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Modeling Student Expectation Formation through SAPS: An Indicator Relationship Analysis among Arabic Language Students

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Abstract

Arabic learning plays a strategic role in religious scholarship, intercultural communication, and global engagement in Indonesia. Despite extensive research on Arabic pedagogy, limited attention has been given to students' future-oriented expectations across higher education institutions. This study investigates the expectations of Arabic language students in four Islamic universities in Metro, Indonesia, using the Scale to Assess Possible Selves (SAPS). The findings reveal that although students' current conditions are weakly associated with their learning expectations, there is a significant collective shift toward higher future aspirations. The ideal self emerges as a strongest motivational predictor than the ought-to self, indicating that positive future self-visions play a central role in shaping engagement and long-term commitment. However, a discrepancy remains between students' self-concepts and their actual learning experiences. The study underscores the importance of strengthening reflective mentoring, curriculum alignment, and authentic learning exposure to foster sustainable motivation, professional identity formation, and academic development among Arabic language students in the contemporary global context.

Keywords: Scale to assess possible selves; L2 motivational self-system; Students Expectation.

Abstrak

Pembelajaran bahasa Arab memainkan peran strategis dalam pengembangan keilmuan keagamaan, komunikasi antarbudaya, dan keterlibatan global di Indonesia. Meskipun penelitian mengenai pedagogi bahasa Arab telah banyak dilakukan, perhatian terhadap ekspektasi mahasiswa yang berorientasi masa depan di berbagai perguruan tinggi masih terbatas. Penelitian ini mengkaji ekspektasi mahasiswa bahasa Arab pada empat perguruan tinggi Islam di Kota Metro, Indonesia, dengan menggunakan Scale to Assess Possible Selves (SAPS) dalam kerangka L2 Motivational Self System. Penelitian ini menganalisis tiga dimensi

utama, yaitu diri ideal (ideal self), diri seharusnya (ought-to self), dan pengalaman belajar (learning experience). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun kondisi aktual mahasiswa memiliki hubungan yang lemah dengan ekspektasi belajar mereka, terdapat pergeseran kolektif yang signifikan menuju aspirasi masa depan yang lebih tinggi. Diri ideal muncul sebagai prediktor motivasional yang lebih kuat dibandingkan diri seharusnya, yang mengindikasikan bahwa visi diri masa depan yang positif berperan sentral dalam membentuk keterlibatan dan komitmen jangka panjang. Namun demikian, masih terdapat kesenjangan antara konsep diri mahasiswa dan pengalaman belajar aktual yang mereka alami. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan mentoring reflektif, penyesuaian kurikulum, serta penyediaan pengalaman belajar autentik guna menumbuhkan motivasi berkelanjutan, pembentukan identitas profesional, dan pengembangan akademik mahasiswa bahasa Arab dalam konteks global kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Scale to assess possible selves; L2 motivational self-system; diri ideal; diri seharusnya; pengalaman belajar.*

INTRODUCTION

40 Arabic language learning (ALL) has a vital role in the development of religious scholarship, cultural understanding, and global communicative competence. In Indonesia, Arabic is regarded as a strategic subject, taught from primary education through to higher education. The city of Metro, as one of the educational centres in Indonesia, hosts a variety of formal educational institutions that offer Arabic instruction across different levels of schooling. The relevance of ALL has gained greater importance due to the growing demand for engaging with religious texts (Arifin & Sukandar, 2021) and to address the challenges of globalisation (Hafiz et al., 2024; Huda & Afrita, 2023).

52 In response to the growing importance of Arabic language education across different levels of schooling, continuous efforts have been undertaken, both nationally and internationally, to enhance the quality and professionalism of Arabic language teaching. The King Salman Global Academy for Arabic Language (KSGAAL) has launched a specialised programme in Arabic language studies (Alshammari, 2024). This programme commenced on 16 October 2024 and is specifically designed to strengthen professional competence in Arabic while also responding to labour market demands. The Government of Indonesia, through the Indonesia Ministry of Religious Affairs, issued Circular Letter Number B-8/Dt.I.I/PP.00/01/2025 concerning the "Recruitment of Main Textbook Authors for Islamic Education (PAI) and Arabic Language Subjects" (Kemenag RI, 2025). This policy reflects the state's commitment to improving the quality of instructional materials and the standard of Arabic language education. Furthermore, Akhmad Masbukhin, an Associate Expert Diplomat at the Centre for Policy Strategy for the Asia-Pacific and Africa Regions within the Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, emphasised that Arabic functions as a language of diplomacy with a pivotal role in international communication, particularly within the Middle East and North Africa regions (Fia, 2025).

The importance of fostering professionalism in the teaching of Arabic extends beyond meeting labour market demands and the requirements of

international diplomacy; it also has a considerable influence on learners' motivation and success in learning the language. In this context, identifying the elements that affect motivation becomes increasingly pertinent. Theoretical approaches, such as the concept of possible selves, provide a comprehensive analytical framework for exploring the dynamics of Arabic language learners' motivation, ultimately supporting the effective implementation of language education programmes at various levels.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that students' motivation and expectations play a crucial role in the success of ALL (Hafi et al., 2024; Kadir et al., 2023; Nur Fatih Ahmad, 2023). Within this line of inquiry, the concept of possible selves has emerged as a central theoretical framework for understanding how learners construct future-oriented identities that shape their motivation (Mann & Blumberg, 2022). Rather than viewing motivation as a static psychological state, this perspective conceptualises it as a dynamic process rooted in learners' visions of who they might become, including both their aspirations and concerns. To operationalise this construct in empirical research, instruments such as the Scale to Assess Possible Selves (SAPS) by MacIntyre et al. (Macintyre et al., 2009b) have been widely used, enabling researchers to examine learners' hopes, goals, and anxieties in a structured manner (Anders et al., 2017).

