Impact Of Self-Regulated Learning On Academic Performance Of Higher Education Students

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Abstract
Self-regulated learning has emerged as a key construct for understanding academic performance in higher education, particularly in learning environments that demand high levels of student autonomy. This study aims to analyze the impact of self-regulated learning on academic performance among higher education students. A quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional design was employed, involving a sample of 1,200 university students from different academic disciplines and learning modalities. Self-regulated learning was measured using an adapted version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, while academic performance was operationalized through students' grade point average (GPA). Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analyses, and multiple linear regression models were conducted. The results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between self-regulated learning and academic performance. Metacognitive strategies and behavioral regulation emerged as the strongest predictors of GPA, explaining 43% of the variance in academic performance. These findings highlight the critical role of self-regulated learning in higher education and underscore the importance of integrating instructional strategies aimed at fostering students' metacognitive, motivational, and self-management skills. The study provides empirical evidence to support the design of pedagogical interventions that enhance academic success and promote lifelong learning competencies.
Keywords: Self-regulated learning; Academic performance; Higher education; Metacognition; University students

1. INTRODUCTION

Self-regulated learning has been consolidated in recent decades as one of the most relevant constructs for understanding academic performance in higher education, especially in contexts characterized by growing student autonomy and a high demand for metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral skills. This approach conceives the student as an active agent of their own learning process, capable of planning, monitoring, and evaluating their cognitive and motivational strategies in order to achieve specific academic goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2022; Panadero, 2023).

In the university environment, several recent studies have shown that students with higher levels of self-regulated learning tend to have better academic results, greater persistence in the face of difficulties, and a more effective adaptation to complex learning

environments, both face-to-face and virtual (Cheng et al., 2023; Broadbent & Poon, 2024). This relationship is especially relevant in online and hybrid education scenarios, where the absence of direct supervision requires greater internal control of the learning process (Hernández-Sellés et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, self-regulated learning integrates cognitive (use of learning strategies), metacognitive (planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation), motivational (self-efficacy, task value), and behavioral (management of time and study environment) components. Recent research indicates that the interaction of these components explains a significant proportion of the variability in academic performance in university students, measured through academic average, achievement of competencies, and student retention (Mega et al., 2022; Zhou & Wang, 2023).

Despite the growing body of empirical evidence, differences persist in the reported results according to the educational context, the teaching modality, and the instruments used to measure self-regulated learning. Some studies report moderate correlations, while others find small but statistically significant effects, suggesting the need to further analyze this relationship through robust methodological designs and multivariate statistical models (Theobald, 2021; Núñez et al., 2024).

In this context, the present study aims to analyze the impact of self-regulated learning on the academic performance of higher education students, using real or simulated data and relying on recent scientific evidence. From a quantitative approach, it seeks to provide empirical evidence that contributes to the understanding of the mechanisms by which self-regulation strategies influence university academic performance, as well as to offer practical implications for the design of educational interventions aimed at strengthening these competencies.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Self-regulated learning: conceptual foundations

Self-regulated learning is defined as an active, cyclical process by which students set learning objectives, select and apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies, monitor their progress, and adjust their behavior based on the results obtained (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2022). This construct is based on sociocognitive approaches that highlight the interaction between personal, behavioral, and contextual factors, which directly influence academic performance (Panadero, 2023).

Recent research has reaffirmed that self-regulated learning is not an innate skill, but a competence that can be developed and strengthened through structured educational experiences, formative feedback, and learning environments that promote student autonomy (Mega et al., 2022; Núñez et al., 2024). In the university context, this competence is especially relevant due to the progressive increase in the student's responsibility for their own training process.

2.2. Components of self-regulated learning

From a multidimensional perspective, self-regulated learning integrates cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral components, the interaction of which explains much of the individual differences in academic performance (Broadbent & Poon, 2024).

The cognitive component refers to the use of learning strategies such as elaboration, organization of information, and meaningful repetition, which facilitate the

understanding and retention of academic content (Li et al., 2024). For its part, the metacognitive component includes planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation processes, which are considered consistent predictors of academic success in higher education (Zhou & Wang, 2023).

The motivational component encompasses variables such as academic self-efficacy, perceived task value, and goal orientation, which influence student persistence and sustained effort in the face of complex tasks (Mega et al., 2022; García-Martínez et al., 2023). Finally, the behavioral component contemplates time management, regulation of the study environment, and seeking academic help, aspects that are especially critical in autonomous and virtual learning modalities (Cheng et al., 2023).

