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Tracing the roots: understanding the factors that drive motivation and loyalty of scholars toward joining international academic conferences

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This study aims to examine the factors contributing to motivation and loyalty among scholars attending international academic conferences. Specifically, the study aims to understand what motivates scholars to participate actively in these events by investigating the interaction between academic skills, academic self-concept, support, motivation, and loyalty. Data were collected from 238 respondents to a structured questionnaire distributed at three international conferences in Indonesia, South Korea, and India. As a result of these findings, academic skills ($\beta = 0.453$, t -value = 5.128) and self-concept ($\beta = 0.358$, t -value = 3.963) significantly influence perceived support, which encourages motivation and fosters loyalty toward these conferences. Furthermore, motivation serves as a critical mediator, bringing together academic skills and self-esteem with loyalty, suggesting that nurturing these elements has a significant impact on scholars' engagement and commitment to the academic community.

KEYWORDS

international conference, motivation, loyalty, academic skill, support

1 Introduction

Motivation is a powerful force that guides our decisions, shapes our goals, and influences the level of effort we invest in various endeavors. It is the internal process that energizes and directs behavior toward achieving desired outcomes (Acquah et al., 2021). In diverse contexts, from personal aspirations to academic and professional environments, motivation plays a pivotal role in driving individuals to persist despite challenges.

This dynamic interplay of internal and external factors underscores the complexity of motivation (Wentzel and Wigfield, 1998). It is influenced by beliefs, values, social cues, and environmental conditions. As individuals become motivated, they often develop a sense of attachment and commitment (Khuong et al., 2020). This loyalty extends beyond mere attendance, reflecting a profound connection to an event that holds personal or collective significance.

Participation in international academic conferences is a valuable experience for scholars and researchers to showcase their study, expand their networks, and gain new insights (Schreiner et al., 2022). A previous study states that program coordinators and doctoral advisors work hard to ensure that admitted applicants are satisfied (Lee et al., 2012). However, not all academics may be equally motivated or loyal to attend such events. Understanding the drivers behind motivation and loyalty toward international academic conferences is crucial for conference organizers, academic institutions, and policymakers.

Hence, the purpose of this research is to delve into the factors that underpin motivation and loyalty among academics in their decision to participate in international academic conferences. Through this exploration, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how conference attendance can be facilitated and enhanced, ultimately enriching the academic landscape.

2 Literature review

2.1 Motivation

Motivation theories form part of a rich and dynamic field that searches for a deeper understanding of human behavior and drive. Essentially, motivation theories attempt to understand the factors that motivate, guide, and sustain goal-directed behavior. It has been traditionally defined as being altruistic and selfless (Phillips, 1982). It was later stated by a scholar in 1987 that each individual has a different motivation; several levels of needs are defined in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1987). Research in the past has shown that different needs, such as motivators and hygiene factors, affect people's motivation to work (Herzberg, 1995). Recent researchers have characterized motivation as a state or process within an organism that leads to activation, indicating that motivation is the driving force behind activation (Reber, 2005) and it has been tried to be assessed by several models such as MUSIC Inventory (Resendiz-Calderón et al., 2024).

2.2 Loyalty

In the event industry, loyalty emerges as a pivotal imperative, which is crucial to the purpose and viability of these events. A key component of this loyalty is the encouragement of visitors to return year after year, thus creating a tradition of attendance that becomes part of the cultural fabric of the participants (Tanford et al., 2012). It has been shown in previous research that loyalty is defined in a variety of ways, including constant purchasing, frequent engagement, and the influential realm of word-of-mouth recommendations (Lee et al., 2006). Rather than simply participating in an event, loyalty in the festival context involves a nuanced analysis of the performance and attributes that contribute to event satisfaction. In the university itself, a previous study noted that students account for 39% of their loyalty to the university they attend (Romero et al., 2024).

As the core of this discourse, customer satisfaction plays a pivotal role, catalyzing securing referrals, fostering customer loyalty, and ultimately contributing to the profitability of an organization (Yang et al., 2011). Throughout this intricate narrative, the consumer's evolving attitude toward a festival is evident, a dynamic influenced by the evaluation of their experiences.

