

Unfolding the Inner Motivation of Students in Navigating Learning Fatigue during Hybrid Education

Aliah Bagus Purwakania Hasan
Universitas Al Azhar Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Aliah Bagus Purwakania Hasan aliah@uai.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the dynamics of internal motivation among university students experiencing learning fatigue in hybrid learning environments. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with six students from a university in Jakarta who reported experiencing hybrid-learning-related fatigue. Thematic analysis revealed that internal motivation is shaped by the interaction of personal goals, social support, and self-regulation in managing academic pressure. The findings show that although hybrid learning contributes to cognitive and emotional fatigue, students with strong intrinsic motivation are able to reinterpret these challenges as opportunities for self-development. The study concludes that understanding internal motivation is essential for designing psychopedagogical interventions that strengthen students' mental resilience and support sustainable learning in flexible education systems.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of learning fatigue is one of the main challenges in the field of educational psychology, especially in the midst of the implementation of hybrid learning that combines online and face-to-face systems. The shift in learning models after the pandemic requires students to adapt to cognitive flexibility, complex time management, and high emotional readiness. However, these demands often lead to academic pressure that leads to learning fatigue, decreased motivation, and reduced academic engagement. According to Martin (2023), students who follow the hybrid learning system show a decrease in engagement and motivation to learn compared to the pre-pandemic period. This condition shows that changes in learning patterns significantly affect the psychological aspects of students, so it is necessary to study in depth how internal motivation plays a role in helping them survive learning fatigue.

Contextually, students in Indonesia, especially in urban areas such as Jakarta, face unique dynamics in hybrid learning. Problems such as limited internet connectivity, distractions from the home environment, and increased workload cause learning fatigue to become a real and widespread phenomenon. Ariansyah et al., (2024) found that even though the hybrid model is able to increase flexibility, students still experience psychological pressure due to the overlap between online and offline learning spaces. This shows that the transition to a hybrid system is not only a technical problem, but also related to students' mental readiness and self-regulation ability to face changes in the learning environment.

Learning fatigue, in the context of educational psychology, is not just physical fatigue, but also mental and emotional fatigue that affects intrinsic motivation. Ling and Chua (2023) emphasized that the success of hybrid learning is largely determined by the extent to which students are able to maintain their internal involvement and motivation in the midst of changing forms of learning. However, most previous research has focused on aspects of learning satisfaction or academic performance, rather than on students' inner experiences when dealing with learning fatigue. This condition shows that there is still a gap in understanding how internal motivation functions as an adaptive mechanism for learning fatigue in a hybrid learning system.

Several previous studies have shown that academic stress and burnout are the dominant factors that affect student well-being during the hybrid learning transition period (Khoirunnisa et al., 2023). However, few have explored how students interpret these experiences personally and how internal motivation helps them manage the fatigue. Therefore, research is needed that highlights the psychological dynamics of students in depth, with an approach that is able to capture the meaning of their experiences in a complete and reflective way. The phenomenological approach is relevant because it can reveal the subjective dimension of students' experiences in dealing with learning fatigue.

This research aims to uncover the dynamics of internal motivation of students in dealing with learning fatigue during the implementation of hybrid education. The main focus of this research is to explore the meaning of student experience, adaptive strategies used in dealing with learning fatigue, and

psychological factors that support learning resilience. By understanding these aspects, it is hoped that the research can provide an in-depth understanding of how internal motivation works as a driving force that helps students adapt and stay afloat amid the challenges of hybrid learning.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of educational psychology, especially in expanding the understanding of intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and learning resilience in the context of hybrid learning. The results of this study can enrich the theory of self-determination and self-regulated learning by adding the dimension of learning fatigue as a relevant psychological context in the era of flexible education. Thus, this study has the potential to open up new perspectives on how internal motivation not only serves to drive academic achievement, but also becomes a protective factor against psychological distress arising from learning fatigue.

Practically, the results of this research are expected to be the basis for the development of psychopedagogical interventions in the university environment. Higher education institutions can design supporting strategies such as self-management training, academic counseling programs, and strengthening social support for students. In addition, lecturers can adapt teaching approaches that are more responsive to the psychological burden of students by considering break time, task flexibility, and self-reflection mechanisms. These efforts are important to create a hybrid learning environment that is more humane and oriented towards the psychological well-being of students.

