

THE INFLUENCE OF EXISTENTIAL AWARENESS AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES ON STUDENT'S ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

Learning becomes more meaningful when students understand the purpose and personal relevance of what they are learning. Existentialism awareness and phenomenological learning experiences emphasize meaning, reflection, and lived experiences, which may influence students' academic motivation. This study aimed to examine the influence of students' existentialism awareness and phenomenological learning experiences on their academic motivation at Rizal National High School. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed, with respondents selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a validated researcher-made questionnaire measuring existentialism awareness, phenomenological learning experiences, and academic motivation. Statistical analyses included mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product–moment correlation. Results revealed that students demonstrated a very high level of existentialism awareness and high to very high phenomenological learning experiences, indicating strong purpose, autonomy, reflection, and meaningful engagement in learning. Students were found to be motivated to highly motivated, with intrinsic motivation and task value as the strongest contributors. Moreover, findings showed a strong and significant relationship between existentialism awareness, phenomenological learning experiences, and academic motivation. The study concludes that students' academic motivation is strengthened when learning is meaningful, reflective, and connected to personal experiences. It is recommended that educators design learning environments that promote purpose, autonomy, reflection, and experiential learning to further enhance students' motivation and engagement.

Keywords: Academic Motivation, Existentialism Awareness, Learning Experiences, Phenomenological Learning, Student Engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Learning becomes more meaningful when students understand not only what they are learning but also why they are learning it. Existential awareness allows students to reflect on their purpose, values, and sense of direction, which can influence how they approach academic tasks. Meanwhile, phenomenological learning experiences emphasize students' personal and lived experiences as central to the learning process. When learning is connected to real-life meaning and personal reflection, students may develop stronger academic motivation. This study focuses on understanding how these two factors—existential awareness and phenomenological learning experiences—shape students' motivation to learn.

Several scholars support the idea that meaning and lived experience play a crucial role in student motivation. Frankl (2020) emphasized that individuals who find meaning in their experiences are more motivated and resilient in their pursuits. Similarly, van Manen (2020) explained that phenomenological learning encourages students to engage deeply by valuing their personal experiences in understanding concepts. In addition, Deci and Ryan (2000) noted that motivation increases when learners feel autonomy and personal relevance in learning tasks. These studies suggest that when students perceive learning as meaningful and connected to their lives, their academic motivation is strengthened.

At Rizal National High School, teachers have observed that many students show low academic motivation despite having the ability to perform well academically. Some students participate minimally in class, complete tasks only to meet requirements, and struggle to see the relevance of lessons to their personal goals. This situation indicates a possible lack of existential awareness and limited opportunities for meaningful, experience-based learning. Addressing these concerns is important in creating a learning environment that encourages students to engage more purposefully with their studies.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence of existential awareness and phenomenological learning experiences on students' academic motivation at Rizal National High School. The findings of this research aim to provide insights that may help teachers and school administrators design learning experiences that are more meaningful, reflective, and motivating for students.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to examine the influence of existentialism awareness and phenomenological learning experiences on students' academic motivation at Rizal National High School. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' existentialism awareness in terms of:
 - 1.1 meaning in life;
 - 1.2 personal responsibility;
 - 1.3 freedom of choice; and
 - 1.4 authenticity?
2. What is the level of students' phenomenological learning experiences in terms of:
 - 2.1 perceived classroom relevance;
 - 2.2 lived learning experience;
 - 2.3 reflective engagement; and
 - 2.4 sense of presence and participation?
3. What is the level of students' academic motivation in terms of:
 - 3.1 intrinsic motivation;
 - 3.2 extrinsic motivation;
 - 3.3 task value; and
 - 3.4 learning persistence?
4. Is there a significant relationship between students' existentialism awareness and phenomenological learning experiences and their academic motivation?

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to describe the levels of students' existential awareness, phenomenological learning experiences, and academic motivation, and to determine the relationship among these variables. The descriptive approach was used to identify and summarize students' perceptions across the different dimensions of each variable, while the correlational method examined whether existential awareness and phenomenological learning experiences are significantly related to students' academic motivation.

