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The role of self-regulated learning in reducing EFL microteaching students' test anxiety

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Abstract

Undergoing anxiety in second language learning is inevitable for EFL students, especially during a test. Therefore, self-regulated learning is necessary to help mitigate test anxiety. To date, only a handful of studies have examined the importance of self-regulated learning in managing test anxiety among students learning English as a foreign language, especially in the Indonesian context. Using the explanatory sequential method with 52 participants, this study investigated how EFL microteaching students' self-regulated learning assisted them in mitigating test anxiety. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire findings showed that the students had a moderate level of test anxiety and a high level of self-regulated learning ability. Moreover, the interview results indicated that most students agreed that self-regulated learning including planning, monitoring, and evaluating, helped reduce their test anxiety. It helped them feel more prepared, confident, secure, and less anxious, and even develop a backup plan. This research offers implications for students and educators to implement self-regulated learning in the teaching and learning process, particularly in anticipating test anxiety. This study also encourages further researchers to conduct similar research on the same topic using different methods.

Keywords: *EFL microteaching students; self-regulated learning; test anxiety*

INTRODUCTION

In the process of acquiring a second language, anxiety is one of the challenges that students of English as a foreign language (EFL) program always face, especially when taking exams or tests. In this case, EFL students refer to microteaching students. Microteaching is a technique that breaks down intricate teaching skills into more manageable components, allowing practitioners to rehearse and polish their teaching method in a supervised environment (Iliasova et al., 2025). Meanwhile, exams or tests are evaluation processes that measure learning or measure several attributes or characteristics (for example, intellectual ability and anxiety levels) (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2016). Therefore, it can be inferred that the microteaching test is an evaluation process that measures pre-service teachers' teaching skills. It was conducted regularly to elevate the teaching performance of pre-service teachers and microteaching students. However, EFL microteaching students who were still in the process of acquiring the target language found it difficult due to various factors, including discomfort and anxiety in the second language, known as foreign language anxiety.

Foreign language anxiety has drawn the attention of educators and researchers around the world for the last three decades. According to Brown (2000), foreign language anxiety is the feeling of pressure and uncertainty when faced with the

prospect of foreign language learning. Aydin et al. (2020) also asserted FLA as the complex combination of beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and perceptions that arise during the foreign language learning process. The anxiety about a foreign language arises from several factors. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified three situations that raise foreign language anxiety. Those are communication apprehension (CA), fear of negative evaluation (FNE), and test anxiety (TA). Test Anxiety (TA) is the main concern of this study. A type of performance anxiety that emerges from apprehension of failure, known as test anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). In addition, test anxiety is also a propensity to worry about the consequences of underperforming on tests or other evaluations (Sarason, 1984). A study by Fong and Soni (2022) found that students aged between 9 and 25 tend to undergo high levels of test anxiety due to their learning adversities. Students who are anxious about exams often set unreasonable expectations and view that anything less than a perfect exam score as a total flop (Horwitz et al., 1986). Moreover, Aydin et al. (2020) found that test anxiety also affects students' physical and affective well-being, as well as test-related problems. Their study found that learners with physical disorders perform poorly on the test and experience reduced self-efficacy. Thus, it also resonated with the study done by Muliawati et al. (2020), which found that anxiety is frequently encountered by test takers, resulting in mental or physical distress, inability to concentrate, and/or paranoia. Therefore, Dodeen et al. (2014) suggested that minimizing anxiety is necessary to achieve good test results.

This study investigates the effect of self-regulated learning (SRL) on reducing test anxiety among EFL students. Zimmerman (2000) stated that self-regulated learning (SRL) refers to the proactive, metacognitive processes by which learners actively control their learning experiences, including monitoring progress, setting goals, and employing adaptive strategies to overcome challenges. Forethought, performance, and self-reflection are the three cyclical phases involved in self-regulated learning process (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2011). One important idea is that motivation, learning, and performance are correlated: students' actions and knowledge affect their motivation, and, in turn, motivation affects learning and performance. For EFL microteaching students, who still often experience high levels of foreign language anxiety (FLA), SRL acts as a critical protector by promoting adaptive adjustment mechanisms, especially when taking performance tests.