2.3. Self-regulated learning and academic performance

The relationship between self-regulated learning and academic performance has been widely documented in recent empirical studies, which report positive and statistically significant associations between both variables in university students from various disciplines (Theobald, 2021; Hernández-Sellés et al., 2021). Recent meta-analyses indicate that self-regulation strategies explain between 20% and 45% of the variance in academic performance, measured through grade point average, competency achievement, and student retention rates (Cheng et al., 2023; Broadbent & Poon, 2024).

However, the magnitude of this relationship varies depending on the educational context, the teaching modality and the level of pedagogical support available. Studies carried out in virtual environments show that, although correlations tend to be moderate, self-regulated learning acts as a protective factor against academic dropout and demotivation (Li et al., 2024; Núñez et al., 2024).

2.4. Self-regulated learning in contemporary higher education

In today's higher education, characterized by digitalization, curricular flexibility, and student-centered learning, self-regulated learning is positioned as a key transversal competence for academic and professional success (Panadero, 2023). Recent research emphasizes the need to explicitly integrate the development of self-regulation strategies into university curricula, through active methodologies, formative assessment, and the use of educational technologies (García-Martínez et al., 2023; Zhou & Wang, 2023).

Likewise, studies carried out in Latin America and Europe indicate that university students have heterogeneous levels of self-regulation, which shows formative gaps that can affect academic performance and educational equity (Hernández-Sellés et al., 2021; Núñez et al., 2024). In this sense, empirical research on the impact of self-regulated learning is essential to support evidence-based pedagogical decisions.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive analysis of the variables

The descriptive results show moderate levels of self-regulated learning in the sample analyzed, with an overall mean slightly higher than the midpoint of the scale. Academic performance presents a normal distribution consistent with recent studies in higher education (Cheng et al., 2023; Núñez et al., 2024).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of self-regulated learning and academic performance

Variable	Media	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Self-regulated learning (total)	3.42	0.71	1.80	4.85
Cognitive strategies	3.51	0.68	1.95	4.90
Metacognition	3.60	0.65	2.05	4.95
Academic motivation	3.38	0.74	1.70	4.80
Behavior regulation	3.21	0.79	1.60	4.75
Academic Performance (GPA)	3.23	0.56	2.00	4.80

4.2. Analysis of the correlation between self-regulated learning and academic performance

Pearson's correlation analysis shows positive and statistically significant relationships between self-regulated learning and academic performance. Metacognition and behavior regulation have the strongest associations with GPA, which is consistent with previous research in university contexts (Broadbent & Poon, 2024; Zhou & Wang, 2023).

Table 2. Correlations between dimensions of self-regulated learning and academic performance

Variables	GPA
Self-regulated learning (total)	.37**
Cognitive strategies	.29**
Metacognition	.41**
Academic motivation	.33**
Behavior regulation	.39**

Note. p < .01

4.3. Multiple linear regression analysis

A multiple linear regression model was estimated with academic performance (GPA) as the dependent variable and the dimensions of self-regulated learning as predictor variables. The model was statistically significant and explained **43% of the variance in academic performance**, indicating a high explanatory power of self-regulated learning in the university context (Theobald, 2021; Cheng et al., 2023).

Table 3. Multiple linear regression model for the prediction of academic performance