The theoretical foundation of possible selves can be traced back to Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius, who conceptualised it as a bridge between cognition and motivation. Their framework highlights that individuals' perceptions of their future selves encompass multiple dimensions, including what they might become, what they hope to become, and what they fear becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). This multidimensionality has been further elaborated in subsequent studies, which distinguish between anticipated selves, desired future selves, and feared selves (Cross & Markus, 1994; Dunkel & Anthis, 2001; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Shepard & Marshall, 2007). Importantly, these studies collectively suggest that possible selves are not merely abstract expectations but are characterised by vivid and concrete mental representations that differentiate them from general hopes or anxieties.

Building on this theoretical foundation, research in second language acquisition has increasingly integrated the concept of possible selves into motivational frameworks, most notably through the L2 Motivational Self System proposed by Zoltán Dörnyei (Dörnyei, E. Ushioda, 2011; Dörnyei, 2009). This model synthesises earlier perspectives by organising motivation into three interrelated dimensions: the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the learning experience. The ideal self represents learners' desired future identity as successful language users, while the ought-to self reflects externally driven expectations and obligations that learners seek to fulfil (Dörnyei, 2009; Higgins, 1987). At the same time, the learning experience dimension captures the influence of situational and contextual factors derived from learners' educational environments and prior experiences (Dörnyei, 2014; Macintyre et al., 2009b). These dimensions illustrate that language learning motivation emerges from the interaction between internal aspirations, external pressures, and contextual learning conditions rather than from a single dominant factor.

50 These dimensions provide a crucial theoretical lens for understanding how students construct and negotiate their expectations toward language mastery. Specifically, students' expectations are not formed in isolation but are dynamically influenced by the interaction between their idealized future identities (e.g., becoming proficient Arabic speakers), perceived social and academic obligations (e.g., institutional or religious expectations), and their actual learning experiences within instructional settings. Therefore, integrating the L2 Motivational Self System into the present study allows for a more nuanced modeling of student expectation formation, particularly when examined through the SAPS framework. The indicators within SAPS can be analytically positioned as representations of these motivational dimensions, enabling a structured exploration of how internal aspirations, external pressures, and contextual learning experiences collectively shape students' expectations in Arabic language education.

15 Studies on learners' expectations in ALL reveal several interconnected thematic orientations rather than isolated research strands. A substantial body of research highlights the role of Arabic as a medium for deepening religious understanding, enabling learners to access classical and contemporary Islamic texts and enhance the quality of their worship (Hanafi, 2016; Susiawati & Mardani, 2022; Sya'bani & Has, 2023). Other studies extend this perspective by positioning Arabic language education within broader sociocultural contexts, particularly as a means of fostering religious moderation, intercultural awareness, and tolerance in diverse societies (al Yamin, 2023; Qomaruddin, 2016; Susanto et al., 2023). In addition to these ideological and cultural dimensions, a growing line of research emphasises the instrumental value of Arabic, especially in relation to employability and the tourism sector, where communicative competence is seen as a strategic asset for enhancing competitiveness in the global market (Ernawati, 2018; Lutfiyatun & Shinta, 2024; Muis, 2020).

These studies suggest that learners' expectations toward Arabic language learning are shaped by a complex interplay of religious, sociocultural, and economic motivations. However, despite this diversity of perspectives, most existing research tends to focus on external orientations rather than on how learners internally construct their expectations, hopes, and anxieties as part of their motivational processes. In particular, empirical studies that examine expectation formation using theoretically grounded frameworks and structured measurement instruments remain limited in the Indonesian context (Akla, 2020; Kawijaya et al., 2022; Oktafia et al., 2023).

This limitation becomes more evident when considering variations across educational settings. Previous studies have not sufficiently explored how students' expectations are shaped by differing institutional contexts, particularly at the level of higher education (Akla, 2017; Nahdla et al., 2023; Oktafia et al., 2023; Rahmi, 2019). As a result, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding of how university students' future-oriented self-concepts are formed and negotiated across diverse learning environments. This gap highlights the need for a more in-depth and theoretically grounded investigation of students' motivational dimensions, particularly through frameworks such as possible selves that allow for a more nuanced analysis of expectation formation.

4 This study is grounded in the argument that possible selves refer to individuals' images of themselves in the future. The concept serves a crucial role in shaping motivation and behaviour (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). In other words, possible selves are understood as component of the self-regulatory process, whereby individuals construct visions of what they aspire to achieve or seek to avoid, which in turn influence their actions and decision-making (Oyserman et al., 2004). The present study aims to explore the expectation formation of Arabic language learners across higher education institutions in Metro City through the SAPS framework. Beyond its empirical focus, this research seeks to contribute theoretically by extending the application of expectation-based constructs within second language learning, particularly in underexplored contexts such as Arabic language education in Indonesia. While prior studies have predominantly emphasized motivational dimensions within the L2 Motivational Self System, this study advances the discourse by positioning student expectations as a structured and measurable construct, analytically modeled through the interrelationships among SAPS indicators.

53 The study offers a conceptual refinement by integrating motivational self constructs with expectation formation processes, thereby proposing a more dynamic framework that captures how learners' aspirations, perceived obligations, and learning experiences are translated into concrete expectations. This integration not only broadens the explanatory scope of existing motivation theories but also provides a systematic basis for examining how expectations function as mediating variables between internal dispositions and observable learning behaviors. The findings are expected to contribute to the theoretical development of language learning motivation by foregrounding expectation formation as a central analytical construct, particularly within the context of Arabic language education.

METHOD

Identify Subsections

27 46 51 This research was carried out in the city of Metro, which is home to four Islamic higher education institutions offering Arabic language education programmes (PBA) at both undergraduate (Strata 1) and postgraduate (Strata 2) levels. These four institutions are Universitas Islam Negeri Jurai Siwo Lampung (UIN JUSILA), Universitas Maarif Lampung (UMALA), Universitas Islam Lampung (UNISLA), and Institut Agama Islam Darul A'mal (IAI Darul A'mal). Each institution possesses distinct characteristics. UIN JUSILA is a public higher education institution; UMALA is managed by an organisation; UNISLA operates under a foundation-based structure; and IAI Darul A'mal is a pesantren-based higher education institution. Although other universities are located in Metro, this study focuses specifically on students enrolled in the Arabic Education and Arabic Literature programmes at these four institutions in order to obtain more accurate and relevant data concerning their expectations in learning Arabic. The research was conducted from March to October 2025.