Research indicates that SRL strategies, such as time management, positive self-talk, and resource utilization, can enhance self-efficacy and reduce emotional distress during language assessments (Magogwe & Oliver, 2007). Alvandi et al. (2025) found that consistent use of SRL strategies was strongly correlated with decreased speaking anxiety. In addition, Martirossian and Hartoonian (2015) reported negative relationships with various kinds of anxiety, including communication anxiety, test-related anxiety, and concerns about negative evaluation. Moreover, SRL as a metacognitive procedure has proven to have a notable impact on some other domains such as teaching writing, students' writing
performance, writing anxiety and procrastination, academic anxiety, learning motivation, and willingness to communicate (Riwayatiningsih, 2021; Nugraeni & Akhiriyah, 2025; Pravita & Kuswandono, 2022; Zhang, 2024; Ragusa et al., 2023).

Numerous relevant studies have shown the benefits of self-regulated learning in both its learning approach and its motivational components. The first study by Lee and Ko (2023), involving 253 Korean middle school students, investigated the impact of

self-regulation, goal orientation, and speech anxiety in both metaverse and face-to-face teaching contexts. The findings showed that, regardless of the context, self-regulation and goal orientation are positively related to speaking performance. Specifically, self-regulation has a significant role in alleviating speaking anxiety. Students who proactively manage their learning process are better at coping with anxiety. However, this study focused on speaking anxiety, not test anxiety in particular.

Another study, conducted by Akcayoglu and Ozer (2023), aimed to investigate the possible relation between cognitive test anxiety and self-regulated learning, whether poor self-regulation is a strong predictor of greater anxiety levels. The data were collected from 269 EFL learners at a state university in Turkey through a correlational survey. The findings of the study showed that, surprisingly, highly self-regulated learners lean to experience higher levels of cognitive anxiety, which is contrary to most of the literature. It can be inferred that anxious students may engage in more self-regulation strategies as a coping mechanism for their worries, especially at the lower proficiency level (A2). Moreover, self-regulated learning and cognitive test anxiety are positively correlated, and self-regulated learning accurately predicts cognitive test anxiety. However, these findings are not inherently positive or negative.

Pertinent to the aforementioned studies, Nabavi (2025) investigated the importance of perfectionism and self-regulation in predicting test anxiety from a descriptive and analytical perspective. Encompassing 200 junior high school students in Sirjan, Nabavi (2025) found that both perfectionism and academic self-regulation significantly predicted students' exam anxiety. Moreover, it indicated that self-regulation had a significant negative correlation with test anxiety, which suggests that the junior high school students have the potential to decrease their test anxiety by implementing self-regulation. These findings also resonate with the study done by Saaidin et al. (2021), which showed a weak positive correlation between self-regulation and test anxiety. The students who practice self-regulation strategies tend to experience slightly less test anxiety. Furthermore, according to Pegah et al. (2025), self-regulation has been shown to improve students' understanding and concentration, thereby reducing their anxiety.

Moreover, in the Indonesian context, there has been extensive research on self-regulated learning and its relationship to numerous variables. Riwayatiningsih (2021) investigated self-regulated learning as a metacognitive strategy in teaching writing. Under the systematic literature review, the findings showed that the self-regulated learning strategy has an essential role in enhancing writing performance. In addition, Nugraeni and Akhiriyah (2025) examined the link between self-regulated learning strategies and high school students' writing performance. The results confirmed a very high and meaningful correlation between SRL strategies and students' writing performance. Moreover, in their study, Lobi and Mbato (2024) also explored the role of self-regulated learning strategies in enhancing seminarians' online reading performance. The findings showed that seminarians were aware of self-regulated learning strategies and that these strategies provided an effective alternative for teaching reading comprehension at the senior high school level. However, these studies did not investigate the relationship between self-regulated learning and test anxiety in particular.

