

DO MOTIVATIONAL SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES VARY BASED ON THE MOTIVATIONAL CHALLENGE?

SARA DA SILVA
MATTHIEU HAUSMAN
JEAN-LOUIS BERGER

UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG - PLEMOS LAB

UNIVERSITY OF LIEGE - PLEMOS LAB

UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG - PLEMOS LAB

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DEFINITION

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MSR strategies (MSRs) are purposeful behaviours and thought processes used to initiate, maintain, or restore willingness to engage when motivation is insufficient (Wolters, 2003).

Motivation is not only a condition for learning but a target of self-regulation.

WHERE THE FIELD STANDS

- A meta-analysis links MSRs use to academic achievement, persistence, and effort investment (Fong et al., 2024).
- These relationships varied across studies, suggesting that MSRs effectiveness may depend on situational factors rather than on how frequently and how many MSRs are used (Fong et al., 2024).
- MSR is contextual and situational, learners monitor their motivational state, identify the source of the motivational challenge, and select MSRs accordingly (Miele & Scholer, 2018).
- MSR does not require a fixed repertoire of MSRs, but rather the capacity to adapt strategy selection to the specific learning contexts and motivational challenges encountered (Engelschalk et al., 2016; Fong et al., 2024; Schwinger & Otterpohl, 2017).

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What are these motivational challenges

?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Situated Expectancy-Value Theory (SEVT) and the Expectancy-Value-Cost model provides a framework for conceptualising this context variability (Barron & Hulleman, 2015 ; Eccles & Wigfield, 2020)

LOW SUCCESS EXPECTANCY

The belief that success at the task is unlikely

Eccles & Wigfield, 2020

LOW SUBJECTIVE TASK VALUE

The appraisal that the task holds little personal interest, importance, or usefulness

Eccles & Wigfield, 2020

HIGH PERCEIVED TASK COST

The appraisal that engaging in the task entails significant negative consequences

Barron & Hulleman, 2015

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HIGH PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY COST

Engagement conflicts with other valued activities.

Barron & Hulleman, 2015

Prior research has largely examined how frequently MSRs are used rather than when they are appropriate to specific motivational challenges (Panadero, 2017; von der Mülbe et al., 2024; Zhang & Dong, 2022).

Consequently, whether different motivational challenges elicit distinct self-regulated responses and MSRs selection remains unclear.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1 Which MSRs do students report using in response to each of three motivational challenges, and do these MSRs selections differ across challenges?

RQ2 Are there MSRs that students report using in practice but that are underrecognized (i.e., absent or underrepresented) in existing taxonomies?

SAMPLE

- Convenience sampling
- 60 Students from University of Fribourg
- Multiple faculties
- Age: 18-22 (n = 15), 23-27 (n = 43), > 27 (n = 2)
- Gender: 38 female, 22 male
- Level: 32 Master's, 28 Bachelor's

3

open-ended scenarios

≥ 3

strategies per scenario

455

strategy instances coded



Scenarios are available on OSF

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PROCEDURE

- Paper-and-pencil survey in French, completed individually under standardised written instructions
- Three open-ended scenarios, order counterbalanced

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Mixed-methods

Quantitative analyses

Friedman tests comparing strategy use between and within-scenario.
Kendall's W for the effect sizes

Qualitative analyses

Categorical content analysis
Inductive and deductive approach

RQ2: TEN MSRS SUBCATEGORIES

RQ2

Are there MSRs that students report using in practice but that are underrecognized (i.e., absent or underrepresented) in existing taxonomies?