Thus, this research plays an important role in enriching the understanding of the role of internal motivation in dealing with learning fatigue in hybrid learning systems. The understanding gained not only contributes to the theory of educational psychology, but also has practical implications in improving academic resilience, mental well-being, and the sustainability of the student learning process. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to be a foothold in designing education policies and strategies that are more adaptive, reflective, and sustainable in the era of digital transformation of higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning Fatigue in Hybrid Education

Learning fatigue is an important phenomenon in the context of hybrid learning that requires students to adapt to the face-to-face and online systems at the same time. According to Juntunen (2022), students who undergo distance learning report higher levels of mental and emotional fatigue due to isolation and changes in study routines. Smith and Jones (2022) also emphasize that learning fatigue is not only physical, but also involves cognitive and emotional fatigue due to the intensive use of digital devices. In hybrid learning, challenges such as learning environment disruptions, digital multitasking, and adaptation pressures exacerbate student burnout levels (Ochs et al., 2024). The impact of this condition includes decreased motivation, academic involvement, and quality of learning outcomes. Therefore, the phenomenon of learning fatigue needs

attention in educational psychology so that effective strategies can be found to support student learning resilience.

Internal Student Motivation and Motivation Theory

Internal motivation or intrinsic motivation is a learning impulse that comes from within, such as interests, personal goals, and the meaning of learning. Based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), there are three basic needs that support intrinsic motivation, namely autonomy, competence, and connectedness (Howard et al., 2021). In hybrid learning, the fulfillment of these three needs has a direct effect on student enthusiasm and involvement. Tanaka and Suzuki (2022) found that support for autonomy and providing constructive feedback can significantly increase students' intrinsic motivation. However, some studies still focus on academic outcomes without exploring how internal motivation plays a role in coping with learning fatigue. Understanding the dynamics of internal motivation is important, as it is the basis for students' emotional resilience and ability to survive in the hybrid learning process.

Hybrid Learning and Its Impact on Student Well-Being

The hybrid learning model is applied as a flexible solution post-pandemic, but also has an impact on the psychological well-being of students. Firmante (2024) reported that engineering students who participated in hybrid learning experienced higher levels of stress and mental fatigue than students with the conventional system. In addition, Ochs et al., (2024) show that off-class activities or off-task activities in a hybrid environment led to decreased focus and learning engagement. This condition suggests that hybrid flexibility is not always in line with students' well-being, especially when they face limited connectivity or an uncondusive learning environment. Therefore, a balance between academic flexibility and psychological support needs to be considered so that hybrid learning can take place effectively without sacrificing students' mental well-being.

Adaptive Strategies and Student Self-Regulation

The ability to self-regulate is an important factor in helping students adapt to the pressure of hybrid learning. Self-regulation includes the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate the learning process independently. Chen et al., (2022) found that students who have self-regulated learning skills tend to have higher motivation and better academic achievement in a hybrid environment. Adaptive strategies such as time management, self-reflection, and seeking social support play an important role in maintaining internal motivation when dealing with learning fatigue. However, there is still little research that specifically links self-regulation to learning fatigue in the context of hybrid learning. Thus, it is important to understand how self-regulation functions as an adaptive mechanism as well as a source of psychological strength in coping with emerging academic pressures.

METHODOLOGY

Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, because the main focus of the research is to explore the meaning of students' subjective experiences in dealing with learning fatigue during hybrid learning. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to understand participants' life experiences in depth through reflection on the perceptions, emotions, and meanings they experience in a particular context (Creswell & Poth, 2023). This design was chosen to reveal the dynamics of students' internal motivation naturally without the intervention of external variables, as well as to understand how they interpret learning fatigue as part of the academic adaptation process. According to Wertz (2022), phenomenology emphasizes on describing the essence of human experience that arises from subjective awareness, making it particularly relevant to explore psychological issues such as intrinsic motivation and learning fatigue.