To sum up, there has been extensive research on the connection between self-regulated learning strategies of EFL learners and multiple variables, such as academic self-efficacy, help-seeking, and test anxiety (Akcayoglu & Ozer, 2023; Saaidin et al.,

2023; Pegah et al., 2025). Moreover, studies on the link between test anxiety and high school students' self-regulation have also been conducted (Lee & Ko, 2023; Nabavi, 2025). In the Indonesian context, self-regulated learning has also been linked to writing instruction and writing and reading performance (Riwayatiningsih, 2021; Nugraeni & Akhiriyah, 2025; Lobi & Mbato, 2024). Nevertheless, the aforementioned studies did not discuss the role of self-regulated learning in reducing test anxiety, which can lead to physical and emotional problems and exam-related issues, and subsequently cause students to perform poorly on exams and lose confidence. The studies mentioned above also did not focus on the relationship of self-regulation in managing EFL microteaching students' test anxiety in particular. Hence, to bridge the gap and offer additional literature on self-regulated learning and its relation to reducing EFL microteaching students' test anxiety, this research was undertaken to address how EFL microteaching students perceive the role of self-regulated learning in managing their test anxiety and to what extent self-regulated learning facilitates EFL microteaching students in alleviating their test anxiety. This paper aims to offer a more in-depth empirical and theoretical understanding of how EFL learners experience test anxiety and how self-regulated learning takes part in reducing their perceived test anxiety.

METHOD

This study applied a mixed-methods approach to analyze the full implications of self-regulated learning in reducing test anxiety, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Creswell, 2009). This research specifically utilized the explanatory sequential design, in which, according to Creswell (2023), the researchers first conduct quantitative research, analyze the results, and then use those results as a basis for more detailed explanations through qualitative research. The qualitative data served as a triangulation method. Triangulation refers to the use of divergent data sources, observers, and/or methods, which yields stronger evidence (Ary et al., 2010).

The target population were the students of the English Language Education study program, batch 2023, at Sanata Dharma University who were enrolled in the microteaching course. Eligible participants were those actively taking the microteaching course during the 2025-2026 academic year. All participants were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as English was not their first language. Only students who gave their consent after receiving a full explanation and who were willing to participate in the survey and interview sessions were included in this study. Out of approximately 117 eligible students, 52 participated in the study. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as the students enrolled in the microteaching course were relevant to the research. The quantitative research was carried out beforehand with 52 participants to collect general data on students' self-regulated learning and its association with test anxiety. Since this study focuses on describing phenomena, data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive analysis, primarily by measuring the central tendency (see Creswell, 2023).

To gather the data, this research divided the questionnaire into three parts and distributed it to the students via *Google Forms*. The Likert scale was used as the questionnaire type, using a scale of 1-5, where 1 represents strongly disagree, and 5 represents strongly agree. At the beginning of the questionnaire, three statements

representing three indicators of anxiety in foreign language learning were adopted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986). For the second part, EFL students' independent learning was developed individually, utilizing three self-regulated learning phases by Schunk and Zimmerman (2011) as the theoretical basis. Moreover, the last part of the questionnaire, concerning EFL students' test anxiety, consisted of five items adapted from a shortened form of the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) by Taylor & Deanne (2002). Specifically, those items were used to investigate students' worries and emotional aspects. After conducting the quantitative research using a questionnaire, the research involved interviewing three students selected to explore the phenomenon further.

The qualitative research was carried out to collect more detailed data on the self-regulated learning process of EFL microteaching students and their role in mitigating their test anxiety. Three students were selected for the interview using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to a nonprobability sampling technique in which subjects deemed to represent the population are incorporated in the sample (Ary et al., 2010). The students were selected as representatives based on their mean scores, ranging from low to high. Low mean range from 1.00-2.33, moderate mean score range from 2.34-3.67, and high mean score range from 3.68-5.00 (Astriningsih & Mbato, 2019). The interview was conducted once and audio-recorded. It was done by confirming participants' questionnaire responses and gathering in-depth information on EFL microteaching students' self-regulated learning and its implications on alleviating test anxiety.

