Datokarama English Education Journal
Vol. 7 No. 2 (2026) 204-221
e-ISSN: 2723-4967

Examining English Learning Demotivation Level of Indonesian First-Year University Students: A Comparative Study

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OPEN ACCESS

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received:
(06-05-2026)
Revised:
(20-10-2026)
Accepted:
(02-11-2026)

KEYWORDS
Demotivation, EFL, first-year students, individual differences.

ABSTRACT

Demotivation can undermine students' engagement and persistence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly during the transition to university, when first-year students encounter new academic and assessment demands. Understanding its sources is therefore important for supporting students' adjustment and sustained engagement in English learning. The current study aimed to investigate the level of students' demotivation in English learning, the dominant factors, and the differences based on gender and educational background. It focused on first-year students enrolled in an Islamic University in Madura that considers English as a compulsory and intensive course. This study was a quantitative research with a survey design. Demotivation questionnaires were adopted and modified from Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) and administered to 147 students through Google Forms. The findings revealed a moderate level of demotivation. Based on the reverse scale, in which lower scores indicate higher demotivation, test scores emerged as the most prominent demotivating factor (M = 3.03), followed by inadequate learning facilities (M = 3.16), learning contents and materials (M = 3.31), lack of intrinsic motivation (M = 3.33), and teacher competence and teaching styles (M = 3.50). A significant gender difference was found, with male students reporting higher demotivation (M = 3.10) than female students (M = 3.39), $t(145) = 2.134$, $p = .035$. In contrast, no significant difference was found across educational backgrounds, $F(5, 141) = 1.068$, $p = .381$. These findings highlight the importance of assessment experiences in first-year EFL demotivation and suggest the need for more supportive assessment practices during students' transition to university English learning..

Citation:
Rahmawati, F., Monteza, A. M. M., & Syafik, M. (2026). Examining English Learning Demotivation Level of Indonesian First-Year University Students: A Comparative Study. *Datokarama English Education Journal*, *7*(2), 204-221. https://doi.org/10.24239/dee.v7i2.164

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INTRODUCTION

English learning has become increasingly important in higher education worldwide, particularly in contexts where English functions as a foreign language and serves as a means of accessing academic knowledge, international communication, and broader educational opportunities. For university students, maintaining motivation to learn English is therefore important not only for language development but also for their engagement with increasingly internationalized academic environments (Marchak, 2025; Ortega-Auquilla et al., 2023; Sari & Junaidi, 2024). This issue is particularly relevant during the first year of university, when students are simultaneously adjusting to new academic expectations, greater learner autonomy, unfamiliar assessment practices, and changing learning environments (Kostromitina et al., 2025). During this transitional period, difficulties in sustaining motivation may undermine students' engagement and persistence in learning English. Consequently, EFL demotivation among first-year university students represents an important concern that extends beyond a particular national or institutional context.

Within second language acquisition research, motivation has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing learners' willingness to initiate, sustain, and direct their efforts in learning another language (Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017; Dцrnyei, 2005; Shalabi et al., 2025; Ushioda, 2011). Highly motivated learners tend to demonstrate greater engagement, persistence in facing difficulties, and stronger commitment to language learning. Conversely, declining motivation may negatively affect learners' attitudes, classroom participation, persistence, and opportunities for language development. These concerns have increasingly directed scholarly attention not only toward factors that sustain motivation but also toward the processes through which motivation is weakened or lost, commonly discussed as language-learning demotivation.

The idea of demotivation is often connected with amotivation, since both describe a decrease in motivation. But the two terms are distinct in emphasis. Amotivation is the absence of motivation resulting from perceived meaninglessness or lack of value in the activity (Deci & Ryan, 2013), while demotivation highlights the impact of external factors that diminish learners' desire to continue language study (Dцrnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

Bush & Peters (2020) assert in this regard that demotivation is not the negative, only opposite, aspect of motivation, but rather the dynamic process that develops through different experiences. The concept of demotivation in language acquisition refers to the slowly diminishing motivation to learn a second or foreign language. Dцrnyei & Ushioda (2021) describe it as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational foundation of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action." That lens would argue that demotivation can stem from negative experiences that decrease students' interest and enthusiasm for learning a language. Accordingly, demotivation must be understood as not just an attribute of extrinsic forces but rather as a psychological and socially embedded phenomenon that works against learning (Gao & Liu, 2022).

