

# Self-Regulated Learning: An Exploratory Study (Level and Gender Difference)

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

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## ABSTRACT

Self-regulated learning as defined by Wolters, Pintrich and Karabenick (2005, P 2), is "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment". The present study aimed to explore the level and gender difference among English as Foreign Language (EFL) university students of Afghanistan. The sample consisted of 180 (105 males and 75 females) students from four various public universities of Afghanistan. A questionnaire including 48 items assessing self-regulated learning of university students was administered. The findings of the study revealed that, maximum number of university students fall into the category of high level of self-regulated. No significant difference was found between male and female university students of Afghanistan in terms of their self-regulated learning.

## 1. Introduction

Geographically, Afghanistan is located in the heart of Asia which is considered as the central point for international business. While it has been regularly shown as, the central point for decades' conflict in the international news. But, there is few or no international as well as national reporter, researcher, educationist and higher authority paid adequate attention to the ground-breaking as well as remarkable development in education sector. Little or no attention is paid for current struggle and improvement which has taken place not only in general education but also in English Language programs. Several English Language projects have implemented and many are in progress across the various parts of the country. The respective language is also taught as

subject in all public as well as privet schools and universities. Conversely, little or no consideration has been given to Afghan English Language learners' issues and problems they face during learning in the international research literature (Bahry, 2013). Then, the researcher has searched several databases related to language learning publications in the Afghan education context, few studies were found since 2019 conducted by national researchers as well as by internationals. But, the respective studies were not that much in deep dive to indentify the issues students face in language learning process. Because, foreign language learning entails complicated process of interacting proper second language pedagogy, cognitive, psychological, societal as well as linguistic aspects .



Moreover, such processes require several techniques, approaches and strategies in order to fruitfully pass the respective process and attain desired objectives. Therefore, to be successful language learner, student needs to set realistic goals, find suitable approaches for learning, proper learning strategies, monitoring techniques for learning performance and immediate reflection from the outcomes which is called self-

regulated learning. There exist numbers of definitions pertaining to self-regulated learning in several text books and publications (Boekaerts and Corno, 2005). This variation among these descriptions of self-regulated learning can be due to researchers' priorities and perceptions regarding the areas have taken to into consideration by them. Self-regulated learning is an intentional or self directive procedure by which

learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills (Zimmerman, 2002).

Self-regulated learning is process in which learners dominant their thoughts, approaches and activities for academic attainments (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2003). Such type of learning helps learners to stay successful and attain the desired academic goals. Self-regulated learning can also assist learners to create better learning behaviors and make them stronger in their study skills (Wolter, 2011). Moreover, self-regulated learning is made of three interpretative components as; (a) self (b) regulation (c) learning (Goetz et al, 2013). As, self can be defined in the context of research and learning is, a person initiative regarding setting and accomplishing his or her aims and objectives. Second, regulation explains the practice through which an individual can move fruitfully from current situation to target position. At last, learning involves a set of activities and tasks for the acquisition of knowledge (Goetz et al, 2013). On the other hand, Boekaerts and Niemivirta (2000) also described the three constructs which formed self-regulated learning namely; learning episodes, self-directed learning and the process of the respective goals. Therefore, self-regulated learning is a structured concept which controls all the behaviors of the learners through interactive procedure among various control system such as; meta-cognition, attention, motivation, action, emotion as well as control of overlapping behaviors (Boekaerts and Niemivirta, 2000).

Besides this, there have been an immense struggle and focus on the development of learning process through instruction at higher education level to focus learning rather than teaching (Suknaisith, 2013). The uses of sufficient self-regulated learning strategies are crucial for learners in order to have successful educational achievements in primary schools (Dginath et al, 2008). Self-regulated learning is essential for higher education students' academic accomplishments (Sitzmann and Ely, 2011). Globally, scientific researches and literature have paid incredible attention to the learners' capability as well as ability to self-regulate their learning.

