretation of the textural content during the analysis process, heuristics focused on the interpersonal relationship between the researcher and participant (i.e., co-researcher). Heuristic inquiry considers only the participant's experience and relationship with the phenomenon and stays purely focused on exploring and understanding the essence of that lived experience. Other explanations of the experience are temporarily suspended, whether they derive from literature, media,

or “other human enterprises” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19). However, while heuristic inquiry is a descriptive paradigm, the pragmatic philosophy remained the overarching theoretical drive and so the primary methodological paradigm persisted as what van Manen (2007) described as an “interpretive–descriptive phenomenology” (p. 26). Careful interpretation as well as accurate descriptions of the participant’s expressed sentiments were paramount to the quality of this study.

7. Data Analysis

Sloan & Bowe (2013) explain that the purpose of phenomenological research analysis is to refine the information from the subject’s lived experience into a description of its essence. In this study descriptive and interpretive phenomenology was the paradigm used to interpret and analyze the collected data. The focus of this analysis was to interpret and refine the transcripts and field notes of the participant’s ($n=3$) interviews into themes that find correlations between the “what” was experienced and the “how” it was experienced. This process included both a priori and open coding. Once the essence of these experiences was coded and categorized then the emerging themes were analyzed to determine if a satisfactory answer or answers to the research questions had been achieved. The path to this goal required an intimate familiarity with the texts so that the coding process flowed smoothly and efficiently. This study utilized guidelines from Stemler (2001) and Blair (2015) for instrument validity and reliability.

The a priori coding process included highlighting sections of the interview transcripts that relate to the preselected labels. After this process was finished, a second examination of the data began. When a concept was recurring throughout this inductive process, then it was highlighted and noted for future investigation as it could relate to an unexpected emerging theme. The highlighted sections were then categorized and organized by their nearness in relationship to the preselected labels or a new label that accurately sums up any emergent idea was created. The labels were then merged into themes and sub-themes derived from the CM matrix. The themes were then prioritized by the following criteria. The hierarchy of themes were determined by their relationship to the research questions, frequency of occurrence in categories and codes, their relationship to topics or concepts included in the research and any unrelated topics that emerged from the interviews that may have relevance to the study. Using these themes, a conclusion to the study was induced and described.

Stemler (2001) asserts that qualitative analysis is validated through triangulation, and reliability is achieved through “stability” and “reproducibility” (p. 5). As this study was established and guided by Pierce’s principles of pragmatism with regards to methodology, so did the analysis follow similar theoretical principles. The triangulation that was employed in the coding process was based on Pierce’s concepts of “firstness”, “secondness” and “thirdness” (Tan et al., 2018, p. 4) originally found in (Buchler, 1955, p.75). This process incorporated deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning to triangulate a synthesis between the a priori and open codes. This process utilized the triadic model created by Kleinhans et al. (2010).

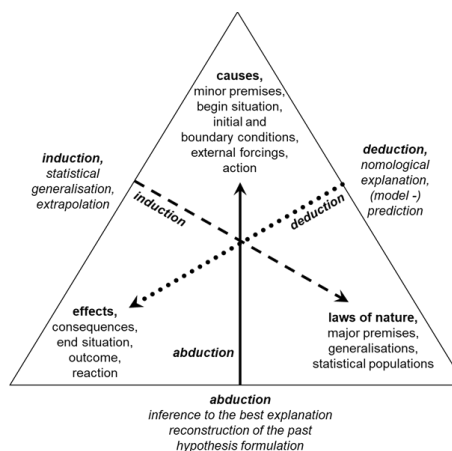


Figure 1 Triadic analysis model.

This model in Figure 1 was created by Kleinhans et al. (2010) and used in hydrology experimentation and analysis, and demonstrates the interrelational characteristics of deduction, induction, and abduction. © Author(s) 2010. This work is distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License. Reprinted with permission.

