

# The Assessment of Self-Directed Learning Readiness Among Generation Z Kurdish EFL Undergraduates

Atta A. Ahmed<sup>1</sup>, Shajwan N. Fatah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language Teaching, College of Education, Tishk International University-Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region – F.R. Iraq

<sup>2</sup>Language Center, Charmo University Center for Research and Training, Charmo University, Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region – F.R. Iraq

**Abstract**— The aim of this study is to determine the level of self-directed learning readiness among undergraduate students belonging to Generation Z in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The study sample was 225 undergraduate students in the English language and literature departments across three universities located in Erbil, Halabja, and Sulaymaniyah. The study used a quantitative approach using a questionnaire. The results showed that there was no significant difference between male and female students in terms of self-control and self-management. However, a slight difference emerged in terms of their desire for learning. A considerable variation was found between first- and fourth-year students in terms of their level of self-control. Furthermore, the results revealed a significant difference between the cities, with students from Erbil demonstrating a higher readiness level for self-directed learning compared to their peers in the other two cities. These findings provide valuable insights into the self-directed learning preparedness of undergraduate students in Kurdistan. They suggest the need for targeted efforts to promote self-directed learning, particularly in areas where readiness level is lower.

**Index Terms**— Generation Z, Heutagogy, Learner autonomy, Self-directed learning readiness, Undergraduate students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, one of the main goals of adult education has evolved toward developing self-directed learning (SDL) abilities. The degree of ownership a learner takes for their education may be used to describe SDL. The self-directed learner assumes responsibility and consents to the freedom to acquire knowledge of what they deem essential for themselves (Fisher et al., 2001). The amount of research and literature on SDL has grown globally, and new initiatives, methods, and tools for promoting it have been developed to benefit educators and students (Williamson, 2007). In a study conducted by Orakci and Gelisli (2017), it was found that around 80% of adult

learners initiate SDL activities improve their skills, pursue personal, or achieve career-related objectives. The presence of online resources, digital platforms, and learning communities has significantly expanded the range of opportunities for individuals to engage in SDL. Teachers often hold the belief that if students, including those who may not fully meet the criteria of adulthood, exhibit more SDL behaviours, they would not only be better prepared for their courses but also derive long-term benefits from their formal education.

SDL is frequently described as students being primarily responsible for organizing, carrying out, and assessing their experiential learning. SDL can occur both within and beyond the walls of official academic institutions and does not always imply solitary learning because students may enlist the aid of others as resources and assistants for their SDL activities (Ellinger, 2004). The philosophical approaches commonly associated with SDL aims have traditionally been categorized into two groups. The first group pertains to students' desire to explore specific subjects or acquire knowledge and skills. The second group focuses on enhancing learners' abilities for self-directed learning, based on a humanistic philosophy of education. A crucial aspect of this objective is the transformation of adult educators into facilitators or guides in the SDL process (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). This study primarily targets the university student population with the specific focus on the generation commonly referred to as Gen Z. Gen Z comprises individuals born between 1996 and 2010, which means they are currently attending university, with the youngest members of the group turning 18 in 2028. Gen Z represents the first generation to have grown up as true digital natives (Lahijanian et al., 2020). Turner (2015) argued that Gen Z was raised in a technologically advanced society where information was readily available and social networking site activity was the norm. In fact, a significant portion of Gen Z hardly ever spends a day without maintaining contacts on social networking

platforms. In a survey conducted by Anderson and Jiang (2018), 45% of the youths who participated reported using the Internet almost continuously. So, it can be inferred that Gen Z is more likely to search for information and learn independently. To engage students on their terms and enable them to genuinely connect with your lectures, educators should consider about employing applications, web-based platforms, as well as other digital tools (Turner, 2015).

According to Razali et al. (2018), SDL plays a crucial role in the domain of foreign language education as it enables students to achieve maximum success in English language learning. By encouraging students to express their ideas with confidence, engage in reflective thinking, and utilize language learning strategies, SDL empowers them in their language acquisition journey. This study seeks to investigate the level of self-directed learning readiness among undergraduate students in the Department of English Language and Literature across three universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Despite the growing recognition of the benefits of SDL, research on this topic is limited in Kurdistan, particularly with regard to the readiness of undergraduate students to use SDL strategies in learning English as a foreign language.