The interview results were analyzed using qualitative data analysis framework by Creswell (2009). Transcripts were first organized and read multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' responses. Then, meaningful sections of text were coded, and these codes were grouped into broader themes. The themes were developed inductively from the data rather than imposed from pre-existing theory. To ensure credibility, the coding process was carried out by the first author and subsequently reviewed by fellow researchers, with triangulation against questionnaire findings to strengthen trustworthiness. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis results supplemented the quantitative data by offering additional descriptions of the phenomenon. Finally, the results from both methods were discussed complementarily.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The following are the results of the study to address the first research question, which investigates the role of self-regulated learning in managing test anxiety as perceived by EFL students, and the second question, which examines the extent to which self-regulated learning facilitated EFL microteaching students in alleviating test anxiety.

The Perceived Role of Self-Regulated Learning by EFL Microteaching Students in Managing Test Anxiety

The researchers conducted a descriptive analysis to examine the role of self-regulated learning, as perceived by EFL Microteaching students, in managing their test anxiety.

Table 1. EFL students' foreign language anxiety levels.

No.	Aspects	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
A1	Heart pounding before being called in a foreign language class	3	8	17	19	5	3.1
A2	Panic response to impromptu speaking	4	12	12	14	10	3.2
A3	Fear of teacher correction in language class	7	14	11	9	11	3.0

Table 1 shows that the EFL microteaching students' foreign language anxiety level was generally moderate. This was reflected in the average of each statement, which was fairly neutral (3). For the communication apprehension factor (statement A1), the students had shown a moderate level of anxiety. Most of the students agreed that they felt their hearts pounding when they were being called in the class (A1; $\bar{x}$= 3.1). This was consistent with the results of the interviews, in which the students admitted that they still feel anxious in the foreign language class, even when they were not as anxious as when they were just starting to study in ELESP, for instance, "I am still feeling anxious, but not as anxious as when I was in the first semester" (Serena). Moreover, for the test anxiety factor (A2), the students had demonstrated a sufficient level of anxiety. A small number of the students agreed that they still felt nervous when speaking spontaneously (A2; $\bar{x}$= 3.2). This is also supported by the results of the interviews, in which students reported feeling panic when responding to impromptu speaking, such as "*I usually got tremor and a little bit nervous when I have to do impromptu speaking*" (Josephine).

Furthermore, for fear of negative evaluation factor (A3), the students generally felt apprehension of being negatively evaluated by the teacher (A3; $\bar{x}$= 3.0). This was also in accordance with the interview results, where students feared the teacher's negative evaluation, for instance, "*sometimes I forget how to say some words in English, yet I should never say it in Bahasa Indonesia, so it makes me feel anxious because the teacher is strict, who will not tolerate*" (Serena). To conclude, generally, students had demonstrated a moderate foreign language anxiety level.

Table 2. EFL students' self-regulated learning

No.	Aspects	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
B1	Setting clear goals before each test	1	1	16	24	10	3.7
B2	Resisting distractions while preparing for a test	6	10	20	14	2	3.0
B3	Maintaining motivation through an academic growth mindset	1	0	18	22	11	3.8
B4	Giving self-reward after study goal completion	1	2	5	16	28	4.3
B5	Reflecting on factors after unmet study goals	0	3	13	24	12	3.8
B6	Conducting self-evaluation for future improvement	0	3	13	18	18	3.9

Table 2 exhibits a high level of self-regulated learning among EFL students in general. This was evident by the average for each statement being above the neutral

number (3). During the planning phase (B1), the students showed strong planning before taking a test. Most of the students confirmed that they did 'plan out' things before taking a test (B1; x= 3.7). This was in line with the interviewee's response, which they reported that they often made a plan or outline for test preparation, for instance," When *I am about to have a test, I usually plan things I want to say, especially certain vocabulary I want to convey*" (Celeste) or "*I usually create to do lists as a guide*" (Josephine). Moreover, during the monitoring phase (B2 to B4), the students generally maintained their test preparation process. The means from statements B2 (x= 3.0) and B3 (x= 3.8) indicated that most students agreed that they can resist distractions and maintain motivation when preparing for a test. These quantitative results were confirmed in interviews, where most students referenced the plans or goals they had set, such as *"sometimes I get distracted, but then I realize and get back on track*" (Serena) or "*when I get distracted, I realize it, then I tried to put the distraction away such as my phone, then get back to do my preparation*" (Josephine). Additionally, the majority of students agreed that they did give themselves self-reward after the completion of a task (B4; x= 4.3), which was supported by the interview result where the students reported that, typically, they would reward themselves, for instance, "*I usually order Go-Food after finishing doing something, especially a difficult task*" (Josephine). Furthermore, during the evaluation phase (B5-B6), the students showed a relatively high level of self-evaluation or self-reflection. This was obviously seen from the average for each statement being above the neutral (3). Most students showed that they reflected on the factors causing failure (B5; x= 3.8) and conducting self-evaluation for better improvement (B6; x= 3.9), which was also mirrored in the interview results, such as "*I did self-evaluate my performance through teacher and peers' feedback and usually did it before I sleep at night, to know what I have done well and what I need to improve*" (Celeste). To sum up, most students demonstrated a strong level of self-regulated learning by planning, monitoring, and evaluating as they prepared for a test.