The triadic analysis procedure for this study was sequential and administered in the following steps:

1. Deductive analysis
 - 1.1. A prior codes established based on Venn diagram (shown in Figure 2) developed through concept mapping of theoretical frame and intersecting concepts related to motivation and cognizance.
 - 1.2. Primary labels include interest, metacognition, and inspiration.

- 1.3. Secondary labels include hindsight, foresight, and presence.
- 1.4. Highlight texts as they relate to labels using a consistent color scheme.
- 1.5. Any combination of these labels obvious in the data will be highlighted. For example: metacognitive hindsight, inspirational foresight, or present interest.

2. Inductive analysis

- 2.1. After a priori coding is complete, begin open coding. Highlight relevant and repeated texts based on the hierarchy of themes listed earlier.
- 2.2. Use the theme hierarchy to choose colors for prioritizing labels.
- 2.3. Use hermeneutic interpretation to determine contextual relationships that could skew intended meaning of each instance.
- 2.4. Use heuristic inquiry last to develop new categories based on common ideas not present in the deductive process.

3. Abductive analysis

- 3.1. Use heuristics first to begin searching for outlier concepts within the text that may have a significant relationship with cognizant motivation or a related concept or theory.
- 3.2. Use hermeneutic interpretation to determine contextual relationships that could skew intended meaning of each instance.
- 3.3. Highlight each relevant instance with the same color or similar color code to denote abductive process.

4. Syntheses

- 4.1. Once the three coding steps are complete, review all the codes and see if any correlations exist between them.
- 4.2. Examine all the codes for disagreements and contradictions.
- 4.3. Using heuristics and abduction to determine if common ground can be established between entries that agree and those that disagree.
- 4.4. Use the codes that share the most commonalities to define initial themes.
- 4.5. Use codes that have a high frequency to define secondary themes.
- 4.6. Use remaining codes of outlier themes based on the heuristic process.

- 4.7. Assign scores based on hierarchy and frequency.

The Venn diagram in Figure 2 below was used as a matrix to guide the study.

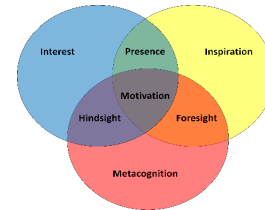


Figure 2. Cognizant motivation matrix

8. Triadic Analysis Results

The results were derived from an iterative process of deductive logic that was used for establishing themes in this study. The a priori codes were developed using the matrix in Figure 2 which was developed in an extensive concept mapping process (See Appendix, Figure 5) that examined the gaps and correlations between the two theories of SDT and SLT used to frame this study. The analysis included the emergent theme that arose from the inductive open coding and abductive reasoning.

The three ($n=3$) participants were designated as P1, P2, and P3. The following excerpts represent a sampling of the most significant answers to the interview questions and using a hermeneutic interpretation that considered context, cultural and environmental factors their responses were categorized by what seemed to be the most relevant code and thematically designated using the a priori codes deduced in the CM matrix.

The participants' responses to the interview questions varied with most replies landing somewhere in the CM matrix. Answers to how they would describe their online learning experience included, "I find value in the journey" and that "I love to be challenged intellectually." Inspirational foresight was a strong motivator with intrinsic motivational insights like, "I have a long-term vision. I am a lifelong learner", and "I want to leave a legacy for others to follow". Metacognitive hindsight was one of the strongest motivations. For example, P3 explained how they were aware of their past tendency to procrastinate and how they use goals to break down tasks to help them to successfully complete large online assignments. Another prominent motivation was inspirational presence in which P2 expressed their need for positive feedback and good instructor rapport to empower their desire to succeed.

The unexpected theme that emerged from the inductive process was labeled “perfunctory”. Both P1 and P2 stated that they are often going through the motions and not given too much thought about other things than the task at hand. This obligatory motivator was not as prominent as the previously mentioned drives but was present in the participants’ responses.