Comparatively, till 1990, there was more focus on memorizing and reproducing the knowledge provided by educators (Boer et al, 2012). But, the trends has totally changed and it is assumed that the acquisition of knowledge and skills should take place by learners which has brought an important shift in the direction and development of the educational curricula to emphasize on teaching self-regulated learning skills in order to assist students in the acquisition of knowledge (Boer et al, 2012). The change in psychological theories and investigations from conditioning to cognition has brought considerable realignments in views of human learning, motivation and accomplishments (Schunk, 2008). Learners with proper self-regulated learning skills are probably successful and being touchy with the required performance. Committed self-regulated learners are more practical and assure compared to poor self-regulated learners in their learning especially pertaining to goal setting, applying workable strategies, overseeing the progress as well as looking for the assistance as required during academic life in order to achieve educational accomplishments (Zimmerman and Schunk, 2008).

Furthermore, accomplishment in educational tasks with confidence, resourcefulness and with sufficient attention perhaps are the most crucial features to successful academic achievements and such accomplishments can be attained through self-regulated learning. The term self-regulated learning as elaborated denotes a process where in students make a plan for a particular educational task, monitor the performance, and evaluate the progress. The term self-regulation first emerged in educational literature in 1960s (Johnson and Davies, 2014). Then, the respective concept appeared in the educational discourse in 1980s and became well-known in 1990s (Dinsmore et al, 2008). Besides this, research studies revealed that, there are various factors which influence self-regulated learning such as, motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence, family support and supervision as well as teachers' personal characteristics (Jouhari et al, 2015). A study conducted on university students by Balapumi et al (2016) which identified the factors concerning to self-regulated learning. After structural equation modeling and partial least square analysis, the study revealed that, students' self-regulated learning significantly influenced by prior knowledge, self-efficacy, meta-cognitive knowledge family and peer influence learning.

In addition, self-regulated learning can be promoted with several factors which may further assist learners' educational achievements. These factors include proper interventions of self-regulated learning strategies, positive feedback and social support from instructors as well as from peer which may serve an essential role in stimulating self-regulated leaning. Likewise, Zumbrunn et al (2011) reviewed several research articles and concluded that, students' self-regulated learning can be encouraged by motivation, engagement and interventions of self-regulated learning strategies. In addition, Mohammadi et al (2014) found, five most frequently strategies which were used by EFL learners namely;

1. Establishing an association between prior knowledge regarding language and new knowledge of English.
2. Later study of the materials when they do not understand.
3. Regular evaluation of English Language knowledge.
4. Finding new ways to enjoy language learning.
5. Keeping records of the materials which were mastered and haven't mastered yet.

Motivation and self-regulation skills are interrelated with each other. Martha Bronson a professor in Boston College, USA, who were relied profoundly on Social Learning Theorists like, Bandura and Vygotsky theories of development and their possible association to self-regulation. Bronson (2000) argued in the book "Self-Regulation in An Early Childhood: Nature and Nurture" that self-regulation is an intrinsic motivational factor in itself. Bronson (2000) further explained that the progress of self-regulation starts during early childhood whereas "children gain as well as develop control of their behaviors in a familiar settings, control mental processing with problem solving and motivational patterns". Similarly, Nakata (2010) also explored that how intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning are associated with each other based on theoretical level and concluded that, intrinsic motivation assists student to become cognitively and affectively independent which may direct them

to be successful in L2 learning. Moreover, self-regulated learners are those learners who are meta-cognitively, motivationally and behaviorally active contributor in their academic life (Zimmerman, 1989). The article further described that self-regulated students begin and lead themselves by their own struggle and expertise rather than looking for the help of others.