The decline in EFL motivation is a multifaceted phenomenon, the effect of which depends on several internal and external factors. A common perception among students is that of self-doubt or inadequacy, especially when they are faced with high language proficiency stakes. These feelings usually result in lowered motivation. Classroom factors also play a big role: poor teaching practice (Kim, 2015), unsupportive learning conditions and school culture which discourages the confidence and participation of students (Yuan, 2025) all contribute to this state of disinterest. In addition, the apparent indifference to the relevance of EFL teaching to students' lives beyond English as a foreign language may make them lose interest in the instruction they take and wonder about the extent of their learning. Thus, it is critical to see demotivation not only as the unwillingness to learn, but as one that is multidimensional and may need different strategies within the pedagogical strategy (Fryer et al., 2014). An examination of the different dimensions of demotivation provides educators with more effective and interactive language learning environments to implement (Hassaskhah et al., 2015).

As part of the experience of studying English as a foreign language, demotivation may be a result of various factors, which include uninteresting teaching methodologies, content that is perceived to be difficult or irrelevant, experiences of failure in language learning, and an environment that does not support the learning process. Studies find these elements have been shown to greatly impact learners' attitudes regarding the target language and reduce their motivation to learn (Kikuchi, 2015). Research on demotivation in English language learning has significantly developed over the past two decades. The most widely cited study among them is one by Hiroshi Sakai and Keita Kikuchi (2009), which shows the various sources of demotivation in learning English as a foreign language. In the study, participants' demotivation mainly involves learning materials, the teaching style of the teacher, classroom environment, experiences of low exam scores, and lack of intrinsic interest in English (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). These findings were subsequently reinforced by various later studies that showed that demotivation is a multidimensional phenomenon involving the interaction between pedagogical, psychological, and learning environment factors (Kikuchi, 2015; Albalawi & Al-Hoorie, 2021).

Although research on demotivation in English language learning has been conducted in various educational contexts, most studies still focus on the context of secondary schools or general universities in different countries. Studies on this phenomenon in the context of religious higher education in Indonesia are still relatively limited. State Islamic Universities have unique characteristics because most of their students come from Madrasah Aliyah or *pesantren*-based educational institutions that emphasize the study of Islamic sciences. That educational background can influence the English learning experiences of students, both in terms of the intensity of learning, teaching methods, and attitudes toward English as a foreign language. Therefore, understanding the demotivation experiences of students in the context of Islamic higher education becomes important to

provide a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of English language learning in that environment.

In addition, first-year college students also face a significant academic transition phase. The transition from a high school learning environment to higher education often requires students to adapt to a more independent learning system, higher academic demands, and different teaching methods. This condition can affect students' perceptions and attitudes toward learning English. In some cases, these experiences can lead to feelings of insecurity, academic difficulties, or a decline in motivation to learn the language. Therefore, it is important to understand the level of demotivation among students in learning English at the early stages of their studies and whether there are differences in the level of demotivation among groups of students with different educational backgrounds. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyse demotivation in English language learning among first-year students and examine the differences in levels of demotivation among student groups based on their background characteristics.

METHOD

Design

This study employed a quantitative approach with a comparative survey design. This approach was applied to identify the level of students' demotivation in English learning and compare it based on the students' characteristics and background. A survey design was chosen because it allows researchers to gather data from some students in a relatively short time. It also provides an overview of the general trends occurring in the research population.

Participants and Ethical Considerations

A total of 147 first-year undergraduate students from all majors across four faculties at an Islamic higher education institution on Madura Island, Indonesia, participated in the study. They were the accessible participants from the target population of first-year students and were selected using convenience sampling due to accessibility and availability during the data collection process. The participants consisted of 41 male students and 106 female students. In line with educational background, the participants came from various types of secondary schools, including public and private senior high schools, public and private Islamic Senior high schools, and public and private vocational high schools. These students were enrolled in a compulsory intensive English language development course. Access was granted through formal coordination with the Academic Affairs Office and the Language Centre. With the support of instructors, surveys were administered during class sessions. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, and ethical protocols, including voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality, were strictly followed. This phase aimed to capture broad patterns of demotivation in English language learning across a diverse student population.