The study employed the SAPS instrument designed by Robert C. MacIntyre and colleagues, which has been previously validated in studies on possible L2 selves. The original validation study demonstrated strong psychometric properties of the instrument (Macintyre et al., 2009b, p. 199). In terms of construct validity, principal

component analysis (PCA) revealed a clear unidimensional structure, supported by scree plot analysis and factor loadings exceeding the acceptable threshold (≥ 0.30). The instrument exhibited high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.82 to 0.95 across different response scales, indicating excellent reliability. Correlational analyses also showed significant relationships among key variables ($r = 0.61-0.75$, $p < 0.001$), further supporting the internal coherence of the scale. In the present study, the instrument was translated into Indonesian to ensure respondents' comprehension while maintaining conceptual equivalence with the original version. Given that the instrument has been widely validated in prior research, it is considered sufficiently robust for adaptation in the context of Arabic language learning. However, it is acknowledged that further validation within the Indonesian context remains an important direction for future research. This approach is consistent with prior studies that adopt established instruments without revalidation when the primary focus lies in model testing rather than scale development.

The ideal self dimension consists of items 1 through 6, while the ought-to self dimension covers items 7 to 12. In addition, the learning experience dimension includes items 13 to 18. A detailed presentation of the instrument can be found in Table 1 below

Table 1.
Research Instrument

No	Statements	Is this expected or unexpected in the future?*	How big is this possibility in the future?***	How often do you think about this future?***
1	Understanding the Arabs' views			
2	Become a knowledgeable person			
3	Appreciate Arabic-language artwork and scientific works			
4	Feel comfortable with Arabic			
5	The pleasure of speaking Arabic			
6	Work in Arabic-speaking jobs			
7	Think like an Arab			
8	Become a cultured person			
9	Being friendly with Arabs or Arabic-speaking people			
10	Feeling respected because I speak Arabic			
11	Participate voluntarily in the activities of other cultural groups			
12	Acting like an Arab			
13	Understand Arabic literacy or books			
14	Want to learn multiple languages			
15	Meeting and talking with Arabs			
16	Traveling to a country or region of an Arabic-speaking person			
17	Watch Arabic movies or videos in Arabic			
18	Reading Arabic-language newspapers and magazines			

Notes :

* 1=Very unexpected., 2=Not expected, 3=Hesitating, 4=expected, 5=highly anticipated

** 1=Highly unlikely, 2=Impossible, 3=Hesitating, 4= Perhaps, 5=Very likely

*** 1=Very rarely, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4= Often, 5=Very often

Source: *Adapted from SAPS developed by MacIntyre et al.*

Participant (Subject) Characteristics

The participants of this study included all students registered in Arabic Education programs at four selected higher education institutions. At the undergraduate level (Strata 1), respondents consisted of students from the first to the fourth year. For the postgraduate level (Strata 2), participants were taken from students in their first and second years. These criteria were established based on

the assumption that actively engaged students can provide relevant and representative insights into their expectations in learning Arabic. Through this approach, the data collected are expected to reflect a range of perspectives, as respondents were categorised according to institution, year of study, and level of education. The demographic profile of the respondents, or the study population, is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Demografi Responden

University	Graduate	Population
UIN JUSILA	PBA (S1)	99
	BSA (S1)	41
	PBA (S2)	34
UMALA	PBA (S1)	54
UNISLA	PBA (S1)	44
IAI Darul A'mal	PBA (S1)	78
Total		350

Source: *Pangkalan Data Pendidikan Tinggi*

The sample consisted of 187 respondents, calculated using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error (Sugiyono, 2022). The respondents were then allocated using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Subsequently, the distribution of participants was further organized through proportionate stratified random sampling.

Table 3.
Sampel Responden

University	Graduate	Population	Sample
UIN JUSILA	PBA (S1)	99	53
	BSA (S1)	41	22
	PBA (S2)	34	18
UMALA	PBA (S1)	54	29
UNISLA	PBA (S1)	44	24
IAI Darul A'mal	PBA (S1)	78	41
Total		350	187

Research Design

his research seeks to examine the expectations of Arabic language students in the city of Metro by employing the SAPS instrument. The study adopts a quantitative correlational design. Data collection was conducted based on guidelines adapted from the SAPS framework to gain deeper insights into learners' self-perceptions, which are categorised into three principal dimensions: the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the learning experience. The integrated analysis was conducted by positioning the concepts of possible selves and the L2 Motivational Self System as the primary analytical framework in this study. Specifically, the dimensions of possible selves were operationalised through the constructs of the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the learning experience, which were used to interpret how students construct their future-oriented expectations in learning Arabic. In this regard, the framework functions not merely as a theoretical reference but as an analytical lens guiding the selection of variables, the structuring of the SAPS indicators, and the interpretation of relationships among constructs.

The data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS Statistics and SmartPLS. The analysis proceeded in several stages. First, descriptive statistics were generated

using SPSS to examine the distribution of students' present and future conditions. Second, preliminary data screening was conducted to ensure data completeness and consistency. Third, the measurement model was evaluated using SmartPLS to assess construct validity and reliability, including indicator loadings and internal consistency. Finally, the structural model was analysed to examine the relationships among the SAPS indicators and to identify the pattern of expectation formation among Arabic language students.

This study adhered to fundamental ethical principles in conducting research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and they were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. No personal identifying information was collected, and all data were analyzed anonymously. This study did not involve any sensitive personal data or interventions that would require formal ethical board approval.