Equally important to mention that, there are three classes of strategies which enhance self-regulated learning of the individual. (a) Self process (personal Function) (b) Control of learning behaviors outcomes and (c) learning environment (Zimmerman, 1989). This means that, an individual applies goal setting strategy such as planning and particular time for completion the required task. Then coping with learning materials as well as assignments for desired outcomes and finally the monitoring strategy in order to check the progress and flaws for further correction and planning which lead students to heart wining academic results. Regulation strategy is like monitoring learning materials and the effort as well as performance against the selected goals. Such monitoring process enables learner to be on the right track toward the targeted goals. For instance, as student study a particular notes and mean while asks certain questions as he/she studies in order to keep an eye means monitoring his/her learning and understanding. In case of any doubts, student goes back and reread the area where obstacle exists. Such a rereading is a self-regulatory strategy. Reviewing any part or portion of the learning materials like class notes, text, lab materials and earlier exams sheets which a student may not remember during studying is refer to self-regulatory strategy (Pintrich, 1999).

In addition, teaching self-regulated learning strategies significantly predicts academic outcomes. Likewise, Zari et al (2018) revealed that self-regulatory strategies such as; cognitive learning strategies, meta-cognitive learning strategies predict learners' academic achievement. Rosario et al (2010) found from empirical study that teaching efficient learning strategies favorably develop self-regulated learning. Yu and Hofer (2003) undertook the research study to examine the effect of a proposed course called "Learning to learn". The aim of the course was to teach self-regulated learning and it was found that the respective course had a significant and positive impact on students. The study also proposed such a course in college level which may enhance learners' cognitive and motivational aspects. Self-regulated learners consciously evaluate and monitor their educational progress and achievements (Bruin, Thiede and Camp, 2001). Self-regulated learning is applying specific learning strategies to improve educational outcomes (Frezzille and Graham, 2005).

Several studies have been conducted with respect to gender differences in self-regulated learning. Likewise, Temi (2005) examined gender difference among 198 undergraduate students of Northeastern University, U.S.A. the study found no significant difference between male and female students with respect to the use of self-regulated learning strategies. Educators also play an important role in enhancing self-regulated learning strategies among students for academic attainments. Pintrich et al (1994) examined the association of

classroom experiences with individual differences pertaining to motivation and self-regulated learning. The study revealed positive motivational beliefs were favorably associated with higher level of self-regulated learning. Moreover, Zumbunn et al (2011) reviewed several research articles and concluded that, students' self-regulated learning can be encouraged by motivation, engagement and interventions of self-regulated learning strategies. Self-regulated students may help themselves to form better learning behavior and make them stronger in their study skills (Wolters, 2011).

## 2. Objectives of the Present Study

Purposefully, the aim of the present research was;

1. To examine the level of self-self-regulated learning among university students.
2. To examine gender differences in self-regulated learning of university students.

## 3. Research and Method

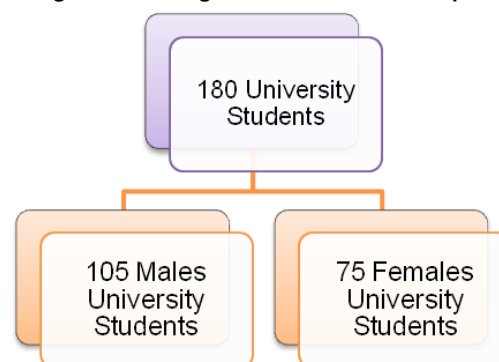
This section of the study explains the methodology of the present research. The current research study followed descriptive research design. The aim of the study was to identify the level and gender difference pertaining to self-regulated learning among EFL universities students of Afghanistan. Data was collected during the academic year of 2018 through Self-regulated Learning Scale developed by Gupta, Madhu and Mehtani, Dimple (2017). Stratified random sampling was adopted in order to lower sampling error and to increase the accuracy. Stratified sampling assures that all strata "groups" of all universities' from 1<sup>st</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year are represented equally. The collected primary data was codified, organized, and tabulated in IBM SPSS 24 software as well as mandatory statistical techniques were applied for further analysis.