9. Instruments Used in the Study

The instruments of this study included interviews containing open-ended questions and documentation from the interview transcripts as well as field notes written during the interviews. An interview protocol was used to maintain consistency and fairness in the interview process. The interview protocol is located in the Appendix as Figure 4. The Cognizant Motivation Matrix proposed for this research was used to categorize the coded excerpts and determine if any alignment exists with the research questions. If the matrix tool is found to be unreliable or incomplete in future studies, then an adjusted matrix could be introduced that better represents the data and emergent themes.

10. Discussion of Trustworthiness

The reliability of this study was contingent on the researcher’s adherence to the theoretical framework and paradigm. If a researcher becomes overly passionate when emergent themes begin to align with the research questions, then a premature conclusion can misguide the analysis and cause the focus to shift from the data clearly described in the phenomenon to an interpreted conjecture that departs from the evidence found in the data. The need for a disciplined approach to interpreting the subtleties found in the participant’s statements was paramount.

Intercoder reliability could have been employed to ensure the conclusions were consistent, but Manen (2007) was skeptical of intercoder reliability in a phenomenological study. He claimed that the subjective posture of the researcher will likely produce varying interpretations of the lived experience. This interpersonal relationship between the researcher and the participant is one of the unique characteristics of the phenomenological paradigm, and though varying interpretations would cause reliability concerns in other paradigms, it is an acceptable, beneficial, and homogeneous aspect of phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Manen, 2014). Therefore, reliability had to be based on adherence to the phenomenological principles of reduction and epoche which are

necessary for both intersubjectivity and decreasing the presence of biased presumptions.

Credibility was established using member-checking. This ensured that participant responses were interpreted and themed properly and gave the participants an opportunity to clarify their intended comments, check for misunderstandings, and confirm conclusions. Reflexivity was used to establish confirmability (Jacob & Furgerson, 2015). A reflexive journal was used throughout the research to document the researcher’s personal perspectives and to carefully weigh the researcher’s values and interests (Shenton, 2004). If a researcher is faithful and diligent to maintain the integrity of interpretive-descriptive phenomenological research then the guidelines of this study should prove dependable, and the data analysis should come to a valid conclusion.

11. Limitations

The limitations of this study are based mainly on sample size and demographics. The interviews focused on three ($n = 3$) individuals from the Midwest US. This could cause the universal application of the conclusions to be invalid in other demographic areas. It is possible that individuals from locations like the west coast of the US may have completely different answers than those interviewed in this study. Or perhaps if the sample included areas of extreme poverty and limited internet access then the lived experiences of the participants would be described very differently in the context of online learning. Culture could also play a significant role in what motivates individuals to excel in online learning. These limitations could be addressed if the study is repeated with a larger sample size in different demographic areas and the themes between the multiple studies could be used to induce an overall conclusion. As that solution is beyond the scope of this current study, the acknowledgement of this limitation must be made clear. However, the research parameters of this study are not contingent on any specific demographic sampling and therefore transferability and repeatability of this research is reasonable and encouraged.

Another limitation of this study is the researcher’s lack of familiarity with the subtle nuances of phenomenological philosophy. While a thorough study has been made of the paradigm including an examination of the works of seminal scholars such as Husserl, Pierce, Heidegger, and Gadamer, as well as modern phenomenologists including van Manen and Moustakas, the sheer volume of over a century of scholarly research on the topic presents an immense volume of insights and varying perspectives. As a

doctoral student the reality of inadequacy in attaining a complete understanding of this paradigm must be confessed. The security for the use of phenomenology in a study may be found in the Peircean approach to the philosophy, as it relies on a pragmatic use and gives the researcher certain liberties to amalgamate a philosophy and methodology that best fulfills the end-goal.