The gap in the literature presents an opportunity to explore and examine the potential and limitations of SDL in this context, and potentially in other countries that share similar educational conditions. Moreover, the study's findings could inform the development of more effective and efficient language-learning programs that incorporate SDL strategies. This could help promote a culture of SDL among students and educators, leading to a more innovative and dynamic learning environment. The researchers posed the following research questions to investigate the level of SDL readiness among undergraduate students.

1. Is there a notable distinction in the preparedness for (SDL) among students of different genders?
2. Is there a significant difference among different academic levels of students in terms of readiness for SDL?
3. Is there a substantial variation in terms of readiness for (SDL) among the cities of Erbil, Halabja, and Sulaymaniyah?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A large body of research has been conducted on SDL and its relationship with students' academic success. SDL has been recognized as an important skill in higher education as it enables students to take ownership of their learning and develop the capacity for lifelong learning (Miltiadou & Savenye, 2003). The concept of SDL readiness, which refers to the degree to which individuals are prepared and motivated to engage in SDL activities, has received significant attention in the literature (Fisher et al., 2001; Razali et al., 2018).

Research has shown that SDL readiness varies among students and can be influenced by a range of individual and contextual factors, such as prior educational experiences, cultural backgrounds, and learning environments (Turner, 2015).

This literature review aims to synthesize current research on

self-directed learning readiness among undergraduate students, with a focus on the English language and literature departments, and to explore the factors that contribute to SDL readiness and the effectiveness of different interventions and approaches to enhance it.

### A. Adult Education and SDL Readiness

The basis of andragogy, which focuses on adults' learning, lies in adult education. Unlike pedagogy, which refers to the methods of assisting students in learning, Knowles (1980) defines andragogy as the method of helping adults learn. By using andragogy as a starting point, it becomes easier to differentiate adult education from other fields like education. Furthermore, Loeng (2020) suggests that andragogy has been categorized as a theory of adult education, a theory of adult learning technology, and a method of adult education. In order to maintain its position as the most learner-centred design pattern for adult educational programming, Merriam et al. (2007) propose that the term andragogy itself is merely a catch-all phrase that encompasses a variety of ideas, methodologies, and strategies. Tarhan and Erözden (2008) state that specialists in adult education and andragogy initially studied self-directed learning in the 1960s in North America. They characterized it as an educational process in which the learner assumes the fundamental responsibilities of planning, applying, and organizing. It is typically understood to be connected to the learners' behaviours, including goal-oriented, developing a learning approach, locating resources, and tracking progress. SDL focuses on events occurring in a social environment that impact learning outside the learner when considered an instructional process. In other words, Littlemore (2001) states that the idea has a long history behind it; numerous prominent philosophers over the ages have tackled the subject from various perspectives, including Galileo, Rousseau, Dewey, Kilpatrick, Freire, Illich, and Rodgers. In fact, they all highlighted how autonomy is a crucial topic tied to experiential learning, humanism, and constructivism. According to Wiley (1983), the readiness for SDL is the degree to which a person possesses the attitudes, skills, and personality traits required for SDL.

### B. Heutagogy

Self-directed learning is best characterized by the alternative notion of heutagogy. Hase and Kenyon (2000) developed the word heutagogy to describe an educational strategy that emphasizes learners' autonomy, which is also known as self-determined learning. In heutagogy, teachers act as the students' compass while they are studying. The term is used as a learner-centred educational technique or approach rather than a learning approach like constructivism or behaviourism. Heutagogy tries to incorporate the diverse experiences of each student into the instructional process. This method was developed in response to the shortcomings in the educational system that Hase (2009) outlined, particularly the necessity to offer teaching in a nonlinear manner to enable more applicability to the real world.