*(Cosnefroy, 2010; Miele & Scholer, 2018; Schwinger et al., 2009; Wolters, 1998, 2003)



Codebook with categories
are available on OSF

RQ2: TEN MSRS SUBCATEGORIES

10 subcategories of strategies

First step : specific strategies

Second step : subcategories → regulation target

Goal-based strategies

(e.g. Mastery self-talk, performance avoidance self-talk, etc)

→ 3 groups of subcategories

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MSRS FROM ESTABLISHED TAXONOMIES*

- Goal-based strategies
(e.g. Mastery self-talk, performance avoidance self-talk, etc)
- Value enhancement
- Self-efficacy enhancement
- Environmental control
- Emotion regulation

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RETAINED FOR SRL INTERDEPENDENCE

- Metacognitive strategies
(e.g. Planning one's performance, Planning one's break)
- Cognitive strategies
(e.g. Instrumental help-seeking, Executive help-seeking)
indirectly support motivation

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EMERGING INDUCTIVELY FROM THE DATA

- Active procrastination
- Need satisfaction
- Disengagement



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RQ1: MSRS ACCORDING TO MOTIVATIONAL PROBLEM

Table 1

Frequencies of Motivational Self-Regulation Strategy Categories by Scenario

Strategy category	Scenarios			Total
	Opportunity cost	Subjective task value	Success expectancy	
<i>Motivational self-regulation strategies (N = 216)</i>				
Goal-based strategies	5	9	2	16
Value enhancement	25	26	5	56
Self-efficacy enhancement	14	10	5	29
Environmental control	9	46	3	58
Emotional regulation	9	3	3	15
Active procrastination	0	11	1	12
Need satisfaction	23	2	5	30
<i>Other strategies (N = 239)</i>				
Metacognitive strategies	39	35	9	83
Cognitive strategies	4	12	105	121
Disengagement	9	6	20	35
Total	137	160	158	455

Friedman test across the three scenarios: $\chi^2(9) = 164.13, p < .001, W = .30$

Note. Frequencies are derived from the analysis dataset.

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HIGH PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY COST

Friedman test : $\chi^2(9) = 85.38, p < .001, W = .16$

Metacognitive strategies

"I would try to create a very well-organized schedule" (S37.C83).

Value enhancement

"Tell myself that this is a temporary discomfort and try to think long-term" (S19.C44).

Need satisfaction

"Relationships are important to maintain a good level of work; I would therefore spend time with family and friends to increase my efficiency" (S41.C74).

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LOW SUBJECTIVE TASK VALUE

Friedman test : $\chi^2(9) = 127.58, p < .001, W = .19$

Environmental control

"Going to the library and being in a studious environment help me get into the task" (S2.V1).

Metacognitive strategies

"I study at regular intervals: 1 hour of work and 15 minutes of break" (S37.V102)

Value enhancement

"I try to find an immediate interest. For example, if I have to read a philosopher I don't particularly like, I tell myself it is still interesting from a historical perspective" (S10.V32).

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LOW SUCCESS EXPECTANCY

Friedman test : $\chi^2(9) = 287.24, p < .001, W = .53$

Cognitive strategies

Executive help-seeking

"I would ask ChatGPT for the answer" (S25.D94).

"I would review the problem from the beginning" (S8.D30).

"I would ask classmates, or even the professor/assistant, to re-explain it to me" (S2.D5).

Disengagement

"I would try to postpone the exam" (S60.D161).

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DISCUSSION

**LOW
SUCCESS
EXPECTANCY**

**SELF
PROTECTION
REGULATION**

Executive help-seeking and disengagement can be understood as defensive coping.
Regulation no longer aims at engagement but at protecting the self against anticipated failure.

DISCUSSION

LOW SUCCESS EXPECTANCY

SELF PROTECTION REGULATION

Executive help-seeking and disengagement resemble defensive coping. When improvement appears impossible, regulation no longer aims at engagement but at self-protection against anticipated failure.

LOW SUBJECTIVE TASK VALUE

REGULATING THE COST OF ENGAGEMENT

Environmental control, effort segmentation, self-consequating and time pressure lower the perceived effort of starting or sustaining an unpleasant task. Students made the task more acceptable rather than more meaningful.

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**REGULATING THE
COST OF
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Environmental control, effort segmentation, self-consequating and time pressure lower the perceived effort of starting or sustaining an unpleasant task. Students made the task more bearable rather than more meaningful.