2.3 Education conference

Researchers, practitioners, and scholars from around the world gather at international conferences to discuss and share the latest research findings (International Conference Alert, 2023). In addition to providing academics with the opportunity to network, learn about new developments in their field (Santos et al., 2023), and collaborate with other experts, international academic conferences provide a

unique platform for them to exchange ideas. As a result, international academic conferences play a significant role in advancing academic knowledge, encouraging intellectual exchange, and promoting the development of interdisciplinary collaborations (Qureshi, 2024). In a specific study, the undergraduate research benefits of joining a conference include the acquisition of other skills such as communication, refinement of career or education path, and enhanced graduate school preparation (Mabrouk, 2009). In a previous study, it was found that presenting a conference paper has a significant positive effect on later journal publication, and that doctoral students have a higher intention to publish the material presented at graduate conferences than masters students (Kim et al., 2010).

2.4 Academic skills, academic self-concept, and support

Academic skills and support are crucial in motivating scholars to participate in international academic conferences, necessitating education in academic writing, strategies for successful conference selections, and accessible online learning options (Nadelia et al., 2020; Johnson, 2022). Enhancing academic and social skills through study and organizational skills, coupled with motivational support, guides students toward their passions and prepares them for rigorous engagements and effective networking at conferences (Octevia, 2019). The 21st-century higher education paradigm, which emphasizes personalized treatment, digital literacy, and innovative teaching methods, is pivotal in fostering student development and facilitating global partnerships (Ratniece, 2015). Understanding the diverse motivations and needs of conference delegates—ranging from seeking immediate academic benefits to exploring opportunities for broader networking and collaboration—is vital for equipping scholars to actively contribute to and benefit from international academic gatherings (Rowe, 2018).

Academic self-concept is crucial in shaping student motivation and educational outcomes, particularly in the context of international academic conferences. This multidimensional construct significantly influences a scholar's motivation, interest, persistence, and engagement, factors that are vital for success in such competitive academic settings (Lee, 2022; Basarkod and Marsh, 2023). Research highlights the relationship between academic self-concept and various factors such as learning motivation, democratic parenting, and peer relations, all of which play a role in a student's academic identity. Integral to developing a strong academic self-concept is support from diverse sources such as guidance counselors, professors, and parents (Frade and Veiga, 2017).

3 Methodology

A structured questionnaire was developed in a few sections: perceived professor support, self-academic concept, motivation, loyalty, and demography information. All of the constructs, in addition to demography information, are collected on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. Finally, the demographic information collected includes gender, age, education level, university name, major name, nationality, GPA, funding received, funding source, and the number of conferences attended.

The questionnaire was distributed at three international conferences in Indonesia, South Korea, and India. A total of 238

student respondents were collected from conferences in Indonesia, South Korea, and India. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Form links that were sent in the conference group chats and QR codes for easier offline access.

4 Results

4.1 Demographic test result

Researchers surveyed 238 scholars to determine their motivations for attending international academic conferences. Respondents' demographic profiles indicate a majority of them are men (60.9%), with 39.1% being women. In terms of duration of engagement with their respective universities, a significant percentage (51.7%) have been involved with their institutions for between 1 and 2 years, followed by 31.5% who have been involved for more than 2 years, and 16.8% who have not been involved for more than 1 year (Table 1).

4.2 Reliability and validity test

Table 2 shows the reliability and validity tests conducted on the constructs used in this study. Among the item loadings for the construct academic skill, 0.895–0.917 indicate that there is a strong relationship between the items and the construct. Further confirmation of the reliability of the items is provided by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.946, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 for internal consistency, as well as a composite reliability (CR) of 0.958. In this construct, the average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.821, well above the benchmark of 0.5, and signifies validity convergent.

It was also shown that academic self-concept exhibited similar robustness, with factor loadings between 0.875 and 0.909, Cronbach's alpha of 0.914, Cronbach's CR of 0.951, and an academic self-concept AVE of 0.795. Both confidence loyalty and motivation exhibit strong internal consistency and convergent validity, as demonstrated by their Cronbach's alpha scores (0.932 and 0.915, respectively), their CR scores (0.951 and 0.936), and their AVE scores (0.831 and 0.746, respectively).

As for the support construct, factor loadings ranged from 0.862 to 0.915, Cronbach's alpha was 0.911, Cronbach's CR was 0.938, and the mean AVE was 0.790. It has been found that the measures are robust and suitable for further analysis across all constructs, indicating that the measures are not only high in reliability but also contain a strong degree of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2011).

4.3 Hypothesis testing

The path result of this study is shown in Figure 1. It shows that all of the path relationships are significant. Furthermore, Table 3 shows that the R^2 explains 70% of the model toward loyalty, so it is acceptable for this study.