RESULT

The formation of students' expectations, as conceptualised through the SAPS framework, encompasses the components of the ideal self, the ought-to self, and the learning experience. The researcher utilised ratio-scale data derived from the SPSS questionnaire output, whereas the preceding analysis had been limited to nominal data. To examine the relationships among the three components, the researcher employed cross-tabulation (crosstabs) analysis as well as path analysis. These techniques enabled a more detailed investigation of the interconnections between the ideal self, the ought-to self, and learning experience in shaping students' expectations.

Structural Model of the Relationship between the Ideal Self and the Ought-to Self

The following cross-tabulation presents the results of a comparative analysis for students' ideal self-expectations and their ought-to self-expectations.

Table 4.
Cross-Tabulation of Ideal Self and Ought-to Self

		Ought-to Self		Total	
		Middle	High		
Ideal Self	Middle	Count	15	0	15
		% within	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	High	Count	91	81	172
		% within	52,9%	47,1%	100,0%
Total	Count	106	81	187	
	% within	56,7%	43,3%	100,0%	

The results of the cross-tabulation analysis between the ideal self and the ought-to self categories indicate that the majority of students fall within the high ideal self category. This suggests that most learners possess strong personal aspirations to become competent users of Arabic, reflecting a positive future-oriented orientation toward language mastery. However, not all students with

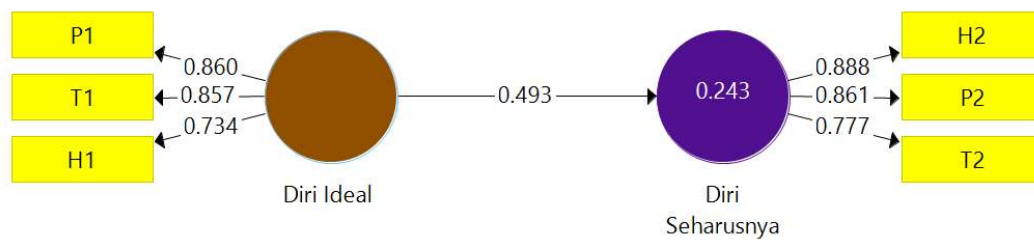
strong ideal aspirations position their perceived obligations at the same level. Of the total 172 students classified as having a high ideal self, more than half (52.9%) still placed their ought-to self within the moderate category, while only 47.1% aligned it with the high category. This pattern indicates that although students are highly motivated by personal goals, these aspirations are not always reinforced by equally strong external expectations or perceived responsibilities, which may weaken the consistency of their learning commitment.

Meanwhile, all respondents categorised as having a moderate ideal self consistently placed their ought-to self within the moderate category. This alignment suggests that students with lower aspirational vision tend to maintain a proportional level of perceived obligation, indicating a more stable but less ambitious motivational profile. Overall, the distribution of data reveals that 56.7% of students fall within the moderate ought-to self category, whereas 43.3% are in the high category. This distribution implies that external motivational pressures, such as institutional expectations or social norms, are present but not dominant, which may limit the extent to which students translate their aspirations into disciplined learning behaviour.

This pattern suggests the presence of a discrepancy between students' ideal self-conceptions and their perceived obligations. In the context of language learning, such a gap may result in motivational inconsistency, where students are able to envision successful future identities but lack the structured commitment required to achieve them. In other words, students tend to hold strong personal aspirations, yet these aspirations are not always accompanied by equally elevated standards of perceived duty or responsibility, potentially affecting the sustainability of their learning efforts.

These findings are further reinforced by the PLS-based structural model analysis. The model demonstrates that the ideal self construct is formed by three principal indicators: P1 (the ideal self perceived as attainable, loading = 0.860), T1 (thinking about one's ideal self in the future, loading = 0.857), and H1 (the hoped-for ideal self, loading = 0.734). The high loading values indicate that students' ideal self is strongly grounded in cognitive and perceptual processes, particularly in terms of how achievable they perceive their goals and how frequently they engage in future-oriented thinking. This indicates that students construct their ideal self-concept on the basis of what they believe is realistically achievable, how they cognitively envisage their future selves, and the aspirational image of the ideal identity they wish to attain. This finding implies that learners' motivation is not solely driven by abstract aspirations but is closely linked to their perceived attainability of success. Therefore, when students believe that mastering Arabic is within their reach, they are more likely to sustain engagement and develop a clearer learning trajectory.

Figure 1, Structural Model of the Relationship between Ideal Self-Expectations and Ought-to Self-Expectations



Based on Figure 1, the ought-to self construct is formed by three indicators: H2 (the hoped-for ought-to self, loading = 0.888), P2 (the attainable ought-to self, loading = 0.861), and T2 (thinking about ought-to self in the future, loading = 0.777). The high loading values indicate that students' perceptions of their obligations are strongly influenced by how desirable these expectations are, how achievable they perceive them to be, and how frequently they reflect on their future responsibilities. This suggests that external expectations become meaningful for learners only when they are internalised as realistic and personally relevant goals. Students' perceptions of their ought-to selves are therefore shaped by normative demands they perceive as ideal, expectations they consider realistically attainable, and reflective considerations of their future roles or responsibilities. This implies that obligation-based motivation in learning Arabic is not purely imposed from outside, but is cognitively processed and partially internalised by learners, influencing how seriously they engage with their learning tasks.

The structural relationship between the two constructs is indicated by a path coefficient of 0.493, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship. This suggests that students who possess stronger ideal self-visions are more likely to develop a heightened sense of obligation toward learning Arabic, as their personal aspirations begin to align with perceived external expectations. In other words, the ideal self may function as a reinforcing mechanism that strengthens the salience of the ought-to self in guiding learning behaviour. However, the R-square value of 0.243 suggests that the ideal self explains only 24.3% of the variance in the ought-to self. The result indicates that while personal aspirations contribute to shaping students' sense of obligation, a substantial proportion of this construct is influenced by other factors. These may include institutional expectations, teacher influence, peer environment, or sociocultural pressures, which operate alongside internal motivation in shaping students' engagement with Arabic. The finding confirms that additional factors beyond the ideal self contribute to shaping students' perceptions of their ought-to selves, highlighting the complexity of motivational dynamics in Arabic language learning and the need for a more comprehensive approach in both research and instructional design.