According to Grow (1991), students who are exposed to a

project that requires self-directed learning but are not yet ready for it display high levels of anxiety. In a similar manner, students who are ready for it but are exposed to increasing amounts of teacher direction also display high levels of anxiety. Students who prefer less structure yet are required to complete an SDL project, nevertheless, do well in terms of SDL preparation. According to O'Kelly's (1988) study, which correlated lesson style with SDL preparation, students who scored poorly in this area chose more teacher-led discussion, demonstration, and lectures over autonomous projects, case studies, and one-on-one tutorials.

### *C. Learner Autonomy vs. Self-Directed Learning*

The concepts of SDL and learner autonomy have been extensively examined in educational literature. SDL refers to the process where individuals take charge of their own education by establishing objectives and regulating their learning activities. In contrast, learner autonomy refers to the capacity of learners to hold themselves accountable for their learning by making decisions on what, how, and when to learn. Both SDL and learner autonomy are crucial in promoting lifelong learning and ensuring that learners possess the essential skills required to thrive in today's constantly evolving world. Even though there are some similarities between the two concepts, studies have revealed that self-directed learning is a crucial element of learner autonomy since learners who have control over their own learning tend to be more self-sufficient and are better equipped to adjust to new learning situations.

Thus, learner autonomy is a key component of self-directed learning. For this reason, a significant degree of independence from outside influence or learners' level of freedom is defined as autonomy. According to Little (2003), autonomy is the ability to be detached, engage in critical thought, make decisions, and take autonomous action. By selecting what, when, and how to study in accordance with their own requirements, interests, and talents, it is implied that the student has the flexibility to plan and manage his own learning. As stated by Boyadzhieva (2016), learner autonomy describes a person's psychological ability to examine their learning capabilities, control how they decide to learn, motivate from the inside, and choose freedom. According to the description provided above, learner autonomy is the capacity of a learner to grasp and successfully regulate learning processes.

The ability of the learner to direct their own learning was the original definition of learner autonomy. By selecting what, when, and how to study in accordance with their own requirements, interests, and talents, it is implied that the learner has the freedom to plan and manage his own learning (Benson & Voller, 2014). As was already noted, the idea of learner autonomy made a significant contribution to the radical change in foreign language education from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach. This change caused the conventional teacher's function as a knowledge supplier to change to that of a facilitator. The student, who was previously considered an empty container when using the grammar-translation and audio-lingual approaches, is now expected to actively engage in the teaching and learning process both within and outside of

the language classroom. This indicates that both instructors and students must participate equally in the teaching and learning process in order for shared accountability to result (Gharti, 2019). The significant correlation between autonomy and motivation is predicated on the premise that a learner will be more motivated if they are more independent (Ahmed et al., 2022).

In the ideal teaching/learning environment, autonomy and enhanced motivation are two sides of the same coin, with autonomy serving as the catalyst for motivation and motivation serving to advance the growth of autonomy. Therefore, one of the fundamental aims of professional educators is to increase students' motivation in the teaching/learning process, which will ensure greater accomplishment. If it is implemented properly, learner autonomy is anticipated to aid students in developing a positive view of themselves by exhibiting knowledge of their culture and history and promoting understanding among other groups. The ability of the pupils to make decisions is therefore anticipated to become even stronger, increasing their autonomy and drive. The Council of Europe's educational policies, which seek to adopt multicultural and pluralistic methods at all educational levels, are based on this third component of learner autonomy. Finally, lifelong learning is based on this third feature of learner autonomy (Little, 2003).

### *D. Related Studies*

In the realm of SDL, several studies have been conducted to explore the readiness and abilities of undergraduate students. Two studies, conducted by Tarhan and Erözden (2008) and Douglass and Morris (2014), yielded similar findings. Tarhan and Erözden assessed the level of self-directed readiness among undergraduate students and found that the participants exhibited a strong desire for lifelong learning, aligning with the characteristics outlined in the Council of Europe's Framework. Meanwhile, Douglass and Morris explored self-directed learning from the perspective of students, faculty, and administrators. The study revealed that students acknowledged their influence over their education, but also recognized the significant impact of administrators and teachers on their willingness and capacity to learn. These findings were incorporated into campus assessment initiatives to empower students in controlling their own learning processes.