The following table presents the results of a path analysis conducted to explore the relationships between academic skill, self-concept, support, motivation, and loyalty to participating in international academic conferences. It was found that academic skill (AS) significantly influenced support (S), with a path coefficient of 0.453 and a t -value of

TABLE 1 Profile of respondents ($n = 238$).

Items		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Men	145	60.9%
	Women	93	39.1%
Time enrolled in university	Not more than 1 year	40	16.8%
	1–2 year	123	51.7%
	More than 2 years	75	31.5%
Conference participated times	1–2 times	165	69.3%
	3–5 times	58	24.4%
	More than 5 times	15	6.3%
University location	University in Korea	115	48.3%
	University in Indonesia	117	49.2%
	University in other countries	6	2.5%

5.128, suggesting that the perception of support increases as academic skills increase. Furthermore, academic self-concept (ASC) is positively related to support, with a path coefficient of 0.359 and a t -value of 3.963.

A path coefficient of 0.837 indicates that motivation (M) is significantly correlated with loyalty (L), indicating a very high probability that motivation increases are associated with greater loyalty among conference participants. A highly significant relationship is evidenced by the highest t -value in the table, 26.104, which indicates a highly significant association. In addition, a t -value of 10.283 indicates that perceived support is a strong predictor of motivation among scholars (path coefficient = 0.772).

It is important to note that each of the path coefficients is significant at the 0.001 level. This confirms that there are robust relationships between these constructs and that they have an impact on scholars' experiences and actions related to their engagement in conferences. Moreover, these findings provide insight into what motivates academic professionals to participate in international scholarly communities.

4.4 Specific indirect effect

Based on the model used to examine the factors contributing to loyalty in academic conference participation, the following table provides a summary of the specific indirect effects. It has been shown that academic skill (AS) indirectly impacts loyalty (L) through support (S) and motivation (M). The path coefficient for AS is 0.293, which is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Hence, academic skills can influence loyalty via the mediating role of perceived support and subsequent motivation.

Through motivation (M), support (S) alone has a significant indirect effect on loyalty (L) with a path coefficient of 0.647 and a t -value of 8.562, suggesting that the support that scholars perceive directly enhances their motivation, which in turn fosters loyalty.

In addition to having an indirect effect on loyalty (L), academic self-concept (ASC) also has an impact on support (S) and motivation (M), with a path coefficient of 0.232, further confirming the importance of self-concept in the development of loyalty.

Furthermore, AS -> S -> M and ASC -> S -> M, with path coefficients of 0.350 and 0.277, demonstrate the cascading effect of

academic skill and self-concept on motivation via perceived support. There is strong empirical support for each of these pathways, with *t*-values exceeding the threshold of 3 and *p*-values below 0.01, providing strong empirical support for the model's pathways mediated by support and motivation from academic skill to loyalty (Table 4).

TABLE 2 Reliability and validity test results.

Factors	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR ^a	AVE ^b
Academic skill				
AS1	0.917	0.946	0.958	0.821
AS2	0.907			
AS3	0.911			
AS4	0.900			
AS5	0.895			
Academic self-concept				
ASC1	0.909	0.914	0.951	0.795
ASC2	0.875			
ASC3	0.883			
ASC4	0.899			
Conference loyalty				
CL1	0.933	0.932	0.951	0.831
CL2	0.878			
CL3	0.908			
CL4	0.925			
Motivation				
M1	0.873	0.915	0.936	0.746
M2	0.849			
M3	0.874			
M4	0.852			
M5	0.870			
Support				
S1	0.903	0.911	0.938	0.790
S2	0.875			
S3	0.862			
S4	0.915			

^aComposite reliability, ^baverage variance extracted, academic skill (AS), academic self-concept (ASC), conference loyalty (CL), motivation (M), and support (S).

5 Discussion

This study sheds light on the multifaceted interplay between academic skills, self-concept, support, motivation, and loyalty among scholars who participate in international academic conferences. The results of this research's analysis indicate that academic skill and self-concept work not only directly to increase perceived support among scholars but also indirectly to amplify their motivation, enabling them to feel more loyal to academic conferences.

The significant direct relationship between support and motivation indicates that scholars' emotional and environmental supports are vital to the maintenance of their scholarly endeavors, whether they come from academic institutions or peer networks (Janssens and Setiadi, 2016). In this study, the findings were consistent with existing literature that indicates the importance of a nurturing academic environment for students' academic success and persistence.