Table 5 below provides a brief summary of the findings from the PLS-based structural model analysis.

Table 5.
Summary Table of the Structural Model of the Relationship between Ideal Self and Ought-to Self

Variable	Indicator	Loading	SE	t	p	CR	AVE	HTMT
Ideal Self	P1	0.860	0,05	23.123	0.000	0.859	0.671	0.595
	T1	0.857	0,05	29.483	0.000			
	H1	0.734	0,05	11.389	0.000			
Ought-to Self	P2	0.861	0,05	26.547	0.000	0.880	0.711	
	T2	0.777	0,05	16.337	0.000			
	H2	0.888	0,05	35.949	0.000			

Table 5 demonstrates that both constructs exhibit excellent validity and reliability. For the Ideal Self variable, all indicators (P1, T1, H1) show high loading factor values (0.734–0.860), with Composite Reliability (CR) = 0.859 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.671, indicating strong internal consistency and satisfactory convergent validity. These results suggest that the indicators consistently capture students’ aspirational self-concepts, meaning that learners hold relatively stable and coherent visions of their desired future identities in learning Arabic. Similarly, the Ought-to Self variable presents robust indicators (0.777–0.888), with CR = 0.880 and AVE = 0.711, reflecting high reliability and the construct’s strong capacity to explain the variance of its indicators. This indicates that students’ perceptions of their obligations are also systematically structured, suggesting that external expectations are clearly recognised and cognitively organised by learners within the learning process. The HTMT value of 0.595 indicates good discriminant validity between the two constructs, meaning that although they are conceptually distinct, they remain reasonably related. In the context of language learning, this suggests that students are able to differentiate between their personal aspirations and their perceived responsibilities, while still maintaining a meaningful connection between the two as part of their overall motivational system. These findings confirm that the measurement model for both variables satisfies the required statistical criteria and is suitable for further structural analysis.

These results from the perspective of Higgins’s self-discrepancy theory suggest a possible gap between the ideal self and the ought-to self. Although the majority of students report high levels of ideal self-expectations, their perceived personal obligations tend to remain at a moderate level. Current condition may be interpreted as a form of caution or realism in balancing what they aspire to achieve with what they believe they are required to accomplish. Both the cross-tabulation analysis and the SEM/PLS structural model consistently demonstrate a positive, yet not fully linear, association between the ideal self and the ought-to self shows that students often maintain high and aspirational visions of their future identities; however, their perceived obligations do not always correspond proportionally to these aspirations. This finding carries important implications for educational contexts. The correspondence between students’ ideal self-expectations and their perceived responsibilities (ought-to self) is likely to influence their learning motivation and personal development. A closer synchronisation between these two dimensions may enhance motivational consistency and contribute to more sustainable academic engagement.

Structural Model of the Relationship between Ideal Self-Expectations and Learning Experience Expectations.

The cross-tabulation below illustrates the findings of a comparative analysis between students' ideal self-expectations and their learning experience expectations.

Tabel 6.
Cross-Tabulation of Ideal Self and Learning Experience

		Learning Experience		Total	
		Middle	High		
Ideal Self	Middle	Count	7	8	15
		% within	46,7%	53,3%	100,0%
	High	Count	10	162	172
		% within	5,8%	94,2%	100,0%
Total	Count	17	170	187	
	% within	9,1%	90,9%	100,0%	

Based on the findings of the cross-tabulation between the ideal self and learning experience categories in Table 6, a fairly significant relationship between the two variables can be observed. This indicates that students' future-oriented self-concepts are closely linked to how they perceive and evaluate their learning experiences in Arabic language education. Of the total 187 students, the majority fall within the high ideal self category (172 students). This suggests that most learners possess a clear and strong vision of themselves as successful users of Arabic, which serves as a foundational motivational resource in the learning process.

Notably, within this group, a substantial majority also position themselves in the high learning experience category, while only 5.8% fall within the moderate learning experience category. This result indicates that students who possess a strong ideal self-concept tend to internalise expectations related to the learning process and perceive it as positive, meaningful, and beneficial. In the context of language learning, this implies that a clearly defined future self can enhance learners' engagement by shaping their perceptions of classroom activities, making them more relevant to their long-term goals.

Students classified within the moderate ideal self category (15 students) display a more balanced distribution: 46.7% fall within the moderate learning experience category, while 53.3% are in the high category. This pattern indicates that a less strongly defined ideal self is associated with more varied and less stable perceptions of the learning experience. From a pedagogical perspective, this suggests that when students lack a clear future vision, their engagement with the learning process may fluctuate, depending on situational factors such as teaching methods or classroom environment.

Overall, 90.9% of students reported a high level of learning experience expectations, while only 9.1% fell within the moderate category. This distribution indicates that, in general, students tend to perceive Arabic language learning as a positive and valuable experience. However, the strength of this perception appears to be closely tied to the clarity of their ideal self-conceptions. In other words, the higher the students' ideal self-expectations, the greater the likelihood that they will perceive the learning process as meaningful and instrumental in achieving both their academic goals and personal development.

These findings are further substantiated by the PLS analysis presented in Figure 2, which demonstrates that the ideal self construct has a significant effect on learning experience, as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.593. This moderately strong relationship suggests that students' personal aspirations play a central role in shaping how they experience the learning process, reinforcing the idea that motivation driven by future self-visions can directly influence learning engagement. The R^2 value of 0.351 indicates that about 35.1% of the variation in learning experience is accounted for by the clarity and strength of students' ideal self-conceptions. This implies that while ideal self is an important predictor, other factors also contribute to shaping students' experiences in learning Arabic.