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The research participants consisted of six active students from one of the universities in Jakarta who have been following a hybrid learning system since 2022. The selection of participants was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is selection based on certain criteria that are in accordance with the research objectives. These criteria include: (1) active students in undergraduate programs, (2) participating in hybrid learning for at least two semesters, and (3) admitting to having experienced learning fatigue or decreased motivation while participating in the system. The number of six participants is considered adequate in phenomenological research because it allows for an in-depth exploration of individual experiences without losing focus on meaning (Moustakas, 2020). All participants were recruited voluntarily after being given an explanation of the research objectives and procedures, and had signed informed consent as a form of ethical consent.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were designed to explore participants' personal experiences related to learning fatigue, adaptive strategies, and internal motivational dynamics during hybrid learning. The interview guide was developed based on the theoretical concepts of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and the Self-Regulated Learning framework (Zimmerman, 2022). The questions include the dimensions of emotional experience, perceptions of academic burden, and the meaning of intrinsic motivation in dealing with learning challenges. Each interview lasts between 45 to 60 minutes and is conducted face-to-face in a conducive space, with an online option for participants who are unable to attend in person. The entire interview process is recorded using digital devices with the consent of the participants, then transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy.

Research Procedure

The research is carried out through several systematic stages. First, the researcher conducts a literature review to formulate the research focus and develop interview guidelines that are relevant to the context of hybrid learning. Second, the participant recruitment stage is carried out through announcements and academic networks in the university environment. Third, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews by paying attention to the ethics of the research, including identity confidentiality and freedom of participation. Fourth, the researcher transcribes the data verbatim and verifies the results of interviews with participants (member checking) to ensure the accuracy of interpretation of meaning. Finally, coding and thematic data analysis was carried out to find the main themes that reflect the essence of students' internal motivation in dealing with learning fatigue. Each step is carried out with the principle of researcher reflectivity so that the results remain objective and authentic (Nowell et al., 2021).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using an interpretative phenomenological thematic approach (IPA) as developed by Smith and Osborn (2021). The steps of the analysis include: (1) a thorough reading of the interview transcript, (2) identification of key units of meaning and concepts, (3) grouping of themes that arise based on similarity of meanings, and (4) withdrawal of phenomenological essence from the participants' experiences. This analysis is focused on understanding the relationship between internal motivation, learning fatigue, and students' adaptive strategies. To support the reliability of the analysis, the researchers used NVivo 14 software to assist in the coding process and the organization of the data. The validity of the research results was strengthened through source triangulation and member checking techniques, while the validity of interpretation was tested through peer debriefing. This approach ensures that the results of the study truly represent the participants' authentic experiences in depth and reflectively.

RESEARCH RESULT

The Meaning of Learning Fatigue Experience in the Context of Hybrid Learning

Most participants revealed that learning fatigue is not just physical fatigue due to the density of tasks, but also reflects the emotional pressure that arises due to the demands of adaptation between online and face-to-face systems. One participant stated that he often felt tired not because of the workload, but because he constantly had to adjust between online and face-to-face lectures, so it felt like he never stopped learning, the student said: "Sometimes I feel tired not because I have a lot of assignments, but because I constantly have to adjust between online and face-to-face lectures, it feels like I never stop learning." (K01, July 3, 2025).

Another participant added that the boundary between study time and break became blurred, as the materials and coursework could be accessed at any time, students added: "When you study, it feels like there are no limits, day and night sometimes you still have to open material or do assignments. So mentally I get tired quickly." (K02, July 7, 2025). In addition, another student described that changes in the learning environment also affect concentration and emotional balance, students revealed: "I feel like I've lost my usual learning rhythm. On

campus, you can focus, but at home you are often distracted. It makes you bored and tired quickly." (K03, July 9, 2025). These findings suggest that learning fatigue in a hybrid context is more triggered by instability of learning rhythms and overlap between academic and personal lives.

Adaptive Strategies in Dealing with Learning Fatigue

To deal with this pressure, students develop various adaptive strategies that are personal. Some participants tried to manage their study time to be more balanced and planned. One of the students explained that making a daily schedule helps reduce stress because the time for study and rest becomes clearer, namely: "I started to make a daily schedule and tried to be more disciplined, so that the study and rest time was clear. It relieves stress." (K04, July 12, 2025). Another widely used strategy is to take short breaks or do light activities when fatigue comes "If I'm too tired, I choose to take a short break or chat with friends. After that, it just continues, so it's not too saturated." (K05, July 16, 2025).