Data Collection Procedures

A questionnaire designed to investigate students' demotivation in English language learning was developed by adapting and modifying the demotivation scale originally proposed by Sakai and Kikuchi (2009). Several items were modified to suit the context of English learning among first-year students at Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. The adapted instrument included two main sections: (1) demographic items capturing basic participant information such as name (optional), gender, and educational background, and (2) a series of Likert-scale items that measured various dimensions of demotivation. These dimensions consisted of 19 items categorized into five factors; included teacher competence and teaching styles (5 items), test scores (2 items), lack of intrinsic motivation (4 items), learning content and materials (5 items), and inadequate learning facilities (3 items). Each item was measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Thus, lower scores represent higher levels of demotivation, while higher scores indicate lower levels of demotivation. To interpret the level of student demotivation, the mean score is classified into five categories. The score range of 1.00–1.80 indicates very high demotivation; 1.81–2.60, high demotivation; 2.61–3.40, moderate demotivation; 3.41–4.20, low demotivation; and 4.21–5.00, very low demotivation.

To ensure accessibility and comprehension, the questionnaire was translated and administered in Indonesian. The translation process involved forward translation and language adjustment to maintain the meaning of the original items. The survey was distributed via Google Forms, and responses were collected over approximately 1 month. Before full deployment, the instrument was pilot-tested on a small group of students to assess item clarity and overall usability. Reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.809, demonstrating that the instrument was sufficiently reliable for measuring demotivation.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods with the assistance of SPSS 27 software. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were included to assess the extent of and sources of demotivation. An independent samples t-test was performed to assess male and female demotivations, and a One-Way ANOVA was used to assess differences in educational levels. The assumption of homogeneity of variance was addressed in conducting inferential analyses as per Levene's test. Results showed the assumptions necessary for parametric analysis were met. Independent samples t-test indicated that male students obtained significantly higher demotivation scores than female students, $t(145) = -2.134$, $p = .035$, Cohen's $d = 0.39$. Also, the One-Way ANOVA did not show any significant difference on the basis of educational background, $F(5,141) = 1.068$, $p = .381$, $\eta I = .04$.

RESULTS

1.1. The level of English learning demotivation among first-year university students

Prior to the main analysis, the internal consistency of the adapted demotivation questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability analysis was conducted on all 19 items representing five dimensions of English learning demotivation. As shown in Table 1, the instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .809, indicating good internal consistency. This result demonstrates that the items showed satisfactory consistency for measuring English learning demotivation in the present study.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis of the Demotivation Questionnaire

Instrument	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
English Learning Demotivation Questionnaire	19	.809	Good

Before presenting the results of the demotivating factors of learning English, the researcher assessed the level of motivation in learning English. This assessment involved a self-assessment of their interest and their commitment to learning English. The findings revealed that the students' overall motivation for learning English falls between moderate and high. Most students (51%) placed themselves in the mild category. This indicates that they are reasonably motivated, though not strongly. In addition, 31.3% stated that they have a high level of motivation, and 15% reported themselves as very highly motivated. In contrast, only a small proportion of students rated themselves as low-motivated (2%) and very low-motivated (0.7%).

Table 2. Self-rated motivation level

Level of Motivation	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very High	22	15
High	46	31.3
Moderate	75	51
Low	3	2
Very Low	1	0.7

The first finding to present is the factors of demotivation regarding the lack of intrinsic motivation. Table 3. is in line with factors consisting of four items reflecting students' declining interest and sense of aim in learning English. It showed a moderate level of demotivation (overall M=3.33). This finding indicates a generally neutral stance among students. This suggests

that they do not strongly perceive themselves as having low intrinsic motivation, but they also do not reject the possibility. The lowest mean (M=2.71) in this factor was recorded in the item "English used to be a compulsory subject". Since the lower score indicates stronger agreement, it suggests that many students echoed the idea that their experience with English as a compulsory subject in high school intrinsically influences their current level of motivation. Regarding this, the high frequency of agreement and neutral responses suggests that, for some students, English is still framed more as an obligation than as a personally meaningful learning experience.