The indicators forming the ideal self consist of H1 (the hoped-for ideal self, loading = 0.776), P1 (the attainable ideal self, loading = 0.878) as the strongest indicator, and T1 (thinking about the ideal self in the future, loading = 0.816). The high loading values indicate that students' ideal self is primarily grounded in their perception of attainability and their cognitive engagement with future goals. This suggests that learners are more motivated when they perceive their goals as realistic and frequently reflect on them. Meanwhile, the learning experience construct is explained by H3 (the hoped-for learning experience, loading = 0.818), P3 (the attainable learning experience, loading = 0.879) as the dominant indicator, and T3 (thinking about future learning experiences, loading = 0.830). These results indicate that students evaluate their learning experiences not only based on expectations but also on how achievable and relevant those experiences are to their personal goals.

Figure 2, Structural Model of the Relationship between Ideal Self-Expectations and Learning Experience Expectations

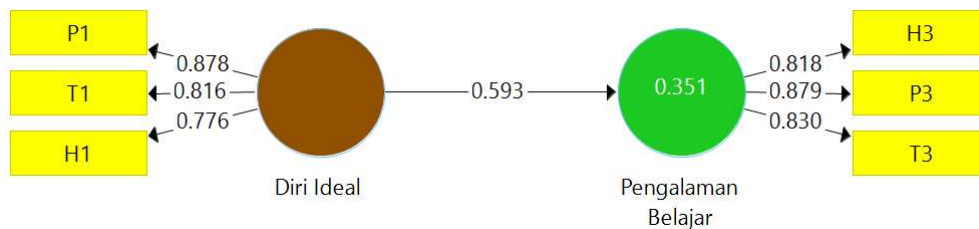


Table 7 below provides a brief overview of the results derived from the PLS-based structural model analysis.

Table 7. Summary Table of the Structural Model of the Relationship between Ideal Self and Learning Experience

Variable	Indicator	Loading	SE	t	p	CR	AVE	HTMT
Ideal Self	P1	0.878	0,05	38.143	0.000	0.864	0.680	0.738
	T1	0.816	0,05	28.019	0.000			
	H1	0.776	0,05	11.946	0.000			
Learning Experience	P3	0.879	0,05	39.613	0.000	0.880	0.710	
	T3	0.830	0,05	30.157	0.000			
	H3	0.818	0,05	18.345	0.000			

The table indicates that both constructs demonstrate excellent measurement quality and are suitable for use in the structural relationship analysis. This suggests

32 that the constructs of Ideal Self and Learning Experience are measured with a high degree of accuracy, allowing for a reliable interpretation of students' motivational dynamics in Arabic language learning. The Ideal Self construct shows high loading factor values across all its indicators (0.776–0.878), with CR = 0.864 and AVE = 0.680, indicating high internal consistency and acceptable convergent validity. These results imply that students' future-oriented aspirations are coherently structured, meaning that their visions of becoming proficient Arabic users are stable and consistently reflected across different indicators. In the context of language learning, this coherence strengthens the role of the ideal self as a central driver of sustained motivation.

4 Similarly, the Learning Experience construct exhibits high consistency, with loading factors ranging from 0.818 to 0.879, CR = 0.880, and AVE = 0.710, suggesting that this variable is both stable and representative in explaining its indicators. This indicates that students' perceptions of their learning experiences are not random or situationally fragmented, but rather systematically formed based on meaningful engagement with the learning process. In practical terms, this suggests that learners are able to evaluate their Arabic learning experiences in a structured way, which can support more consistent learning behaviour. The HTMT value of 0.738 remains below the threshold of 0.85, thereby demonstrating good discriminant validity between the constructs. This finding indicates that students are able to distinguish between their personal aspirations (ideal self) and their perceptions of the learning process (learning experience), while still maintaining a meaningful relationship between the two. In the context of language learning, this distinction is important because it allows both internal motivation and experiential factors to interact without collapsing into a single dimension.

6 According to Higgins's perspective, the ideal self refers to the mental representation of who individuals aspire to become, whereas the ought-to self denotes who they feel obligated to be. Higgins highlights that a mismatch between the actual self and the ideal self can lead to negative emotions such as disappointment or dissatisfaction, while alignment between these aspects promotes positive motivation. The results of this study support Higgins' perspective. Students who possess clear and realistic ideal self-expectations (H1, P1, T1) tend to anticipate more positive learning experiences (H3, P3, T3). This suggests a meaningful connection between future-oriented self-expectations and perceptions of academic experience, whereby the discrepancy between "actual self" and "ideal self" may be narrowed through a meaningful learning process. The stronger the integration between students' ideal self-expectations and their anticipated learning experiences, the lower the likelihood of experiencing negative self-discrepancy. Conversely, meaningful learning experiences may serve as a mediating mechanism to minimize the gap between the actual self and the ideal self, thereby facilitating the development of intrinsic motivation and a sense of personal accomplishment.

11 **Structural Model of the Relationship between Ought-to Self-Expectations and Learning Experience Expectations**

26
42 The following cross-tabulation presents the results of a comparative analysis between students' ought-to self-expectations and their expectations of learning experiences.

Table 8.
Cross-Tabulation of Ought-to Self and Learning Experience

		Learning Experience			Total
		Middle	High		
Ought-to Self	Middle	Count	16	90	106
		% within	15,1%	84,9%	100,0%
	High	Count	1	80	81
		% within	1,2%	98,8%	100,0%
Total	Count	17	170	187	
	% within	9,1%	90,9%	100,0%	

The cross-tabulation results between ought-to self-expectations and learning experience expectations reveal a consistent trend: as students' ought-to self-expectations increase, their expectations of learning experiences also tend to rise. This indicates that students' perceived obligations and normative standards play an important role in shaping how they evaluate and anticipate their learning process in Arabic language education. The vast majority fall within the high learning experience category (90.9%), while only 9.1% are classified within the moderate category. This suggests that, overall, students tend to perceive Arabic language learning as a meaningful and positive experience. In the learning context, such a dominant positive perception may support sustained engagement and persistence, especially when learners recognise the relevance of their studies to future roles or responsibilities.