The Extent to Which Self-Regulated Learning Facilitated EFL Microteaching Students to Alleviate Test Anxiety

The descriptive analysis was also conducted to find out to what extent self-regulated learning facilitated EFL Microteaching students in alleviating their test anxiety.

Table 3. EFL students' test anxiety

No.	Aspects	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
C1	Negative thoughts interfering with test concentration	3	7	20	14	8	3.3
C2	Greater test effort leading to more confusion	4	5	18	15	10	3.4
C3	Emotional discomfort during examinations	3	10	17	16	6	3.2
C4	Feeling tense during tests	2	5	21	16	8	3.4
C5	Thinking about the consequences of failing	2	10	16	17	7	3.3

Similar to the students' level of anxiety about foreign languages, as measured by a Likert-type questionnaire, shows that, in general, the students' test anxiety levels were moderate. Regarding the feeling of worry (C1 to C2), the students generally stated

that their worry interferes with their test concentration (C1; $\bar{x}$= 3.3) and they become more confused when they try to understand more (C2; $\bar{x}$= 3.4). This was reflected in the results of the interviews, where students tend to think negatively during a test, such as "*I am afraid that things won't go as planned and fear to make mistakes during a test*" (Serena) or "*when I get anxious on a test, I will lose my concentration immediately for example in a listening test"* (Josephine).

Moreover, for the feeling of emotionality (C3 to C5), the students showed a moderate level of anxiety, especially in dealing with their emotions. The means from the statements C3 ($\bar{x}$= 3.2), C4 ($\bar{x}$= 3.4), and C5 ($\bar{x}$= 3.3) indicated that most students agreed that they usually feel uneasy and tense and sometimes think about failing during a test. This was also in line with the interview results, in which most students felt tense during a test, for instance, "*I am afraid I can't answer the questions*" (Josephine) or "*I am afraid whether I have done the right thing or not*" (Serena). To conclude, generally, the students had shown a moderate level of test anxiety.

The findings from the qualitative data gained through the interview generally supported the results of the quantitative data above. Many students perceived self-regulated learning as a way to alleviate their test anxiety. According to the answers to the questionnaire's open-ended questions, most students agreed that self-regulated learning helped reduce test anxiety, as it assists them in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their preparation for a test. They stated that it helped them to be more prepared, more confident, feel secure, less worried, less anxious, and even come up with a backup plan. These findings matched the results of the interview. The students agree that the self-regulated learning ability has played a beneficial role in reducing their test anxiety, since they knew what to do. For instance, "*by doing self-regulated learning continuously, I know what needs to be reduced and what needs to be improved which eventually reduces my test anxiety*" (Celeste). Another response stated that self-regulated learning processes helped because they have a plan or guidance, which eventually reduces their test anxiety; for instance, "*planning, monitoring, and evaluating helped me in reducing test anxiety because I know I have a plan or a guidance so I won't walk blindly*" (Serena). Thus, it can be concluded that most students agreed that self-regulated learning helped them reduce their test anxiety.