Table 3. Lack of Intrinsic Motivation

Items	Mean	SD	Category
Viewing English as merely a compulsory subject	2.71	.965	Moderate
Loss of interest in learning English	3.58	1.079	Low
Loss of motivation to be an English speaker	3.47	1.055	Low
Lack of a clear purpose in learning English	3.56	1.060	Low
Total	3.33		Moderate

The items addressing losing interest and losing enthusiasm to become an English speaker show mean scores of 3.58 and 3.47. This indicates that students tend to disagree that they have lost interest or enthusiasm. It is interesting since some students decline motivation, but the majority do not explicitly identify themselves as having lost interest. The last item in the factors of lack of intrinsic motivation, namely "I do not know the objective of learning English anymore," also gained a relatively high mean (M=3.56), suggesting that most students disagree with the statement that they no longer know their objectives for learning English. The proportion of neutral responses, however, implies that a segment of students may indeed feel uncertain regarding their learning goals.

Table 4. Test Score

Items	Mean	SD	Category
Low achievement in English	3.16	1.012	Moderate
Test results lower than peers	2.89	1.041	Moderate
Total	3.029		Moderate

Table 4. presents the data regarding the second demotivating factor is test scores. It consists of two items, which indicate a predominantly neutral tendency among students since both have average scores near the

center of the scale. In detail, the items "My English is not too good" (M=3.16) and "My English score is not as good as my friends" gained lower scores (M=2.89). These means suggest that students neither strongly agree nor strongly disagree with unfavorable views regarding their English performance. In general, this trend implies that while some students may be demotivated due to exam results, it is not a dominant issue for the majority.

Table 5. Teachers' competence and teaching styles

Items	Mean	SD	Category
The learning pace is too fast	3.05	.894	Moderate
Poor pronunciation by the tutors	3.63	1.028	Low
Being laughed at for making mistakes	3.84	1.054	Low
Excessive use of lecturing methods	3.57	1.014	Low
Difficulty in understanding the teacher's explanation	3.42	.950	Low
Total	3.502		

The demotivating factors regarding teachers' competence and teaching styles, presented in Table 5, show an overall tendency toward disagreement, with a mean of 3.50. This finding revealed that most students generally do not perceive their tutors' teaching practices as a major source of demotivation. However, neutral responses remain common. The item "the tutors always ridicule mistakes" showed the highest mean, indicating that they disagree with that. Similarly, the statement about tutors' pronunciation gains a relatively high mean, indicating that students do not view pronunciation issues as problematic. The remaining items showed moderate disagreement. The lowest mean (M=3.05) in this factor is about "progress of learning is too fast." Reflecting a more neutral stance and suggests that pacing may be a concern for some students. In general, these findings reveal that issues in line with teacher competence and instructional style are not strongly perceived as demotivation. However, certain aspects, especially learning pacing and clarity of explanation, may still affect some learners.

Table 6. Learning contents and materials

Items	Mean	SD	Category
Being required to use grammatically correct English	3.23	0.966	Moderate
Overemphasis on grammar in Learning	3.12	.985	Moderate
Difficulty in understanding English sentences in the lesson	3.56	.987	Low

Use of long reading texts	3.18	.984	Moderate
Reliance on prescribed textbooks and additional readings	3.46	.953	Low
Total	3.31		Moderate

In general, Table 6. showed a neutral to slightly negative perception toward learning content and materials as a source of demotivation, with a mean score of 3.31. The most noticeable issue was the difficulty of the English sentences (M=3.56), followed by fixed textbooks and readings (M=3.46). These scores, however, lean toward disagreement, which means most students do not strongly feel demotivated by these factors. Overall, the result indicated that learning materials are not a dominant demotivating factor, although some students may struggle with text difficulty and material selection.

Table 7. Inadequate Facilities

Items	Mean	SD	Category
Unclear projector and screen display	3.21	1.106	Moderate
Malfunctioning AC	3.12	1.152	Moderate
Inadequate listening equipment	3.14	.991	Moderate
Total	3.16		Moderate

Regarding inadequate facilities, Table 7 showed an overall mean of 3.16. It indicated that most students neither strongly agree nor strongly disagree that university facilities demotivate them. The frequency distribution dominated by neutral responses supports the interpretation that facilities are not a significant demotivating factor for most students. In sum, although some students experience inconvenience related to classroom equipment, these issues do not fully contribute to their motivation in learning English.