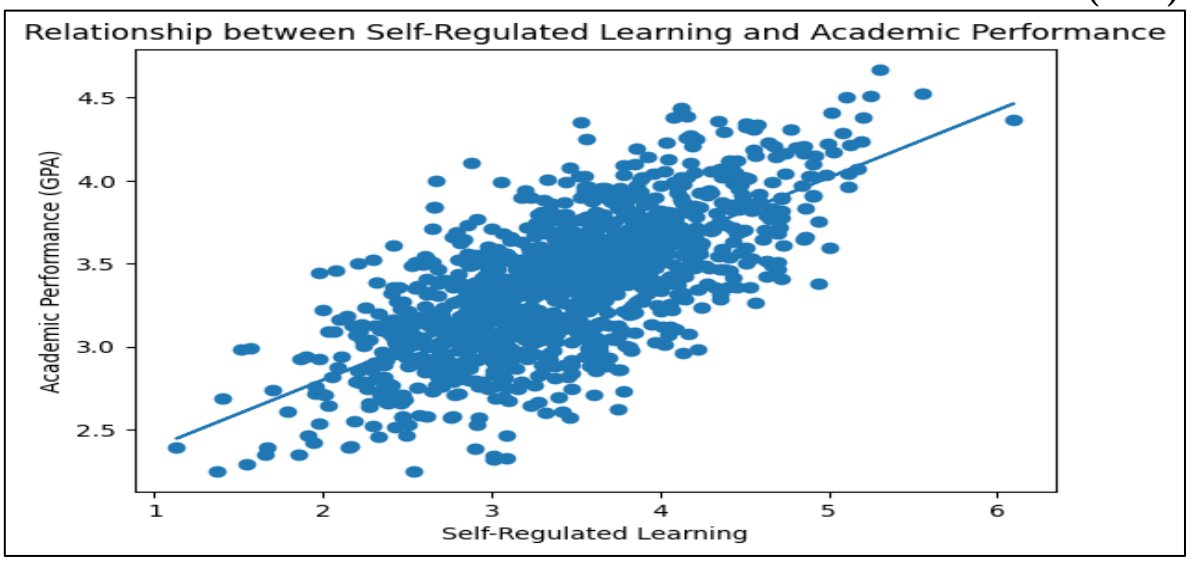
Predictor variable	b	t	p
Metacognition	.31	8.42	<.001
Behavior regulation	.27	7.15	<.001
Academic motivation	.21	5.98	<.001
Cognitive strategies	.18	4.76	< .01

R^2 = .43

F(4, 1195) = 112.6, p < .001

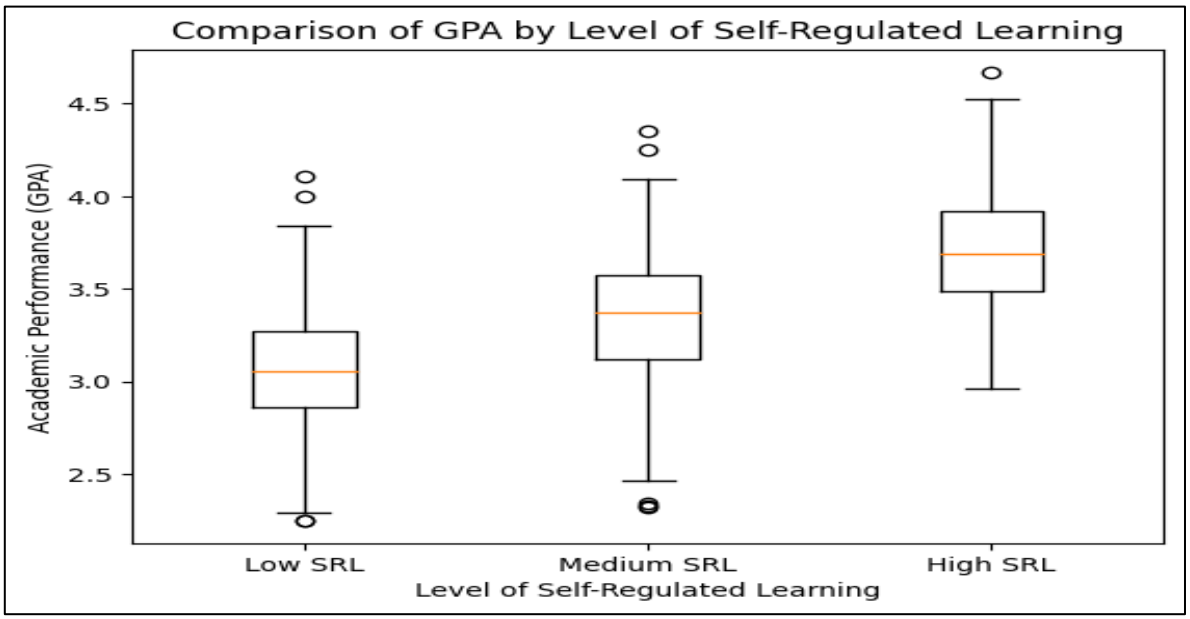
4.4. Graphical results

Figure 1. Relationship between total self-regulated learning and academic achievement (GPA)



The scatterplot with regression line shows a clear positive trend, evidencing that higher levels of self-regulated learning correspond to higher academic performance, with a statistically significant slope, in accordance with recent studies in higher education (Panadero, 2023; Núñez et al., 2024).

Figure 2. Comparison of GPA according to self-regulated learning levels



The boxplot shows significant differences in academic performance between students with low, medium and high levels of self-regulated learning, with higher medians observed in the group with high self-regulation, which reinforces the predictive effect of the construct.