## 4. Subjects

In the present study, 180 EFL students (105 males and 75 females) were selected from four public universities of Afghanistan namely:

1. Kabul University, Kabul Province, Afghanistan
2. Shaheed Professor Rabani Education University, Kabul Province, Afghanistan
3. Nangharhar University, Nangharhar Province, Afghanistan
4. Laghman Univeristy, Laghman Province, Afghanistan

Figure 1 Showing Distribution of the Sample



5. Result and Discussion

Table 1 Showing Levels of Self-Regulated Learning among University Students of Afghanistan.

Sr. No	Levels of SRL	No. of Students	Percentage
1	Extremely High	22	12.22%
2	High	73	40.55%
3	Above Average	54	30%
4	Average	29	16.11%
5	Below Average	1	0.55%
6	Low	1	0.55%
7	Extremely Low	0	0%

Looking at the table 1 reveals that, 12.22% university students possess extremely high self regulated learning, 40.55% of university students possess high level of Self-regulated learning, whereas 30% of university students falls under above average level of self-regulated learning, 16.11% of university students possess average level of self-regulated learning, 0.55% university students possess low level of self-regulated learning and 0.55% university students possess low level of self-regulated learning, on the other hand none of the university students fall in the category of extremely low level of self-regulated learning.

It can also be observed in table 1 that scores of self-regulated learning vary among students. Accordingly, it can be argued that, self-regulated learning among university students is found to be high. As looking at the table 1 and figure 2 in terms of score and level, it is shown that, maximum numbers of university students of Afghanistan (73) students (40.55%) possessed high level of self-regulated learning and only 1 university students (0.55%) belonged to the low average level category of self-regulated learning whereas none of the university students (0%) fall in to the category of extremely low level of self-regulated learning. Beside this, 22 students (12.22%) students possessed extremely high level of self-regulated learning whereas 30% university students possessed above average level and 16.11% university students has fallen under the average level of self-regulated learning. Therefore, it

can be stated that, majority university students of Afghanistan possessed high level of self-regulated learning.

The researcher is of the view that such a result may be due to several reasons like, as government universities follow the same curriculum guidelines provided by the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan, whereas few years back the ministry added a subject called "study skills" in the curriculum of first year of university students in which students are taught various self-regulation strategies and skills which may significantly influence learners' awareness regarding self-regulation. Schneider (1985) concluded that, it is important to teach learners different learning strategies as it helps and augment their self-regulated learning. Ghatala (1988) concluded that learners' awareness regarding self-regulated learning is an essential and critical to continuous use of learning strategies during academic life. Similarly, Combs (1989) found that instructional intervention may help students to enhance their learning skills and learning strategies. Similarly, the Afghan Government has signed a protocol of exchange program with U.S.A. regarding educating and training university lecturers in the field of pedagogy and current practices. The researcher is also of the view of that such a result might be the outcome of training provided to teachers in the exchange program. Such training might have significantly influenced teachers resultantly they are applying such practices in the class during instruction which ultimately helps students to regulate their learning by themselves.

Figure 2 Showing Levels of Self-Regulated Learning among University Students of Afghanistan

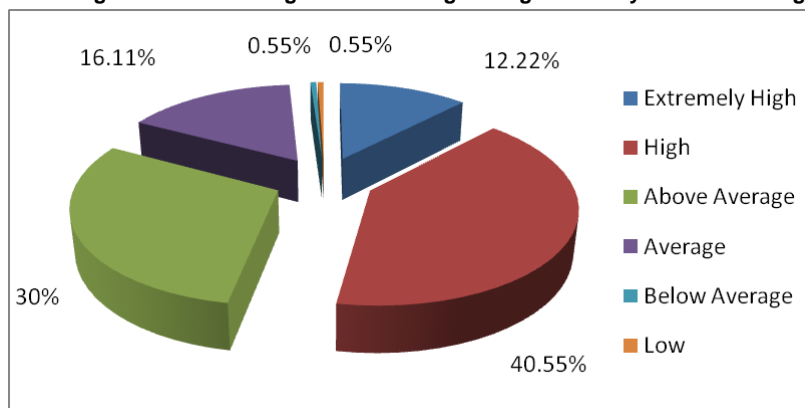


Table 2 Showing Difference in Self-Regulated Learning between Male and Female University Students of Afghanistan