There are also students who try to change the perspective of fatigue, by interpreting it as part of a self-reinforcing learning process, students say: "I try to change my perspective, thinking that fatigue is part of the learning process that makes me stronger and able to manage myself." (K06, July 18, 2025). From this description, it can be seen that students try to navigate fatigue not only by avoiding it, but by managing it reflexively through self-regulation and perception adjustment.

Psychological and Social Factors That Strengthen Internal Motivation

Students' internal motivation not only grows from themselves, but is also influenced by social support and psychological factors that interact with each other. One of the participants revealed that the support from classmates was an important source of encouragement, as they reminded and supported each other in the face of academic pressure. Student Statement: "My classmates often remind each other and support each other, it makes me feel not alone." (K02, July 21, 2025). Another participant said that family support helps maintain emotional stability and a sense of responsibility towards college, saying: "My parents also often ask me about college, it's simple but it is an encouragement for me." (K05, July 24, 2025).

In addition to social support, awareness of personal goals is also a strong driver in maintaining motivation, one student revealed: "I always remember the reason why this college is important for my future, that's what keeps me motivated even though I'm tired." (K01, July 27, 2025). These findings confirm that the combination of internal factors such as self-awareness and external factors such as social support plays an important role in strengthening students' motivational resilience in the midst of learning fatigue.

Formation of Self-Resilience as a Result of the Adaptation Process

Over time, the experience of facing learning fatigue actually forms stronger self-resilience in students. One of the participants admitted that he is now better able to recognize the limits of his abilities and adjust the rhythm of

learning so that he does not get tired easily, Partispan admitted: "Now I know better when to stop and when to continue. I used to be pushy, now I'm more aware of my limits." (K03, July 28, 2025). Other students realized that the fatigue experienced can be a learning experience to be more realistic and empathetic towards themselves, one of the students said: "This fatigue actually made me learn to be more realistic and not be too myself." (K06, July 29, 2025).

In addition, there is also a higher sense of confidence in facing academic challenges after going through these difficult times, namely students said: "I became more confident in facing new challenges. It feels more resistant and not easy to panic if there is a burden on the lecture." (K04, July 30, 2025). This shows that learning fatigue not only has a negative impact, but also a trigger for students to build a more mature and self-aware survival strategy.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the phenomenon of learning fatigue in students in the context of hybrid learning is a complex form of psychological fatigue, covering cognitive, emotional, and motivational dimensions. Learning fatigue does not only arise due to high academic load, but also due to the demand to adapt to changes in the learning system that combines online and face-to-face methods. This is in line with the findings of previous research that affirmed that hybrid learning requires greater cognitive flexibility, time management skills, and emotional stability than conventional learning models (Miller & Santos, 2024). This condition explains that learning fatigue is not a sign of lack of ability, but rather a psychological response to changes that require new adjustment strategies in the context of modern learning.

The main findings of this study confirm that students' internal motivation plays an important role in overcoming learning fatigue that arises during hybrid learning. Students who have a clear personal goal orientation, an intrinsic drive to grow, and good self-regulation skills tend to be more resistant to academic pressure. This reinforces the basic concept of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) put forward by Ryan and Deci, that intrinsic motivation arises when individuals feel they have autonomy, competence, and social connectedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the context of this study, students who are able to manage themselves well tend to interpret learning fatigue not as an obstacle, but as an adaptation process that strengthens their psychological resilience. Therefore, it can be concluded that the formation of internal motivation is a protective factor that allows students to stay afloat and productive in the midst of the pressure of hybrid learning.

In addition to intrinsic motivational factors, this study also found that social support plays an important role in maintaining the psychological stability of students. Support from peers and lecturers contributes to lowering stress levels, increasing a sense of connectedness, and strengthening the spirit of learning. These results are in line with research by Jeon and Lee (2023) who show that social connectedness in an online learning environment can increase motivation to learn through a sense of belonging and emotional support. Thus, the existence of a mutually supportive academic community is an important

aspect in creating psychological balance for students during hybrid education. This phenomenon shows that the success of hybrid learning systems depends not only on technological readiness, but also on the quality of social relations and the psychological climate that is formed within them.