Discussion

Although self-regulated learning and test anxiety have become popular topics for research (e.g., Akcaygolu & Ozer, 2023; Saaidin et al., 2023; Pegah et al., 2025; Lee & Ko, 2023; Nabavi, 2025; Riwayatiningsih, 2021; Nugraeni & Akhiriyah, 2025; Lobi & Mbato, 2024), to date, only limited research has discussed the importance of self-regulated learning in managing EFL microteaching students' test anxiety in particular, particularly in the Indonesian context. This research found that first, the students reportedly have a moderate foreign language anxiety level. These findings indicated that students remain anxious when using a foreign language in the classroom, even after completing their fifth semester in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP). The data analysis reflects the three factors identified by Horwitz et al. (1986) as causing FLA: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Test anxiety, the main concern of this study, is a form of worry about performance that arises from apprehension of messing up (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The students feel worried and emotional, which affects their apprehension about failing a test.

Second, this study indicates that most students engaged in self-regulated learning, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating, in preparing for a test (see Schunk & Zimmerman, 2011). It showed that their self-regulated learning ability caused anxiety to decrease since they had already made a plan, were focusing on their preparation, and had evaluated their own performance. Surprisingly, this finding contradicts the studies by Akcayoglu and Ozer (2023) and Bademcioglu et al. (2017), which found that learners with higher levels of self-regulated learning tended to experience higher levels of test anxiety. Ackayoglu and Ozer (2023) argued that students with lower proficiency levels (A2) may experience more anxiety and therefore engage in self-regulation more frequently as a way to cope. Furthermore, it was found that without adequate motivation or self-efficacy, self-regulation skills may not effectively reduce anxiety (Bademciouglu et al., 2017). In other words, self-regulation alone may not reduce anxiety unless it is combined with strong self-efficacy and positive attitudes.

Nevertheless, this study's findings resonate well with previous studies (Alvandi et al., 2025; Lee & Ko, 2023; Martirossian & Hartoonian, 2015; Nabavi, 2025), which consistently highlights that self-regulated learning ability helps reduce and predict test or exam anxiety. Whereas earlier research pointed to a positive association between self-regulated learning and reduced test anxiety among mostly EFL students in general, this paper extended this finding to EFL microteaching students in particular. This discovery reinforces the idea that self-regulated learning ability appears to play an important role in alleviating the EFL microteaching students' test anxiety.

Finally, this paper found that the students showed a moderate level of test anxiety, where learners experiencing physical disorders, resulting in mental or physical distress, inability to concentrate, paranoia, perform poorly on a test, and even lose self-efficacy (Aydin et al., 2020; Badrian et al., 2022; Muliawati et al., 2020). Furthermore, patterns in the descriptive data, confirmed by the interview findings, indicate that students who reported stronger self-regulated learning strategies also reported lower levels of test anxiety. The majority of students agreed that self-regulated learning ability brought many advantages for their test anxiety. The findings showed that self-regulated learning helped students reduce their test anxiety by increasing their preparation and self-confidence and, at the same time, made them feel secure, reducing their worries and anxiety because they had prepared a backup plan. Other studies that align with these findings (Saaidin et al., 2021; Pegah et al., 2025; Lee & Ko, 2023) found that high levels of self-regulated learning can help students at different proficiency levels perform better and reduce test anxiety in language learning.

CONCLUSION

This research has elucidated how EFL students perceived self-regulated learning and to what extent it helped them alleviate their test anxiety. Generally, the students had demonstrated a moderate level of foreign language anxiety, especially test anxiety, and a high level of self-regulated learning ability. Moreover, most students agreed that self-regulated learning had a big impact on reducing their test anxiety, as they felt more prepared before taking a test, more confident, more secure, less worried, less anxious, and even came up with a backup plan.

Furthermore, this study brings forth several implications. First, based on the results, this study suggests that students implement self-regulated Learning in their learning process. Second, the researchers suggest that educators raise awareness of Self-Regulated Learning throughout the learning process. Additionally, educators can encourage students to build or strengthen their self-regulated learning processes.

However, this paper also has certain limitations. First, the sample size is relatively small, limiting generalizability to a wider population. Hence, future researchers are encouraged to replicate this study with a larger population. Second, this study used only descriptive statistics and did not investigate correlations among the phenomena. Thus, further researchers are encouraged to conduct correlational research.

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