In addition, the research's thorough examination of the specific indirect effects reveals the nuanced role motivation plays as a mediator between academic skill, self-concept, support, and loyalty. It is particularly valuable to foster intrinsic scholarly enthusiasm and a dedication to continuing learning and knowledge dissemination as motivation is a pronounced mediating factor between academic skill and loyalty (Kuśnierz et al., 2020).

As a result of these insights, students' conference participation is not only better understood, but it provides a powerful incentive for conference organizers and academic institutions to develop strategies that enhance academic skill development, improve support mechanisms, and foster positive academic self-concepts. To accomplish this goal, a committed and motivated scholarly community must be established, united by a commitment to academic excellence and innovation.

6 Implications and conclusion

This research emphasizes the strong relationship between academic skills, self-concept, support, motivation, and loyalty. In addition to strengthening and building on existing theories in motivation and educational psychology, substantial path coefficients and *p*-values support the findings. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of perceived support and academic self-concept in maintaining a commitment to academic endeavors, such as participating in international conferences.

The results of this study support previous research showing that academic skills and support are major determinants of motivation to participate in conferences (Nadelia et al., 2020). Furthermore, the second hypothesis reveals a significant relationship between academic

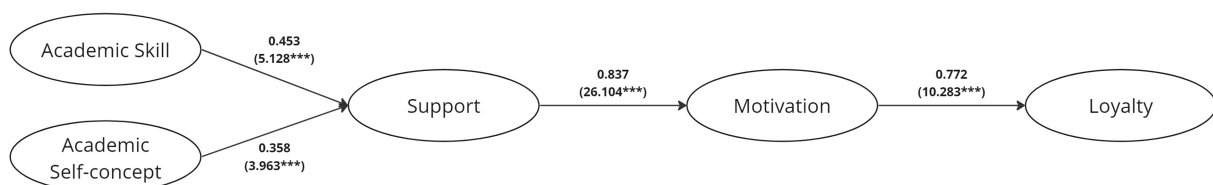


FIGURE 1 Visualization of path analysis. The figure outside the parentheses are the path coefficient value. The figure in parentheses are the *t*-value ****p* < 0.001.

TABLE 3 Hypothesis testing results.

	Path coefficient	Std. Deviation	t-values	p-values
AS -> S	0.453	0.088	5.128	< 0.001
ASC -> S	0.359	0.090	3.963	< 0.001
M -> L	0.837	0.032	26.104	< 0.001
S -> M	0.772	0.075	10.283	< 0.001

Academic skill (AS), academic self-concept (ASC), loyalty (L), motivation (M), support (S).

TABLE 4 Specific indirect effect results.

	Path coefficient	Std. Deviation	t-values	p-values
AS -> S -> M -> L	0.293	0.075	3.892	< 0.001
S -> M -> L	0.647	0.076	8.562	< 0.001
ASC -> S -> M -> L	0.232	0.074	3.149	0.002
AS -> S -> M	0.350	0.087	4.031	< 0.001
ASC -> S -> M	0.277	0.084	3.302	0.001

Academic skill (AS), academic self-concept (ASC), loyalty (L), motivation (M), and support (S).

self-concept and support, consistent with earlier research that identifies academic self-concept as an important motivator in educational settings (Basarkod and Marsh, 2023). In contrast to earlier research showing a complex and nuanced relationship between support and motivation (Bauman et al., 1992), this study finds a positive and significant relationship, offering a potential basis for future research. Diller (2000) has shown how motivation theory can help manage conference participation and identify loyalty factors (in addition to the link between motivation and loyalty). Furthermore, this study confirms that motivation is significantly linked to conference loyalty (Nadelia et al., 2020; Basarkod and Marsh, 2023).

It is crucial to understand what type of support students need to attend conferences since their motivation is directly influenced by the support they receive. As an example of this, faculty may assist students with conference preparation and maximizing the academic benefits of attending different conferences (Davis and Alvarado, 2017). In addition, this study shows that motivation directly impacts loyalty, so students who are motivated are more likely to stick with an organization. As a result, it is crucial to foster motivation through a variety of strategies, such as tailoring conference experiences to meet students' needs or incorporating hedonic elements that will enhance motivation, ultimately resulting in greater loyalty (Tyrväinen et al., 2020).

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Author contributions

AW: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft. NH: Conceptualization, Data curation,

Methodology, Writing – original draft. JW: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – original draft. H-SK: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review & editing.

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