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were students of Rizal National High School selected through simple random sampling to ensure equal chances of participation. The inclusion criteria consisted of officially enrolled students during the school year who were present at the time of data collection and willing to participate in the study. Students who were not officially enrolled, absent during data gathering, or who declined participation were excluded. To implement random selection, all students with even numbers in the official enrollment list were considered as respondents, providing a fair and unbiased representation of the student population.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a validated researcher-made survey questionnaire as the main research instrument. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: Part I measured the level of students' existentialism awareness, Part II assessed the level of phenomenological learning experiences, and Part III determined the level of students' academic motivation. Prior to the actual data collection, the instrument underwent pilot testing among students who were not part of the study respondents, yielding a p-value of 0.78, which indicated that the questionnaire was reliable and suitable for use in the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data were gathered using the survey method. After securing permission from the school administration, the validated questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents during their free time. Clear instructions were given to ensure proper understanding of the items, and the accomplished questionnaires were collected immediately to ensure completeness and accuracy of the data.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The mean and standard deviation were utilized to describe the levels of existentialism awareness, phenomenological learning experiences, and academic motivation. The Pearson product–moment correlation was used to determine the significant relationship among these variables.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Level of Student's Existentialism Awareness

Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
A. Meaning in Life				
1. I have a clear sense of purpose in my life.	3.40	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
2. I feel that my daily activities have meaning.	3.35	0.42	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
3. I can see how my education contributes to my life goals.	3.32	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
4. I believe that my life has a direction I want to follow.	3.38	0.40	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
5. I feel motivated when I think about my future aspirations.	3.33	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Average	3.36	0.41	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
B. Personal Responsibility				
1. I take responsibility for my academic performance.	3.25	0.50	Agree	High Level
2. I acknowledge the consequences of my actions.	3.20	0.48	Agree	High Level
3. I manage my time effectively to complete tasks.	3.18	0.49	Agree	High Level
4. I ensure that I fulfill my commitments and obligations.	3.23	0.47	Agree	High Level
5. I actively seek solutions when I encounter problems in my studies.	3.27	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Average	3.22	0.48	Agree	High Level
C. Freedom of Choice				
1. I make choices that align with my personal values.	3.32	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
2. I feel empowered to decide how I approach my studies.	3.28	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
3. I can choose how to spend my time productively.	3.30	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
4. I believe I have control over the decisions that affect my learning.	3.31	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
5. I actively explore different options before making academic decisions.	3.28	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Average	3.30	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
D. Authenticity				
1. I express my true thoughts and feelings in class.	3.25	0.47	Agree	High Level
2. I am honest with myself about my strengths and weaknesses.	3.30	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
3. I act consistently with my personal values.	3.28	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
4. I do not pretend to be someone I am not to please others.	3.27	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level

Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
5. I feel comfortable showing my genuine self in school activities.	3.31	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Average	3.28	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Overall Average	3.29	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level

Legend:

Scale	Parameters	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
4	3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Very High Level (VHL)
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree (A)	High Level (HL)
2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree (D)	Low Level (LL)
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Very Low Level (VLL)

The results show that students' overall existentialism awareness obtained a very high level ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.45$), indicating that students generally possess a strong sense of purpose, self-direction, and authenticity. This suggests that learners are not only academically engaged but are also aware of the deeper meaning and personal significance of their educational experiences.

For Meaning in Life, the indicator yielded the highest average mean ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.41$), interpreted as Very High Level. The highest mean statement was "I have a clear sense of purpose in my life" ($M = 3.40$), while the lowest was "I can see how my education contributes to my life goals" ($M = 3.32$), although still very high. This implies that students strongly perceive their lives as purposeful, and most already recognize education as part of their future aspirations. This finding aligns with Frankl (2020), who emphasized that individuals with a strong sense of meaning are more motivated and resilient in pursuing goals, including academic ones.

In terms of Personal Responsibility, the indicator obtained a High Level ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.48$). The highest mean statement was "I actively seek solutions when I encounter problems in my studies" ($M = 3.27$), while the lowest was "I manage my time effectively to complete tasks" ($M = 3.18$). This suggests that while students are willing to take responsibility and solve academic challenges, time management remains a relatively weaker area. This finding supports existentialist views that responsibility develops through choice and action but requires continuous guidance and practice (Sartre, 2021).