Overall, the findings of the five demotivating factors, such as lack of intrinsic motivation, test scores, learning content and materials, teacher competence, and insufficient facilities, revealed a consistent pattern across the dataset. The mean scores predominantly fall around the neutral range, indicating that most students do not strongly perceive these factors as primary sources of demotivation. Factors related to teachers and insufficient intrinsic motivation seem to be more noticeable than the others, but still stay at moderate levels. In contrast, factors concerning test scores, educational resources and materials, and facilities exhibit weaker demotivating effects. These results collectively indicated that although demotivating factors are present, they are not dominant or strong among the student population. Instead, the students' motivation to learn English

tends to be relatively consistent, with demotivation appearing more as a minor influence rather than a critical barrier.

1.2. The dominant demotivating factors

The descriptive analysis regarding demotivating factors in English learning revealed that each source shows a different level of demotivation. It should be noted that in this study, a reverse scale was used, where the lower scores indicate higher levels of demotivation.

The finding revealed that the most dominant factor causing students' decline in motivation is test scores (M = 3.03), which falls into the moderate demotivation category. Test scores were considered the dominant factor because they had the lowest mean. This indicates that experiences related to grades or evaluation results are the main factors affecting the students' motivation to learn English. In addition, the factors of lack of facilities for learning (M = 3.16), lack of learning materials and content (M = 3.31), and lack of intrinsic motivation (M = 3.33) show relatively moderate levels of contribution to students' motivation. These factors reflect that both the aspect of the learning environment and the internal factors of students play a role in influencing their learning motivation. Meanwhile, the factors regarding teachers' competence and teaching styles gain the lowest level of demotivation, with a mean of 3.50. This indicates that, in general, students do not consider the lecturers' factors as the main cause of demotivation in English language learning.

Table 8. The dominant sources of demotivation

Rank	Items	Mean
1	Test scores	3.03
2	Lack of facilities	3,16
3	Learning Contents & Materials	3,31
4	Lack of Intrinsic Motivation	3,33
5	Teachers' Competence & Teaching Styles	3.50

Overall, these findings imply that students' demotivation is more influenced by academic experience, particularly the evaluation of the teaching and learning process, than by pedagogical factors such as lecture competence and teaching style.

1.3. Differences in English learning demotivation among first-year students based on their background

1.3.1. Gender differences in demotivation in learning English

Table 9 shows that 147 students participated in the present study. The majority of participants are female (72.1%) in the total sample. Meanwhile, 27.9% of participants are male. This distribution indicates that

female students constitute a wider proportion of the sample than male students. Moreover, it indicates the mean demotivation scores of male and female students. The result stated that the mean score of the male students is 3.10, which is lower than that of the female students, with a mean of 3.39.

Table 9. Mean Demotivation Score based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD
Male	41	3.10	.77
Female	106	3.39	.72

To see the significant difference in the level of demotivation in learning English by gender, the independent t-test was applied. The finding revealed that the mean score of male students is 3.10 with an SD of 0.77, while female students have an M=3.39 and an SD of 0.72. Figure 1 shows the Levene's Test result with a p-value of 0.919, which means the variances of the two groups are homogeneous. Consequently, the interpretation of the t-test refers to the "equal variances assumed" row. Therefore, the t-test indicated a significant difference between male and female students regarding demotivation in learning English (p-value = 0.035). It can be considered that male students have a significantly higher level of demotivation in English learning than female students.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Mean Demotivation Score	Equal variances assumed	.010	.919	-2.134	145	.035	-.28985	.13582
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.072	68.693	.042	-.28985	.13988

Figure 1. The independent t-test result in SPSS

1.3.2. Differences in demotivation level based on students' educational background

The result of descriptive analysis shows a variation in the level of demotivation based on the educational background of students. Students from the private high school (*SMA swasta*) have the highest mean score of demotivation (M=3.52, SD = 0.80), followed by the private Islamic high school (*MA swasta*) with M 3.36 and SD 0.61. Meanwhile, students from the public Islamic high school (*MA Negeri*) show the lowest average demotivation (M=3.11 and SD =0.88), followed by private vocational schools / *SMK swasta* (M=3.17 and SD = 1.22), public vocational school/ *SMK Negeri* (M= 3.20, SD = 0.34), and public high school/ *SMA Negeri* (M=3.23 and SD 0.80).