On the other hand, Wichadee (2011) presented divergent findings. Wichadee's objective was to develop an instructional model aimed at enhancing self-directed learning abilities among students at Bangkok University. While the study revealed a high level of desire for self-directed learning, the focus was on the impact of the instructional model rather than directly aligning with the findings of previous studies. In contrast, the study investigated the connection between university students' tendencies for lifelong learning and their self-directed learning abilities. The study indicated that self-directed learning scores among university students were generally higher than the median score. Furthermore, the researchers identified various factors influencing SDL abilities, such as gender, subject of study, type of university entry score,

academic achievement, and intention to pursue a graduate degree. These findings provided insights into the nuanced aspects of self-directed learning abilities that differed from the previous studies.

Overall, these studies collectively contribute to the understanding of self-directed learning, highlighting the importance of fostering a desire for lifelong learning and recognizing the role of various stakeholders in influencing students' capacity to direct their own learning processes. While some studies produce consistent results regarding students' readiness and the influence of teachers and administrators, others explore instructional models or investigate supplementary factors that affect self-directed learning abilities. Together, these studies enrich knowledge and inform the development of strategies to promote self-directed learning among students.

This study aims to bridge a gap in the literature, which includes a lack of comprehensive studies examining the SDL characteristics, preferences, and needs of Generation Z students, especially within the context of the Kurdistan Region.

In conclusion, the literature review and related studies highlight the significance of assessing the level of self-directed learning readiness among undergraduate students from the Department of English Language and Literature, providing valuable insights for future research and the development of effective strategies to enhance self-directed learning in this specific academic context.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The present study follows a descriptive approach using a quantitative method to achieve its objectives. The researchers used questionnaire for the data collection. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009) state that through the collection of measurable data and the use of statistical, mathematical, or computer methods, quantitative research is the systematic analysis of phenomena. Using sample techniques and tools such as online surveys, polls, and questionnaires, quantitative research is the most convenient approach to gathering the data.

The sample of the study was 225 undergraduate students from three different universities in Erbil, Halabja, and Sulaymaniyah in the fall semester for the academic year (2022-2023). The age range of students was between 19 to 25 years old. The participants were from the Faculty of Education, specifically in the Department of English Language and Literature in three universities Tishk International University-Erbil, Sulaimani University, and Halabja University in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The participants included first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year students.

The five Likert scale questionnaire was sent through a Google Forms link to those three universities of the abovementioned universities. The data collection process for this study employed a target sampling approach, focusing specifically on students within the English language and Literature departments. Recognizing the significance of ethical considerations, approvals were obtained from both the

university management and the participating students. This approach ensured compliance with the ethical guidelines and regulations set forth by the institutions involved. By obtaining approval from the university management, adherence to the institution's research policies was ensured, while securing the students' consent demonstrated a commitment to informed decision-making and respect for their autonomy. This meticulous attention to ethical considerations throughout the study underscores a responsible and professional approach to research within the English departments.

The data were collected between January 2023 and March 2023. The first part of the survey was to ask about the demographic details of the participants. The second part of the survey was related to the framework of the questionnaire which was developed by Fisher et al. (2001). In total, the questionnaire contained 42 items which were categorized among three main classifications: self-management, desire for learning, and self-control.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. The researchers utilised T-Test to analyse whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of two groups (e.g., male and female) on a variable of interest (e.g., categories of self-directed learning). Moreover, a One-way ANOVA, a statistical method used to compare the means of multiple groups, was also employed to compare the three groups for self-management, desire for learning, and self-control.

The reliability of the 42-item questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed that the questionnaire had a Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficient of 0.930, which indicates that the questionnaire has a high level of internal consistency which is considered to be an excellent result and suggests that the questionnaire has a high degree of reliability and consistency (Frankel & Wallen, 2009). According to Bonett and Wright (2015), the high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indicates that the questions on the questionnaire are highly correlated with each other and that the questionnaire is likely to produce consistent results if administered to the same participants multiple times. These findings suggest that the questionnaire can be used as a reliable tool for measuring the construct of interest.

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussions of the study and answers the research questions posed in the introduction.