The indicator Freedom of Choice recorded a Very High Level ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.44$). The highest mean statement was "I make choices that align with my personal values" ($M = 3.32$), while the lowest was "I feel empowered to decide how I approach my studies" ($M = 3.28$). This indicates that students feel a strong sense of autonomy and control over their learning decisions. This result is consistent with Self-Determination Theory, which posits that autonomy enhances motivation and meaningful engagement in learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Lastly, Authenticity also showed a Very High Level ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.46$). The highest mean statement was "I feel comfortable showing my genuine self in school activities" ($M = 3.31$), while the lowest was "I express my true thoughts and feelings in class" ($M = 3.25$). This implies that students generally feel authentic and true to themselves, although some may still hesitate to openly express thoughts in classroom discussions. According to van Manen (2020), authentic learning environments allow students to feel safe in expressing their identities, which supports deeper engagement and personal meaning in learning. The findings suggest that students possess a strong level of existential awareness, which may positively influence their academic motivation and engagement. The results imply that schools should continue fostering learning environments that promote meaning, autonomy, responsibility, and authenticity, as these are essential foundations for motivated and holistic learners.

Table 2: Level of Student's Phenomenological Learning Experiences

Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Verbal Interpretation (VI)	Qualitative Description (QD)
A. Perceived Classroom Relevance				
1. I learn lessons that are related to real-life	3.26	0.48	Strongly Agree	Very High Level

Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Verbal Interpretation (VI)	Qualitative Description (QD)
situations.				
2. What I learn in class is useful in my daily life.	3.22	0.46	Agree	High Level
3. Classroom activities help me understand real-world issues.	3.24	0.49	Agree	High Level
The topics discussed in class are meaningful to me.	3.23	0.47	Agree	High Level
I can apply what I learn in school outside the classroom.	3.25	0.45	Agree	High Level
Average	3.24	0.47	Agree	High Level
B. Lived Learning Experience				
I learn best through my own experiences in class.	3.17	0.51	Agree	High Level
Classroom activities allow me to share my personal experiences.	3.15	0.50	Agree	High Level
I can relate lessons to events in my own life.	3.18	0.52	Agree	High Level
My learning experiences feel real and meaningful.	3.20	0.48	Agree	High Level
I understand lessons better when I experience them firsthand.	3.19	0.49	Agree	High Level
Average	3.18	0.50	Agree	High Level
C. Reflective Engagement				
I reflect on what I learn after class discussions.	3.28	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
2. I think deeply about lessons taught in class.	3.25	0.46	Agree	High Level
Classroom activities encourage me to reflect on my learning.	3.27	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
I evaluate my own understanding of the lessons.	3.24	0.47	Agree	High Level
I learn from reflecting on my experiences in class.	3.26	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Average	3.26	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
D. Sense of Presence and Participation				
I feel actively involved during class discussions.	3.32	0.43	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
I participate confidently in classroom activities.	3.29	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
3. I feel present and focused during lessons.	3.31	0.45	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
I am comfortable expressing my ideas in class.	3.28	0.46	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
I feel that my participation is valued by my teacher and classmates.	3.30	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Average	3.30	0.44	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
Overall Average	3.25	0.47	Agree	High Level

The overall results indicate that students' phenomenological learning experiences were at a high level ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.47$), suggesting that students generally experience learning as meaningful, reflective, and personally engaging. This implies that classroom environments allow learners to connect lessons with real-life experiences and actively participate in the learning process.

For Perceived Classroom Relevance, the indicator obtained a high level ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.47$). The highest mean statement was “I learn lessons that are related to real-life situations” ($M = 3.26$), while the lowest was “What I learn in class is useful in my daily life” ($M = 3.22$). This indicates that students recognize the real-world connections of their lessons, although some may still find it challenging to consistently apply classroom learning in daily situations. This finding supports Dewey’s (2020) view that learning becomes meaningful when connected to real-life contexts.