**HIGH
PERCEIVED
OPPORTUNITY
COST**

**REGULATING THE
CONDITIONS OF
ENGAGEMENT**

Planning and need satisfaction act on the feasibility of engagement rather than on immediate willingness. Persistence is supported indirectly, by making engagement viable.

Thank you for your attention !

Da Silva, S; Hausman, M; Berger, J.-L. (2026). Do motivational self-regulation strategies vary based on the motivational challenge?



Link to the preprint on OSF

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METHODOLOGY

CATEGORICAL CONTENT ANALYSIS, DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE (BRAUN & CLARKE, 2013)

1

Coding scheme

Deductive base from established taxonomies, inductive openness

2

Reliability check

Two independent coders, 30% of the dataset, $\kappa = .52$

3

Refinement

Category definitions revised; second check on 20%, $\kappa = .84$

4

Full coding

Remaining responses coded with the finalised codebook

Quantitative analyses

Descriptive frequencies, then Friedman tests comparing strategy use across categories and across motivational challenges and within-scenario. Effect sizes are reported as Kendall's W

RQ2: TEN OVERARCHING STRATEGY CATEGORIES

ACTIVE PROCRASTINATION

Active procrastination is defined as intentional delay coupled with timely completion and satisfaction (Choi & Moran, 2009; Chu & Choi, 2005), and is also referred to as delaying for pressure (Trautner et al., 2026).

"I wait until the last minute to do it, and then I have no choice but to work; the pressure forces me to get it done" (S24.V70)

NEED SATISFACTION

Engaging in physiological or social activities to restore readiness to study. Treated by students as a prerequisite for sustained engagement.

"It is important that he get enough sleep, eat, and drink properly" (S50.C96)

SITUATIONAL GOAL ADJUSTMENT

Calibrating performance standards or reducing task scope under constraint, while still intending to submit the assignment.

"I would submit something that is below the level of quality I am capable of, just to meet the deadline" (S24.C54)

DISCUSSION

THEORETICAL SITUATIONAL FIT STRATEGIES

**HIGH PERCEIVED
OPPORTUNITY COST**

**SITUATIONAL FIT
=
ENVIRONMENTAL
CONTROL**

9 OF 137

**LOW SUBJECTIVE TASK
VALUE**

**SITUATIONAL FIT
=
VALUE ENHANCEMENT**

26 OF 160

LOW SUCCESS EXPECTANCY

**SITUATIONAL FIT
=
SELF-EFFICACY
ENHANCEMENT AND
PROXIMAL GOAL
SETTING**

7 OF 158

Students appeared to regulate their motivation mostly externally, by altering task conditions rather than their motivational belief appraisals, a tendency also noted by Villar et al. (2024). This may point to a relatively limited repertoire and to conditional knowledge that remains to be developed.

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- Emotion regulation

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indirectly support motivation

EMERGING INDUCTIVELY FROM THE DATA

- Active procrastination
- Need satisfaction
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EMERGING INDUCTIVELY FROM THE DATA

- Active procrastination
- Need satisfaction
- **Disengagement**
- **Breaks**
- *Situational goal adjustment*

*(Cosnefroy, 2010; Miele & Scholer, 2018; Schwinger et al., 2009; Wolters, 1998, 2003)

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RETAINED FOR SRL INTERDEPENDENCE

- Metacognitive strategies
(e.g. Planning one's performance, Planning one's break)
- Cognitive strategies
(e.g. Instrumental help-seeking, Executive help-seeking)

"I would submit something that is below the level of quality I am capable of, just to meet the deadline" (S24.C54).

EMERGING INDUCTIVELY FROM THE DATA

- Active procrastination
- Need satisfaction
- Disengagement
- Breaks
- **Situational goal adjustment**

*(Cosnefroy, 2010; Miele & Scholer, 2018; Schwinger et al., 2009; Wolters, 1998, 2003)