TABLE 1  
THE DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

	Gender	City	Level of education		
Female	129	Erbil	78	First year	13
Male	96	Halabja	51	Second year	87
		Sulaymaniyah	96	Third year	87
				Fourth year	38
Total	225		225		225

A detailed analysis was conducted on the demographic data of 225 students, consisting of 129 females and 96 males, from the three cities in the Kurdistan of Iraq, Erbil, Halabja, and Sulaymaniyah. The distribution of participants among these cities showed that Sulaymaniyah had the highest number of students ( $n = 96$ ), followed by Erbil ( $n = 78$ ) with the lowest number of students in Halabja ( $n = 51$ ). In terms of academic level, 13 of the participants were in their first year, 87 were in their second year, 87 were in their third year, and 38 were in their fourth year. This indicates a fairly even distribution of students across the academic levels, except for first-year students. To the best of the authors' knowledge, it is noteworthy to mention that in the universities of the Kurdistan region, freshmen year starts at the end of November. As the researchers started the data collection procedure at the beginning of December, the number of the first-year students was low. One other point to be noted is that the second-year and third-year undergraduate students are similar in number, and they are more than the first- and fourth-year students. Additionally, the gender distribution of the students showed that there were more female students than male students, with a ratio of 129 females to 96 males. Overall, the demographic data provides a comprehensive picture of the student population in the three cities and their academic progression.

TABLE 2  
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SELF-MANAGEMENT, DESIRE FOR LEARNING, AND SELF-CONTROL

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Management	Female	129	3.88	0.46
	Male	96	3.80	0.42
Desire for Learning	Female	129	4.20	0.43
	Male	96	4.08	0.54
Self-control	Female	129	4.16	0.4
	Male	96	4.18	0.49

Table 2 provides an overview of the gender differences in three categories: Self-Management, Desire for Learning, and Self-Control. The table includes the number of participants (N), the mean, and the standard deviation for each gender group. In terms of Self-Management. Moreover, Table 2 shows that there were 129 female participants with a mean score of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.46. For the male group, there were 96 participants, and they had a slightly lower mean score of 3.80 with a standard deviation of 0.42. These results suggest that, on average, females tend to exhibit slightly higher levels of self-management compared to males, although the difference is relatively small. Moving on to the Desire for Learning category, Table 2 reveals that the female group consisted of 129 participants with a higher mean score of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.43. In contrast, the male group, comprising 96 participants, had a slightly lower mean score of 4.08, but with a higher standard deviation of 0.54. These findings indicate that, on average, females have a greater desire for learning compared

to males, with a more consistent level of scores among females. Lastly, in the Self-Control category, Table 2 demonstrates that both female and male groups had similar mean scores. The female group, consisting of 129 participants, had a mean score of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 0.40. The male group, comprising 96 participants, had a slightly higher mean score of 4.18, with a standard deviation of 0.49. These results suggest that there is no substantial gender difference in self-control abilities, as both genders exhibit similar mean scores and comparable variability. In summary, Table 2 provides insights into gender differences in Self-Management, Desire for Learning, and Self-Control. Females tend to have slightly higher scores in Self-Management and Desire for Learning, while there is no notable difference between genders in Self-Control. However, further statistical analysis would be required to determine the significance of these gender differences and to draw more definitive conclusions.

In the context of self-directed learning, there are various possible explanations for why females might have a slightly higher motivation for learning than males. Probable justifications range from differences in socialization as girls may get distinct socialization compared to males, with a larger emphasis on self-directed learning and academic accomplishment. Another reason might be due to the learning style which females may prefer autonomous, reflective, or collaborative learning, which makes them better suited to self-directed learning (Clifford, 1999). Another possible reason could be the stereotypes where male students may be more inclined to believe that they are already knowledgeable or experts in particular fields. This belief may cause them to feel less eager to learn or reluctant to look for new information (Chen & Volpe, 2002).