12. Findings

The results of the interview coding and analysis revealed a strong alignment to the proposed CM matrix. Figure 3 shows how the cognizance of inspirational presence and metacognitive hindsight were two of the strongest motivators in online learning. Inspirational foresight was also a prominent trait for motivating online learners followed by present interest and metacognitive foresight. The lesser motivator related to how learners connect former interests to present online coursework. An emergent theme from the inductive analysis revealed how sometimes motivation is compulsory and perfunctory. Learners are sometimes engaged merely out of obligation and are not reliant on cognizance to help enhance their online learning experience. The occurrence of this phenomenon was minimal compared to the others, but the presence of automatic information processing must be considered in the motivational equation. The reality that a learner can be motivated to complete online coursework without being interested in the topic, inspired by the content or the instructor, or metacognitively aware of their process is worth mentioning and was the primary abductive conclusion from the analysis. However, the purpose of this study is to explore motivational traits that can be harnessed to improve the online learning experience for all students. Therefore, an evaluation of what may be the status quo in the average online learner only further emphasizes the relevance of any research that proposes to enhance this learning experience. As the data presented in this study represents an initial examination of this phenomenon, and the development of the novel concept of cognizant motivation, a case to further this study becomes apparent.

The synthesis of the triadic analysis revealed similarities to SRL and SDT in the shift from the extrinsically driven perfunctory effort to the highly intrinsic inspirational and metacognitive motivators. The essence of the phenomenon of motivational awareness showed evidence of a strong relationship to online learner resilience and satisfaction. Such a revelation could be useful for the online learning industry which relies heavily on compulsory extrinsic

motivational practices. Should intrinsic drivers like inspiration and metacognition be prioritized in online content design then the resilience of many online learners could be positively impacted.

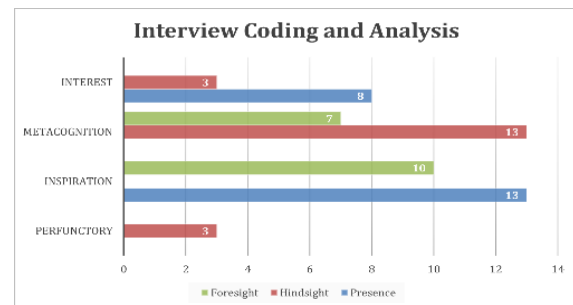


Figure 3. Interview coding and analysis

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14. Appendix

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL			
Name	Date	Time	Setting
Opening script	Thank you for taking the time to answer a few questions about your online learning experience. Please take a moment to read over and sign the participant consent form. I want to reassure you that your answers are anonymous, and your participation could be beneficial to future online learners.		
Question 1	How would you describe your experience with online learning?		
Question 2	How would describe your experience with taking classes online?		
- Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you going through the motions or are you aware of your mental process? 		
Question 3	What were some of your greatest challenges with taking online classes?		
Question 4	What do you believe were your greatest motivations for overcoming challenges with online learning?		
Question 5	If possible, can you describe how you acquired these motivations?		
- Prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perhaps from your parents (upbringing)? Maybe from a former teacher? Or perhaps it is related to your cultural background? 		

Question 6	Do you feel you are always aware of what motivates you to succeed? If so, can you describe how that awareness is applied in the moment you need to be motivated?
- Prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like when you have a pressing deadline, what motivates you to get it done? Or a challenging assignment, where do find the confidence to face it?
Question 7	Are you aware of whether that motivation emerges when you are inspired or is it more of an awareness of your own academic ability, or a combination of the two?
- Prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does what motivate you seem more like a feeling or a thought? Or is the feedback from your instructor or your peers a stronger motivation?
Question 8	How would you describe your mental process for being successful in online learning?
Question 9	Can you describe any specific instances when someone or something inspired you to excel in online learning?
Question 10	Do you have any suggestions to help motivate others who may struggle with online learning?
Closing script	I appreciate your honesty and willingness to be a part of this research. I will continue to keep you updated on the progress of the study. If needed, would you be willing to participate in a short follow-up interview and debriefing to ensure I have accurately transcribed and interpreted your answers? Thank you again for participating.

Figure 4. Interview protocol