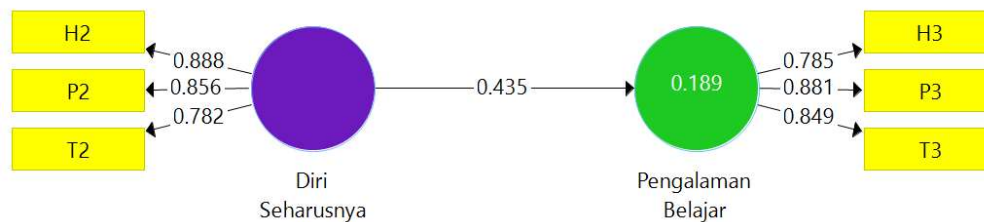
Students with high ought-to self-expectations display a particularly striking pattern: almost all of them (98.8%) also report high learning experience expectations, with only 1.2% placing themselves in the moderate category. This finding indicates that when students strongly internalise external expectations, they are more likely to perceive the learning process as valuable and worthwhile. In other words, obligation-based motivation can reinforce positive engagement with learning activities when it is meaningfully internalised. Students with moderate ought-to self-expectations demonstrate greater variation: 84.9% fall within the high learning experience category, while 15.1% are in the moderate category. This pattern suggests that when perceived obligations are less strongly defined, students' perceptions of the learning experience become more variable and potentially influenced by situational factors such as teaching quality or classroom environment. From a pedagogical perspective, this indicates that weaker normative motivation may lead to less consistent engagement in the learning process.

These findings demonstrate that the ought-to self plays a significant role in shaping students' orientation towards their desired learning experiences. Students who possess high ought-to self-expectations tend to align these perceptions with equally high expectations of their learning experiences. This suggests that the more strongly students perceive the importance of their academic roles and responsibilities, the higher the quality of learning experiences they expect as a means of fulfilling those perceived obligations. It may therefore be concluded that a positive association exists between ought-to self-expectations and learning experience expectations. Students who view themselves as bearing greater academic duties and responsibilities are more likely to place substantial expectations on the learning process. This indicates that internal factors,

particularly the construction of the ought-to self, can influence students' orientation in evaluating and anticipating their learning experiences, ultimately shaping their motivation, satisfaction, and academic achievement.

These findings are further reinforced by the PLS structural model analysis presented in Figure 3, which indicates that the ought-to self construct exerts a significant effect on learning experience, with a path coefficient of 0.435. This implies that the higher students' expectations regarding academic obligations or social demands they perceive must be fulfilled, the stronger their orientation towards learning experience. However, the R² value of 0.189 indicates that only about 18.9% of the variance in learning experience can be explained by the ought-to self construct. This indicates that additional factors beyond the scope of this model contribute significantly to shaping students' learning experiences.

Figure 3, Structural Model of the Relationship between Ought-to Self-Expectations and Learning Experience Expectations



The ought-to self construct is formed through three principal dimensions: the hoped-for ought-to self (H2), which demonstrates the highest loading at 0.888; the attainable ought-to self (P2), with a loading of 0.856; and thinking about the ought-to self in the future (T2), with a loading of 0.782. Meanwhile, the learning experience construct is explained by three indicators: the hoped-for learning experience (H3), with a loading of 0.785; the attainable learning experience (P3), which emerges as the most dominant indicator with a loading of 0.881; and thinking about future learning experiences (T3), with a loading of 0.849. The integration of these two constructs underscores that students who possess a strong sense of ought-to self-awareness tend to internalise perceived obligations into higher expectations of their learning experiences. Consequently, the learning process is viewed not only as an academic activity, but also as a strategic means of fulfilling the self-imposed demands and responsibilities they have constructed.

Table 9 below provides a brief overview of the findings from the PLS-based structural model analysis.

Tabel 9. Summary Table of the Structural Model of the Relationship between Ought-to Self and Learning Experience

Variabel	Indicator	Loading	SE	t	p	CR	AVE	HTMT
Ought-to Self	P2	0.856	0,05	21.296	0.000	0.880	0.711	0.516
	T2	0.782	0,05	14.972	0.000			
	H2	0.888	0,05	33.509	0.000			
Learning Experience	P3	0.881	0,05	37.308	0.000	0.877	0.704	
	T3	0.849	0,05	25.508	0.000			
	H3	0.785	0,05	13.001	0.000			

19 Table 9 indicates that both constructs demonstrate strong validity and reliability within the tested structural model. This suggests that the measurement of Ought-to Self and Learning Experience is statistically sound, allowing for a credible interpretation of how obligation-based motivation interacts with students' perceptions of the learning process in Arabic language education. The Ought-to Self construct exhibits high loading factor values across all indicators (0.782–0.888), with CR = 0.880 and AVE = 0.711, signifying excellent internal consistency and a strong capacity to explain the variance of its indicators. These results indicate that students' perceptions of their obligations are coherently structured and consistently reflected across indicators. In the context of language learning, this suggests that normative motivation is clearly recognised and can serve as a stable source of behavioural regulation in learning Arabic.

Similarly, the Learning Experience construct shows high loading factors (0.785–0.881), with CR = 0.877 and AVE = 0.704, indicating that its indicators consistently and adequately represent the construct. This implies that students' evaluations of their learning experiences are systematically formed rather than incidental, reflecting meaningful engagement with instructional activities. From a pedagogical perspective, this consistency suggests that learners are able to assess their learning experiences in relation to their goals, which may support more sustained participation in the learning process.