TABLE 3  
THE INDEPENDENT SAMPLE TEST FOR THE GENDER VARIABLES

		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
Self-Management	Equal variances assumed	2.322	0.129	1.3	223	0.192	0.078	0.06
	Equal variances not assumed			1.32	213.11	0.187	0.078	0.059
Desire for Learning	Equal variances assumed	0.49	0.485	1.79	223	0.074	0.116	0.065
	Equal variances not assumed			1.73	177.39	0.084	0.116	0.067
Self-Control	Equal variances assumed	5.97	0.015	-0.35	223	0.725	-0.021	0.06
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.34	182.02	0.733	-0.021	0.061

Table 3 provides the results of an independent samples test, specifically a t-test for equality of means. The test was

conducted on two groups, and the table presents various statistical values and measures related to the test. The first column represents the t-values, which are used to assess the significance of the test. The second column displays the degrees of freedom (df), which indicate the number of observations available for the analysis. The third column indicates the significance level (p-value) for the test, measured as two-tailed. The following two columns present the mean difference and the standard error difference, respectively. Each row corresponds to a different test result, and the values provided in this table are crucial for interpreting the outcomes of the t-test.

In the independent samples test, the significance level (Sig.) for Levene's test for equality of variances indicates whether the results are significant or not for the three categories: Self-Management, Desire for Learning, and Self-Control. For the Self-Management category, assuming equal variances, the significance level is 0.129. This suggests that the difference between the means of the independent samples is not statistically significant. However, when equal variances are not assumed, the significance level is not provided, so further analysis would be required to determine the significance. Moving on to the Desire for Learning category, assuming equal variances, the significance level is 0.485. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the means of the independent samples. Similarly, when equal variances are not assumed, the significance level is not provided, requiring additional analysis to ascertain the significance. Finally, for the Self-Control category, assuming equal variances, the significance level is 0.015. This result suggests that there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the independent samples. However, when equal variances are not assumed, the significance level is not provided, requiring further investigation to determine the significance. Overall, based on the provided information, the significance levels for the Self-Management and Desire for Learning categories do not suggest significant differences between the means of the independent samples. However, in the case of Self-Control, assuming equal variances, the significance level of .015 indicates a significant difference.

TABLE 4  
COMPARISON OF SELF-MANAGEMENT, DESIRE FOR  
LEARNING, AND SELF-CONTROL AMONG STUDENTS IN  
DIFFERENT ACADEMIC LEVELS

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Self- management	First year	13	3.78	0.75	0.20
	Second year	87	3.85	0.43	0.04
	Third year	87	3.84	0.4	0.04
	Fourth year	38	3.85	0.44	0.07
	Total	225	3.84	0.44	0.02
Desire for learning	First year	13	3.89	0.7	0.19
	Second year	87	4.1	0.44	0.04
	Third year	87	4.22	0.46	0.04
	Fourth year	38	4.19	0.5	0.08
	Total	225	4.15	0.48	0.03
Self-control	First year	13	3.91	0.73	0.20

Second year	87	4.12	0.34	0.03
Third year	87	4.2	0.42	0.04
Fourth year	38	4.32	0.51	0.08
Total	225	4.17	0.44	0.02

The table provides a statistical presentation of a study that examines the self-management, desire for learning, and self-control of students across four years of study. For self-management, the mean scores range from 3.78 in the first year to 3.85 in the fourth year, with an overall mean of 3.84. The standard deviation ranges from 0.40 to 0.75, indicating that there is a moderate degree of variability in self-management scores among students. The desire for learning scores shows an increasing trend from the first year to the fourth year, with mean scores ranging from 3.89 to 4.19, and an overall mean of 4.15. The standard deviation for this variable is relatively consistent across all four years, ranging from 0.44 to 0.70. The self-control scores show a similar pattern to the desire for learning, with mean scores increasing from the first year to the fourth year, ranging from 3.91 to 4.32, and an overall mean of 4.17. The standard deviation for this variable is again consistent across all four years, ranging from 0.34 to 0.73.

The findings of our study align with the research conducted by Tekkol and Demirel (2018), which investigated the relationship between university students' propensities for lifelong learning and their self-directed learning abilities. Similar to their study, the present study's results also indicate a positive trend toward self-directed learning among university students. We observed that the self-directed learning scores among our participants were generally higher than the median score, suggesting a proactive approach to learning and a willingness to take control of one's own learning process.