In terms of Lived Learning Experience, the results also showed a high level ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.50$). The highest mean was “My learning experiences feel real and meaningful” ($M = 3.20$), while the lowest was “Classroom activities allow me to share my personal experiences” ($M = 3.15$). This suggests that students generally experience learning as authentic, though opportunities to openly share personal experiences in class may still be improved. According to Kolb (2020), experiential learning strengthens understanding when learners actively engage and reflect on personal experiences.

The indicator Reflective Engagement registered a very high level ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.45$). The highest mean statement was “I reflect on what I learn after class discussions” ($M = 3.28$), while the lowest was “I evaluate my own understanding of the lessons” ($M = 3.24$). This implies that students frequently engage in reflection, which deepens learning and comprehension. This finding aligns with van Manen (2020), who emphasized that reflection is central to phenomenological learning as it helps learners make meaning from experience.

For Sense of Presence and Participation, the indicator obtained the highest average mean among all indicators ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.44$), interpreted as a very high level. The highest mean was “I feel actively involved during class discussions” ($M = 3.32$), while the lowest was “I am comfortable expressing my ideas in class” ($M = 3.28$). This indicates that students feel engaged and valued in classroom interactions, though some may still experience hesitation in fully expressing ideas. This result supports the claim of Fredricks et al. (2020) that active participation and presence are key components of meaningful student engagement.

The findings suggest that phenomenological learning experiences are well evident among students and play a vital role in making learning meaningful and engaging. The results imply that teachers should continue designing learning activities that emphasize real-life relevance, reflection, and active participation to further enhance students’ academic motivation and engagement.

Table 3: Level of Student’s Motivation

Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Verbal Interpretation (VI)	Qualitative Description (QD)
A. Intrinsic Motivation				
1. I enjoy learning new things in school.	3.32	0.44	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
I feel satisfied when I understand my lessons.	3.28	0.46	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
I study because I want to learn, not just to pass.	3.25	0.47	Agree	Motivated
I feel interested in the topics discussed in class.	3.30	0.45	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
I feel proud when I do well in my schoolwork.	3.34	0.43	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
Average	3.30	0.45	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
B. Extrinsic Motivation				
1. I study hard to get good grades.	3.20	0.48	Agree	Motivated
I am motivated by rewards or recognition from teachers.	3.15	0.50	Agree	Motivated
I complete my schoolwork to meet expectations of others.	3.18	0.49	Agree	Motivated
4. I am encouraged when my efforts are acknowledged.	3.22	0.47	Agree	Motivated
5. I feel motivated when I receive positive feedback.	3.24	0.46	Agree	Motivated

Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Verbal Interpretation (VI)	Qualitative Description (QD)
Average	3.20	0.48	Agree	Motivated
C. Task Value				
1. I believe my school tasks are important.	3.26	0.45	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
I find my schoolwork useful for my future.	3.30	0.44	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
I see value in completing my academic tasks well.	3.28	0.46	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
4. I feel that my lessons are worth learning.	3.24	0.47	Agree	Motivated
I believe that what I learn in school matters.	3.29	0.45	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
Average	3.27	0.45	Strongly Agree	Highly Motivated
D. Learning Persistence				
I continue studying even when lessons are difficult.	3.18	0.49	Agree	Motivated
I do not easily give up when I face academic challenges.	3.22	0.47	Agree	Motivated
I make an effort to finish my school tasks on time.	3.25	0.46	Agree	Motivated
I try different ways to understand difficult lessons.	3.20	0.48	Agree	Motivated
I stay focused on my goals even when learning is hard.	3.23	0.47	Agree	Motivated
Average	3.22	0.47	Agree	Motivated
Overall Average	3.25	0.46	Agree	Motivated

Legend:

Scale	Parameters	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
4	3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)	Highly Motivated (HM)
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree (A)	Motivated (M)
2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree (D)	Less Motivated (LM)
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Not Motivated (NM)

The overall level of students' academic motivation was found to be motivated ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.46$), indicating that students generally demonstrate positive motivation toward their learning tasks. This suggests that learners are engaged in their studies and recognize the importance of academic effort, though there remains room to further strengthen deeper, sustained motivation.