4 The HTMT value of 0.516 demonstrates good discriminant validity, as it remains well below the 0.85 threshold, indicating that the two constructs are conceptually different yet remain significantly associated. In the context of language learning, this means that students can distinguish between what they feel obliged to achieve and how they experience the learning process, while still allowing these two dimensions to interact in shaping their motivation. The model demonstrates a strong relationship between Ought-to Self-Expectations and Learning Experience Expectations, with both dimensions contributing meaningfully to individuals' perceptions and motivation toward an ideal and norm-based learning process. This suggests that when students internalise their responsibilities in a meaningful way, these obligations can positively influence how they perceive and engage with Arabic language learning, thereby supporting more consistent and goal-oriented learning behaviour.

5 38 From the perspective of Higgins' theory, these findings suggest that the ought-to self has an important role in directing students' orientation toward their learning experiences. According to Higgins, the ought-to self is strongly linked to internalized norms, duties, and responsibilities from the social environment, including family, society, and educational institutions. When students perceive academic demands as obligations that must be fulfilled, they are motivated to adjust their behaviors and learning strategies to align with these external expectations.

The tendency of the majority of students with high ought-to self-expectations to also report high expectations of their learning experiences demonstrates consistency with Higgins' framework. A strong ought-to self encourages individuals to avoid self-discrepancy between the actual self and socially prescribed standards. Consequently, students with a heightened awareness of their academic responsibilities are more likely to develop a positive, proactive, and future-oriented learning orientation.

11 Although the effect of the ought-to self on learning experience is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.435$), the relatively low R^2 value (0.189) indicates that the ought-to self accounts for only a small proportion of the variance in learning experience. This finding aligns with Higgins' argument that individual motivation is not determined solely by the ought-to self, but also by other self-representations, such as the ideal self, which is more strongly associated with aspirations, personal hopes, and intrinsic desires. In other words, students may require a balance between external pressures and internal drives to foster more comprehensive and meaningful learning experiences.

2 The findings of this study support the fundamental assumption of Higgins' theory that the discrepancy or congruence between self-constructs and lived experience can influence individuals' motivation, attitudes, and learning orientations. In the context of Arabic language students, a strong ought-to self may encourage them to perceive learning experiences not merely as cognitive processes, but also as a means of fulfilling moral and social obligations that affirm their academic and religious identities.

DISCUSSION

31 The findings of this study reveal a theoretically significant pattern: although the relationship between students' present condition and their expectations toward learning Arabic is statistically weak at the individual level, a clear distributional shift toward higher future-oriented categories is observed. This indicates that expectation formation may not follow a linear trajectory from present competence to future projection, but instead reflects a more collective and aspirational orientation among learners.

37 This finding both aligns with and challenges previous studies within the framework of Possible Selves and the L2 Motivational Self System. While prior research (Subekti, 2018; Üstünbaş, 2017) highlights the central role of the Ideal L2 Self as a motivational driver, it often assumes a relatively coherent relationship between self-guides and actual learning outcomes. However, the present study demonstrates that strong future expectations can coexist with relatively weak present conditions. This suggests that the Ideal L2 Self may function less as a direct predictor of immediate performance and more as a symbolic and future-oriented construct that shapes long-term direction rather than short-term achievement. Studies such as Shih and Change (2018) emphasize the role of mediating variables, including self-efficacy, anxiety, and social support, in linking motivation and performance. The current findings support this perspective but also extend it by indicating that expectation formation may operate as a semi-independent layer within the motivational system. In other words, students' expectations cannot be fully explained by their current condition or by traditional motivational variables alone.

6 This study contributes with a theoretical standpoint by repositioning student expectations as a distinct analytical construct within second language motivation research. Rather than treating expectations as a derivative of motivation, the findings suggest that expectations constitute a parallel system that interacts with, but is not entirely determined by, learners' present condition. This reconceptualization is particularly relevant in the context of Arabic language

learning, where sociocultural, religious, and identity-related dimensions may intensify future-oriented self-construction.

25 However, these interpretations should be approached with caution. One limitation of the present study lies in the reliance on the SAPS framework, which primarily captures expectation-based constructs and may not fully account for other influential variables. Factors such as self-efficacy, language anxiety, prior learning experiences, and institutional support systems were not explicitly included in the model, yet they may significantly influence both present conditions and future expectations. The use of self-reported data introduces the possibility of response bias, particularly in relation to socially desirable future-oriented responses.

16 SAPS may simplify the complexity of motivational dynamics by treating expectations as relatively stable constructs, whereas in reality, learners' expectations are dynamic, context-dependent, and subject to change over time. This suggests that future research should adopt more comprehensive and longitudinal approaches to better capture the evolving nature of expectation formation.

2 Despite these limitations, the findings carry important pedagogical implications. The discrepancy between the ideal self, the ought-to self, and actual learning experiences indicates a structural gap within the educational process. Although students demonstrate strong future-oriented visions, these are not sufficiently supported by authentic learning experiences or meaningful engagement with Arabic language and culture. Academic programs need to strengthen reflective-based academic and career mentoring to help students translate their aspirations into concrete and achievable actions. Curriculum design should reinforce ethical values, intercultural competence, and the integration of Islamic principles, while expanding exposure to authentic contexts. In other words, aligning students' motivational vision with structured learning support is essential for fostering professional identity formation among Arabic language learners in the global era.

CONCLUSION

43 This study concludes that although students' current conditions are weakly related to their expectations for learning Arabic, there is a clear collective shift toward higher future aspirations, indicating the strong role of future-oriented self-concepts in shaping motivation. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to L2 motivation research by positioning student expectations as a distinct and semi-autonomous construct within the L2 Motivational Self System, showing that expectation formation does not develop linearly from present competence but emerges as an aspirational process that may operate independently of current proficiency levels. This finding refines existing theory by suggesting that expectations function as an intermediary layer linking ideal and ought-to selves with learning behavior. At the same time, the observed gap between students' self-concepts and their actual learning experiences underscores the need for more structured academic support, including reflective mentoring, curriculum alignment, and authentic learning exposure, to translate future-oriented aspirations into sustainable academic development and professional identity formation.

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