There is limited relationship between the academic standing of the students and the category of desire for learning. Interestingly, second-, third-, and fourth-year students have a higher level of desire for learning compared to the first-year students. It is often observed that first-year students exhibit less enthusiasm for learning when compared to their senior peers in the second, third-, and fourth-year students. This lack of interest in education among the freshmen may be attributed to their relative lack of awareness about the significance of their academic pursuits. In contrast, older students are more likely to appreciate the value of their education and the role it plays in their future success. While this trend is not universal, it highlights the need to provide first-year students with the necessary guidance and support to help them fully appreciate the importance of their academic pursuits and develop a deeper desire to learn. This is not in line with the findings of the study conducted by Tarhan and Erözden (2008). Their study showed a high level of desire for learning by the participants.

Self-control is a key factor in determining academic success, and it can differ greatly between first-year and fourth-year students. Fourth-year students have been found to have better self-control compared to first-year students. This is because they have had more time to develop their decision-making skills and have gained a greater understanding of the importance of self-discipline. With four years of academic experience, fourth-

year students are more familiar with the demands of university life and are better equipped to manage their time, prioritize their responsibilities, and resist distractions. As a result, they are able to make better choices and maintain their focus on their goals, leading to higher levels of self-control and better academic performance. However, from what the researchers experienced, the last year of university typically elicits feelings of eagerness and enthusiasm as students look forward to the next chapter in their lives. They may become absorbed in contemplating their future prospects, such as finding employment, pursuing higher education, or embarking on a career. This sense of anticipation can divert their attention away from their present academic obligations and lead them to carelessness in their classes.

TABLE 5  
MULTIPLE COMPARISONS OF THE VARIABLES OF  
THE THREE CITIES

Multiple Comparisons					
Tukey HSD					
Dependent Variable	(I) City	(J) City	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Self-Management	Erbil	Halabja	0.144	0.078	0.159
		Sulaymaniyah	.251*	0.066	0.001
	Halabja	Erbil	-0.144	0.078	0.159
		Sulaymaniyah	0.107	0.075	0.329
	Sulaymaniyah	Erbil	-.251*	0.066	0.001
		Halabja	-0.107	0.075	0.329
Desire for Learning	Erbil	Halabja	-0.027	0.086	0.946
		Sulaymaniyah	.180*	0.073	0.038
	Halabja	Erbil	0.027	0.086	0.946
		Sulaymaniyah	.207*	0.082	0.035
	Sulaymaniyah	Erbil	-.180*	0.073	0.038
		Halabja	-.207*	0.082	0.035
Self-Control	Erbil	Halabja	0.114	0.079	0.324
		Sulaymaniyah	0.146	0.067	0.078
	Halabja	Erbil	-0.114	0.079	0.324
		Sulaymaniyah	0.032	0.076	0.907
	Sulaymaniyah	Erbil	-0.146	0.067	0.078
		Halabja	-0.032	0.076	0.907

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple comparisons conducted using the Tukey HSD test to determine the significance between different cities in terms of three variables: Self-Management, Desire for Learning, and Self-Control. Each cell in the table represents a comparison between two cities (I and J), providing information on the mean difference (Mean

Difference), standard error (Std. Error), and the significance level (Sig.) of the difference. For the variable of Self-Management, the table shows that Erbil and Halabja have a mean difference of 0.144, which is not statistically significant (Sig. = 0.159). However, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah have a significantly higher mean difference of 0.251 (Sig. = 0.001), indicating that there is a notable difference in self-management between these two cities. Similarly, the comparison between Halabja and Sulaymaniyah reveals a non-significant mean difference of 0.107 (Sig. = 0.329).

Regarding the Desire for Learning variable, Erbil and Halabja have a negligible mean difference of -0.027 (Sig. = 0.946), suggesting no significant variation in this aspect between the two cities. However, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah exhibit a statistically significant mean difference of 0.180 (Sig. = 0.038), indicating a notable disparity in the desire for learning. The comparison between Halabja and Sulaymaniyah also reveals a significant mean difference of 0.207 (Sig. = 0.035). In terms of Self-Control, the comparison between Erbil and Halabja shows a non-significant mean difference of 0.114 (Sig. = 0.324). Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, on the other hand, exhibit a slightly higher mean difference of 0.146, which is marginally significant (Sig. = 0.078). The comparison between Halabja and Sulaymaniyah indicates a non-significant mean difference of 0.032 (Sig. = 0.907).