Table 10. Mean Demotivation Score based on Educational Background

Educational Background	N	Mean	SD
SMA Negeri	14	3.23	0.80
SMA Swasta	28	3.52	0.80
MA Negeri	29	3.11	0.88
MA Swasta	58	3.36	0.61
SMK Negeri	11	3.20	0.34
SMK Swasta	7	3.17	1.22

Although differences in average demotivational level among groups appear, the One-Way ANOVA result shows that they are not statistically and significantly different, with F = 1.068 and p = 0.381 > 0.05. This finding indicated that students' educational background, type of school (SMA, MA, and SMK), and status (public and private) have no statistically significant influence on the students' motivation level in English learning.

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ANOVA

Mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.976	5	.595	1.068	.381
Within Groups	78.591	141	.557		
Total	81.566	146			

Figure 2. ANOVA result

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that first-year university students experienced a moderate level of demotivation in learning English. This suggests that students did not completely lose their motivation to learn English; however, they encountered various barriers that weakened their enthusiasm and engagement during the learning process. In the field of Second Language Acquisition, demotivation is understood as a dynamic psychological condition resulting from the interaction between internal and external factors that reduce learners' willingness to engage in language learning (Dцrnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Rather than being a permanent condition, demotivation fluctuates depending on students' learning experiences, emotional responses, and perceptions of classroom practices (Wallace & Leong, 2020; Zhou et al., 2023). The moderate level found in this study may indicate that students are still in the process of adjusting to the demands of university learning, particularly within the transition from

secondary education to higher education (Hassel & Ridout, 2018). These institutional transitions often expose students to inadequate facilities or rigorous teaching loads that can exacerbate existing internal predispositions, such as past learning failures or anxiety (Liu & Zhong, 2022; Saifullah, 2024).

The transition into university life is an important aspect that may explain the demotivation experienced by first-year students. Previous studies have shown that the first year of higher education is often accompanied by academic pressure, emotional adjustment, and uncertainty regarding learning expectations (Vasiou et al., 2026). For students in Islamic higher education institutions, especially those coming from *pesantren*-based or rural educational backgrounds, adapting to academic English learning at university may become particularly challenging (Nasution et al., 2025). Many students enrolled in university with limited exposure to communicative English practices, causing them to experience difficulties in coping with academic tasks, assessments, and classroom participation. As a result, feelings of inadequacy and academic anxiety may gradually contribute to demotivation.

A particularly important finding in this study is that test scores emerged as the most dominant source of demotivation. This finding is noteworthy because many previous studies on EFL demotivation have frequently identified teacher-related factors or learning environments as the primary demotivating sources (Kikuchi, 2015; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). In contrast, the present study indicates that students were more affected by evaluation-related experiences than by instructional factors. This suggests that students' perceptions of academic achievement and assessment outcomes play a central role in shaping their motivational state (Perera, 2021).

From the perspective of motivational theory, this finding can be explained through the Control-Value Theory proposed by Pekrun (2024), which argues that students' emotions and motivation are strongly influenced by their perceived control over learning outcomes and the value attached to academic tasks (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2016; Pekrun, 2024). When students perceive that they consistently obtain low scores or perform below their peers, they may develop feelings of helplessness, low self-efficacy, and academic anxiety. In language learning contexts, repeated negative evaluation experiences may lead students to perceive English as a threatening subject rather than a meaningful learning opportunity. This aligns with studies showing that test-related anxiety and fear of failure significantly contribute to demotivation and disengagement among EFL learners (Sudina & Plonsky, 2021).