This research also reveals that the ability to self-regulate is the main adaptive strategy for students in dealing with learning fatigue. Students who are able to set priorities, manage study time, and adjust academic rhythms to personal conditions show a higher level of resilience. These findings support Zimmerman's (2022) view that self-regulated learning is an important mechanism for maintaining intrinsic motivation and learning sustainability in an environment that demands independence. Self-regulation not only serves as a time management tool, but also as a form of reflective awareness of personal capacity. Thus, strengthening self-regulation skills needs to be an integral part of a hybrid learning strategy so that students are able to navigate academic pressures adaptively.

From the conceptual side, the results of this research contribute to the development of the theory of motivation and learning resilience in the era of flexible education. This research expands the understanding of how learning fatigue does not solely decrease motivation, but can actually be a turning point for strengthening intrinsic motivation through self-reflection and psychological adaptation. These findings enrich the Self-Determination Theory literature with a new context, namely learning fatigue as a stimulus for strengthening individual autonomy and competence (Rahayu et al., 2024). Thus, learning fatigue can be understood not only as a negative phenomenon, but also as an emotional learning mechanism that leads students to find a balance between academic demands and personal needs.

However, this study has some limitations that need to be considered. The limited number of participants and the scope of research focused on one university in Jakarta make the results of this study not yet generalize widely. In addition, the phenomenological approach provides a depth of understanding of subjective experiences, but it is not possible to quantitatively measure the relationship between variables such as fatigue levels, motivation, and academic achievement. Therefore, follow-up research is recommended to use a mixed methods approach by involving more participants from different academic backgrounds. This approach will strengthen the external validity of the research results and provide a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of internal motivation of students in the hybrid learning system.

Practically, the results of this study have important implications for higher education institutions. Universities need to develop hybrid learning policies that not only emphasize academic efficiency, but also pay attention to the psychological well-being of students. Motivation strengthening programs, self-regulation training, and the formation of a supportive learning community can be effective strategies to reduce the impact of learning fatigue. In addition, lecturers can apply a more empathetic approach to learning by providing room for reflection, time flexibility, and constructive feedback for students. Thus, the results of this study not only contribute to motivational theory in education, but

also provide practical guidance for the development of a more sustainable hybrid learning system oriented towards the psychological well-being of students.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this study confirms that understanding internal motivation plays an important role in designing psychopedagogical interventions that support mental resilience and student learning sustainability in the era of flexible education. Students who have strong intrinsic motivation, good self-regulation skills, and adequate social support are able to navigate learning fatigue more adaptively while participating in hybrid learning. Internal motivation has been proven to be a protective factor that allows students to maintain learning engagement, foster meaning in the academic process, and turn academic pressure into opportunities for self-improvement.

Conceptually, this study expands the understanding of the psychological dynamics of students in the context of hybrid learning by placing learning fatigue not only as an obstacle, but as a process of building resilience and self-reflection. Therefore, higher education institutions need to develop learning strategies that focus not only on academic achievement, but also on aspects of students' psychological well-being. The implementation of a learning approach oriented to intrinsic motivation, social support, and self-regulation is expected to create an education system that is more adaptive, sustainable, and able to prepare students to face dynamic challenges in the modern education era.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study advances existing research by offering a deeper psychological framework that positions internal motivation as a central protective factor in students' adaptive responses to learning fatigue within hybrid learning environments. Unlike prior studies that primarily describe learning fatigue as a barrier to academic performance, this research highlights how intrinsic motivation, supported by self-regulation and social support, transforms fatigue into opportunities for resilience-building and self-reflection. By conceptualizing learning fatigue as part of a broader developmental process rather than solely a psychological burden, the study contributes new insights into the dynamics of student motivation in flexible education systems. These findings strengthen theoretical discourse on motivation and resilience while providing practical guidance for higher education institutions to design psychopedagogical interventions that integrate emotional well-being, intrinsic motivation, and adaptive learning strategies in preparing students for the complex demands of modern education.

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