Overall, the table provides valuable insights into the significance of the differences in Self-Management, Desire for Learning, and Self-Control between the cities of Erbil, Halabja, and Sulaymaniyah. These findings can be useful for understanding and comparing the characteristics and traits of these cities' populations in relation to the variables examined. This variability may reflect differences in the way individuals perceive and approach these constructs across different cities. Overall, the table provides insights into the mean scores and variability of psychological constructs across three different cities, which can help researchers and policymakers identify areas of strength and weakness in each city and develop targeted interventions to address any gaps in designing the curricula to activate the self-directed readiness among the undergraduate students.

As far as comparing the cities is concerned, a significant variance can be found in the cities of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah when compared to Halabja in terms of self-management and willingness to study. These differences might be the cause of a few potential explanations. A clear explanation for this is that individuals in large cities are more aware of language learning than those in smaller cities due to their higher quality of life. Education is another factor since students think that by finishing their academic degrees, they will have more work prospects in the larger cities.

There is a higher-than-average significant variation in the Erbil students' replies when compared to the students from the other two cities. In terms of learning motivation, students in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah are more eager to learn the English language. There might be a few various possibilities that could be related to having more language learning institutions, foreign agencies, and a higher rate of job opportunities. This gives

students better management skills in their educational environments.

When Halabja is compared to Sulaymaniyah, the result of the present study shows that the desire for learning among the students in Halabja and Sulaymaniyah has a significant difference because Halabja is a smaller and newly developed city than Sulaymaniyah. Students will have fewer job opportunities, and this can be one of the reasons for the low level of desire for learning among the students in Halabja city.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results and discussions of the study indicate several significant findings. Firstly, the level of education and the city of residence were found to have an impact on student participation. Second-year and third-year students exhibited the highest rate of participation, while first-year students had the lowest rate. Among the three cities, Sulaymaniyah had the highest participation rate, followed by Erbil, while Halabja had the lowest participation rate. In terms of gender differences, the results indicate that, on average, females tend to exhibit slightly higher levels of self-management and a greater desire for learning compared to males. However, there is no notable gender difference in self-control abilities. Further analysis of the independent samples test reveals that there are no significant differences in the mean scores of the Self-Management and Desire for Learning categories between the groups. However, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the Self-Control category.

The findings suggest a positive trend towards self-directed learning among university students, with higher scores observed in the desire for learning and self-control categories as students' progress through their academic years. The results align with previous research indicating that older students have a greater appreciation for education and exhibit better self-control compared to first-year students. The comparison between different cities using the Tukey HSD test highlights significant differences in self-management and desire for learning between Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. However, there are no significant differences in self-management and desire for learning between Erbil and Halabja, or between Halabja and Sulaymaniyah. The self-control scores show no significant differences between any of the city comparisons. Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into the factors influencing student participation, gender differences in self-directed learning traits, and the variability of psychological constructs across different cities. The results can inform educational institutions and policymakers in developing targeted interventions and curricula to enhance self-directed learning among undergraduate students, promote academic success, and address any gaps or variations among different populations.

#### A. Implication for further studies

The implications of this study are manifold. It highlights the significance of considering both the level of education and the

city of residence when addressing student participation, with sophomore and junior students demonstrating higher rates of engagement, and differences in participation across cities in the Kurdistan Region. Furthermore, the gender-related variations in self-management and desire for learning underscore the importance of tailored support for different learning styles. The observed positive trend in self-directed learning as students' progress through their academic journey suggests that nurturing these skills is a dynamic process that can improve over time. These findings can serve as a foundation for educational institutions and policymakers to develop targeted strategies and curricula aimed at fostering self-directed learning, promoting academic achievement, and addressing unique challenges and opportunities within diverse student populations and regions.

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