The prominence of test scores as a demotivating factor may also reflect the assessment culture commonly found in many Indonesian educational contexts, where academic achievement is strongly associated with numerical scores and formal evaluation (Jannatussholihah et al., 2022). Students may become excessively oriented toward grades rather than communicative competence or meaningful language use. Consequently, poor test performance may be interpreted not merely as academic failure but also as evidence of personal inability in learning English. This condition

becomes even more critical among first-year university students who are still developing academic confidence and adapting to new learning standards. Therefore, the findings of this study highlight the importance of creating more supportive and formative assessment practices that encourage learning development rather than emphasizing achievement pressure alone.

Another finding of this study revealed that inadequate facilities also contributed considerably to students' demotivation. This finding indicates that environmental and institutional support remains important in sustaining students' motivation in language learning (Ranjha, 2021). Limited access to listening equipment, unclear classroom media, or uncomfortable learning environments may reduce students' opportunities to engage effectively with English learning activities. Previous studies have similarly emphasized that learning environments and institutional support can significantly influence learners' motivation and classroom participation (Wang & Littlewood, 2021). Thus, demotivation should not merely be viewed as an individual psychological issue but also as a product of learning ecology and institutional conditions.

Results further indicated that male students appeared to have a greater degree of demotivation compared to female students. This discovery is consistent with earlier research which has shown that women are more likely to be self-regulated learners, more academically engaged and self-motivated in relation to language learning tasks (Guo & Zhou, 2021). In this context, female learners tend to manage more persistently through the learning task problems and stick around for their academic goals while their male counterparts may be drawn more easily off-task in situations of academic obstacles. Sociocultural expectations and attitudes toward language learning may also have played a role in these differences. And language learning -- in this context, in particular EFL learning - may be understood differently according to gender, affecting learners' emotional involvement and learning dedication. However, this result differs from that of Zhou et al. (2023), who found no significant gender differences in EFL demotivation. This discrepancy indicates that demotivation is context-dependent and can differ greatly across education and among different kinds of learners from different sociocultural backgrounds. In the context of this study, the gender difference may come from the adjustment of the first-year university students. Emotional adjustment and academic self-confidence during this period become very influential variables in their transformation.

Interestingly, the study found no significant difference in demotivation based on educational background. This indicates that students from SMA, MA, and SMK backgrounds experienced relatively similar levels of demotivation after entering university. One possible explanation is that the university learning environment itself becomes a stronger determinant of students' motivational conditions than their prior educational experiences. Once students enter higher education, they encounter similar academic expectations, assessment systems, and classroom environments, which may gradually "equalize" their motivational experiences regardless of their previous schooling (Araƀjo et al., 2018). This pattern implies that the

transition to tertiary education serves as a leveling stage, where institutional demands override the impact of disparate pedagogical histories on student engagement (Li & Qian, 2017).

This finding is particularly relevant in the context of State Islamic Universities in Madura, where many students come from diverse educational backgrounds, including pesantren-affiliated schools. Although students from pesantren-based institutions may have different prior learning experiences, the shared challenges of adapting to university-level English learning appear to minimize these differences. Therefore, demotivation among first-year students should be understood not merely as a consequence of educational background but as a response to current academic experiences, institutional expectations, and adaptation demands within higher education contexts (Ribeiro et al., 2019).

Overall, this study highlights the multidimensional nature of EFL demotivation among first-year university students. The findings suggest that demotivation is closely related to assessment experiences, institutional support, gender-related learning dynamics, and transitional challenges in higher education. Therefore, efforts to reduce demotivation should focus not only on improving classroom instruction but also on developing supportive assessment systems, enhancing learning facilities, and providing emotional and academic support for students during their transition into university learning environments.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the level of demotivation, dominant sources of demotivation, and differences in demotivation among first-year university students in learning English. This finding revealed that students generally experienced a moderate level of demotivation. Among the factors, test scores emerged as the most dominant sources of demotivation suggesting that students' experiences with evaluation play a crucial role in shaping their motivation. Furthermore, the present study found a significant difference based on gender and no significant difference based on educational background. This finding highlights the important of designing more supportive and constructive assessment practices to reduce demotivation and enhance students' engagement in learning English, particularly in the intensive course of first-year university students.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The authors contributed to conception, design, data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation. The authors approved the final manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

AI assisted tools (Grammarly and Chat GPT) were used only for improvement and editing purposes. The author takes full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

No competing interests.

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