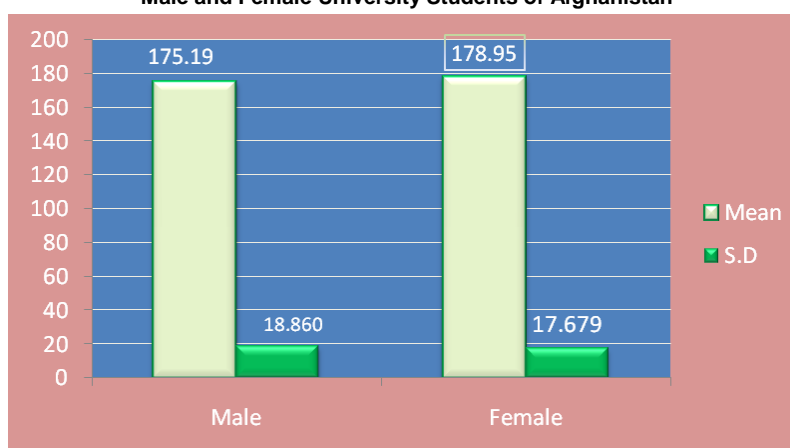
Variable	Gender	Mean Score	SD	df	t-Value	P-Value	Remarks
Self-Regulated Learning	Male	175.19	18.860	78	-1.352	.178	Insignificant
	Female	178.95	17.679				

From the above table 2, it is clear that p-value for self-regulated learning for male and female university students of Afghanistan came out as .178 which is greater than .05 level of significance ( $p > .05$ ). It means that there exists no significant difference between male and female university students of Afghanistan. Furthermore, figure 3 also supports the result. It can be seen that the means score for male university students came out to be 175.19 which is little bit lesser than mean score of female university students 178.95. So, this difference can be due chance factor.

The stated result pertaining to difference in the self-regulated learning between male and female university students signifies that, male and female university students of Afghanistan do not differ significantly from each other in terms of their self-regulated learning. The researcher is of the view that, such results came out due to the reason that the new

government of Afghanistan has provided equal learning environment for both male and female university students to enable them to succeed at academic front. Such environment serves as a motivating factor for both male as well as female university students which aids in their academic accomplishments. Such results are in line with a study conducted by Baharom, et al (2011) on 185 Malaysian secondary school students to explore gender difference in self-regulated learning where it was found that there is no significant difference between male and female secondary school students with regard to their self-regulated learning in mathematics. Furthermore, Yukselturk and Bulut (2009) in a study on 145 male and female participants of online programming course. The study found that, there is exists no significant difference in the self-regulated learning among students with respect to gender.

**Figure 3 Showing Mean and SD values in the Self-Regulated Learning between Male and Female University Students of Afghanistan**



## 6. Conclusion

The research intended to bring attention to the identification of the level and gender differences in terms of self-regulated learning among university students of Afghanistan. The findings of the study revealed that maximum number of university students fall into high level of self-regulated learning. Besides this, result pertaining to gender difference revealed that, no significant difference was found between male and female university students in terms of their self-regulated learning. The main reason of this type of result is our upgraded existing culture, equal educational opportunities

from family and equal learning environment for both male and female university students of Afghanistan. The findings of the present research study which is came into view regarding levels and gender difference reflects that, the respective universities management and higher education practitioners should keep implementing the current teaching practices, curriculum as well as educational policies so they may retain and attain further educational achievements. Self-regulated learning is essential whereby learners alert and sustain cognition as well as their behaviors for systematic and goal oriented academic achievements.

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