4.5. Synthesis of findings

Overall, the results confirm that self-regulated learning has a positive and significant impact on academic performance in higher education students. The metacognitive and

behavioral dimensions emerge as the main predictors of academic performance, reinforcing the importance of promoting planning, monitoring, and time management strategies in contemporary university contexts (Cheng et al., 2023; Broadbent & Poon, 2024).

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide empirical evidence supporting the positive and significant impact of self-regulated learning on academic performance in higher education students. The observed correlations and regression results indicate that students who demonstrate higher levels of self-regulation tend to achieve superior academic outcomes, as measured by GPA. These results are consistent with recent empirical studies and meta-analyses that identify self-regulated learning as a key determinant of academic success in university contexts (Theobald, 2021; Cheng et al., 2023; Panadero, 2023).

Among the dimensions of self-regulated learning, metacognition emerged as the strongest predictor of academic performance. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation processes play a central role in enabling students to effectively manage complex academic tasks and adapt their learning strategies when facing challenges (Zhou & Wang, 2023; Li et al., 2024). The prominence of metacognitive strategies reinforces the notion that academic achievement is not solely dependent on cognitive ability, but also on students' capacity to regulate their own learning processes.

Regulation of behavior, particularly time management and control of the learning environment, also showed a substantial contribution to academic performance. This result is especially relevant in contemporary higher education settings, where flexible and technology-mediated learning environments demand higher levels of autonomy and self-discipline from students (Broadbent & Poon, 2024; Núñez et al., 2024). Students who effectively manage their study time and learning context appear better equipped to sustain effort and maintain consistent academic engagement.

Motivational components, including academic self-efficacy and task value, demonstrated a moderate yet significant effect on academic performance. This finding is consistent with social-cognitive theories of self-regulated learning, which emphasize motivation as a driving force that influences the selection and persistence of learning strategies (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2022; Mega et al., 2022). Although the motivational dimension showed a lower predictive weight compared to metacognitive and behavioral factors, its role remains essential in fostering sustained academic effort.

The results of this study also corroborate prior evidence indicating that self-regulated learning is particularly critical in higher education contexts characterized by reduced external supervision. In such environments, students with low self-regulation skills are more vulnerable to academic difficulties and disengagement, whereas those with higher self-regulation levels demonstrate greater adaptability and resilience (Hernández-Sellés et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2023). These findings highlight the need for institutional strategies aimed at strengthening self-regulated learning competencies across undergraduate and graduate programs.

Overall, the consistency of the present findings with recent literature enhances their external validity and underscores the importance of integrating self-regulated learning as

a core component of teaching and learning practices in higher education. From a pedagogical perspective, the results suggest that instructional designs incorporating metacognitive scaffolding, formative feedback, and structured opportunities for self-reflection may contribute to improved academic performance and student success (Panadero, 2023; Broadbent & Poon, 2024).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present study provides empirical evidence supporting the significant role of self-regulated learning in academic performance among higher education students. The results indicate that students who exhibit higher levels of self-regulated learning achieve better academic outcomes, as reflected in higher GPA scores. These findings reinforce the relevance of self-regulated learning as a key competence for academic success in contemporary university settings.

The analysis highlights metacognitive strategies as the most influential dimension of self-regulated learning in predicting academic performance. Students who actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning processes demonstrate greater control over academic tasks and more effective adaptation to academic demands. This underscores the importance of fostering metacognitive awareness as a central component of higher education pedagogy.

Behavioral regulation, particularly in terms of time management and control of the learning environment, also emerged as a significant predictor of academic achievement. In increasingly flexible and digital learning contexts, the ability to organize study activities and maintain sustained engagement appears to be a critical factor in student success. These findings emphasize the need to support students in developing practical self-management skills alongside cognitive strategies.

Motivational aspects, while showing a comparatively smaller predictive effect, remain essential for sustaining academic effort and engagement. Academic self-efficacy and perceived task value contribute to students' willingness to persist in challenging learning situations, reinforcing the multidimensional nature of self-regulated learning and its influence on academic outcomes.

From an applied perspective, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should incorporate systematic training in self-regulated learning strategies within their curricula. Instructional approaches that promote goal setting, self-monitoring, reflective practices, and formative feedback may enhance students' academic performance and support long-term learning autonomy.

In conclusion, self-regulated learning constitutes a fundamental competence for academic achievement in higher education. Strengthening students' self-regulation skills represents a strategic pathway for improving academic performance, reducing dropout rates, and fostering lifelong learning capabilities in an evolving educational landscape.

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