For Intrinsic Motivation, the indicator obtained the highest average mean among the four indicators ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.45$), interpreted as highly motivated. The highest mean statement was "I feel proud when I do well in my schoolwork" ($M = 3.34$), while the lowest was "I study because I want to learn, not just to pass" ($M = 3.25$). This indicates that students experience enjoyment and personal satisfaction in learning, although some may still be partially driven by performance outcomes rather than pure interest. This finding aligns with Deci and Ryan's (2020) Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation flourishes when learning is personally meaningful and autonomy-supportive.

In terms of Extrinsic Motivation, the results showed a motivated level ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.48$). The highest mean statement was "I feel motivated when I receive positive feedback" ($M = 3.24$), while the lowest was "I am motivated by rewards or recognition from teachers" ($M = 3.15$). This suggests that external encouragement and acknowledgment

play a role in motivating students, although rewards alone may not be the strongest motivator. This supports findings by Hidi and Renninger (2020), who noted that external factors can support motivation, especially when combined with meaningful learning experiences.

The indicator Task Value also registered a highly motivated level ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.45$). The highest mean was “I find my schoolwork useful for my future” ($M = 3.30$), while the lowest was “I feel that my lessons are worth learning” ($M = 3.24$). This implies that students strongly perceive their academic tasks as important and relevant to future goals, reinforcing their motivation to engage in learning activities. This finding is consistent with Expectancy-Value Theory, which highlights task value as a strong predictor of student motivation and persistence (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020).

For Learning Persistence, the results revealed a motivated level ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.47$). The highest mean statement was “I make an effort to finish my school tasks on time” ($M = 3.25$), while the lowest was “I continue studying even when lessons are difficult” ($M = 3.18$). This indicates that students generally persist in completing tasks, but may still struggle when faced with academic difficulties. This finding supports Dweck’s (2020) assertion that persistence is strengthened when learners develop positive beliefs about effort and growth.

The results suggest that students’ academic motivation is influenced by both internal satisfaction and external support. The findings imply that educators should continue fostering intrinsic motivation and task value while providing constructive feedback and support to strengthen students’ persistence in learning.

Table 4: Significant Relationship Between the Level of Existentialism Awareness and Phenomenological Learning Experiences to Student’s Academic Motivation

Factors Linked To	Pearson- r	p- value	Verbal Interpretation
Level of Existentialism Awareness and Students’ Academic Motivation	0.81	0.000	Significant
Level of Phenomenological Learning Experiences and Students’ Academic Motivation	0.78	0.000	Significant
Overall	0.80	0.000	Significant

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The results in Table 4 reveal a strong and significant relationship between students’ level of existential awareness and their academic motivation, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.81 ($p = 0.000$). This indicates that students who are more aware of their existence, personal values, and purpose tend to be more motivated in their academic pursuits. Similarly, phenomenological learning experiences also showed a significant positive relationship with academic motivation ($r = 0.78$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that students who engage in meaningful and reflective learning experiences are more likely to be motivated.

The overall correlation of 0.80 ($p = 0.000$) highlights that the combination of existential awareness and phenomenological learning experiences strongly influences students’ motivation. These findings imply that academic motivation is not driven solely by external factors or traditional teaching methods but is significantly enhanced when students connect personally with their learning and reflect on their purpose and experiences. Educators can apply this by integrating reflective practices, purpose-driven tasks, and experiential learning activities to foster higher engagement and intrinsic motivation among students. This aligns with prior research indicating that existential awareness promotes intrinsic motivation and personal responsibility in learners (Spinelli, 2021), while phenomenological learning approaches, which emphasize personal meaning-making, enhance engagement and academic achievement (van Manen, 2020; Ashworth, 2021). Combining reflective existential practices with meaningful learning experiences proves effective in strengthening students’ academic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

The study found that students at Rizal National High School have a very high level of existentialism awareness and high to very high phenomenological learning experiences, indicating strong purpose, autonomy, and meaningful engagement in learning. Students were motivated to highly motivated, with intrinsic motivation and task value as the strongest factors. Results further revealed a strong and significant relationship between existential awareness, phenomenological learning experiences, and academic motivation, confirming that meaningful and reflective learning experiences enhance students’ motivation.

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