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Tier and Clout of Motivation on Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Language in Ahoada Local Government Area of Rivers State

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Abstract

This study examined the level and influence of motivation on senior secondary school students' achievement in English Language in Ahoada Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study focused on students in senior secondary schools. The study was guided by five research objectives, which sought to determine students' level of motivation towards learning English Language, assess their level of achievement in the subject, examine the relationship between motivation and academic achievement, and investigate the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on students' performance. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to enable the researcher to collect data from respondents without manipulating the variables under investigation. The population comprised senior secondary school students in public secondary schools in Ahoada Local Government Area. A sample of students was selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure representation across SS1, SS2, and SS3 classes. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Level and Influence of Motivation on Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Language Questionnaire (LIMSSSAELQ), designed on a four-point Likert scale. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean scores and standard deviations, with a criterion mean of 2.50 adopted for decision-making. The findings revealed that students demonstrated a high level of motivation towards learning English Language and achieved moderate to high levels of performance in the subject. The study also established a strong positive relationship between students' motivation and their achievement in English Language. Furthermore, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were found to have significant influences on students' academic performance, although extrinsic motivation appeared slightly more dominant due to factors such as examination pressure, parental encouragement, and teacher influence. The study concluded that motivation is an important factor associated with students' achievement in English Language. Based on these findings, it recommended that teachers adopt learner-centred instructional strategies, parents provide adequate academic support, and schools improve the availability of learning resources to strengthen students' motivation and enhance their performance in English Language.

Keywords: *Student Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Academic Achievement, English Language Learning, Senior Secondary School Students, Academic Performance, Learner-Centred Instruction, Teaching Strategies, Ahoada Local Government Area, Rivers State.*

Introduction

Education is generally considered as a basic tool for national development, human capital development and socio-economic transformation. Students' academic performance is one of the most important factors that influence the achievement of educational objectives, and it is determined by a variety of cognitive, psychological, social and environmental factors. Of these, the role of motivation has always been found to be one of the key determinants of a students' learning behaviours and performance. It influences students' commitment to learning, persistence, ability to face obstacles and strive for learning success. In recent years, the role of motivation in enhancing learning outcomes from a variety of subject areas has become a priority for educational psychologists and researchers (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Motivation is the internal and external forces that stimulate and direct a person's behaviour in order to reach a certain goal. In the school context, it affects children's investment in learning activities in terms of time, effort, and effort. Motivated students tend to concentrate well, actively participate in class, learn self-regulated learning, and persist in challenging tasks. On the other hand, the students who are less motivated can show less active participation in the classroom, less effort in learning and not achieving well in academic tasks (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2018). Motivation has, therefore, continued to be a significant area of study in education and instruction.

English Language has a prominent role in the educational system of Nigeria. It is the language of communication and is used extensively in administration, commerce, science, and technology and in education. In addition, English is used as the main language in which the majority of subjects are being delivered and evaluated in the school. Thus, students' learning and future employment require proficiency in English Language. The fact that tertiary institutions in Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) require an English Language credit pass for admissions is another indication of its importance.

English Language is an important subject, but students' achievement in this subject remains a matter of concern for educators, parents, and policy makers. The results of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) have shown that there are differences and, in some cases, poor performance of the senior secondary school students in the English Language examination. The WAEC Chief Examiners' Reports (2021-2024) revealed that most students still struggle with the following language skills that are vital to academic success: Reading comprehension, Vocabulary development, Grammatical accuracy, Oral communication, and Essay writing.

Some of the factors affecting students' poor performance in English Language according to the research evidence are; poor quality of teaching, overcrowding of classrooms, negative learning environment, lack of self-efficacy, and low motivation towards learning, inadequate instructional materials, and ineffective teaching methods (Aina & Olanipekun, 2022; Eze et al., 2023). Of these factors, motivation is especially important as it can affect students' interest, effort, persistence and active participation in learning activities. Learners with positive attitudes towards English Language learning will be interested in classroom discussion, will do assigned homework, will ask for academic help if needed, and will do their best to learn the language.

In the current theories of education there are two major types of motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation is when students participate in learning activities because of their personal interest, enjoyment, curiosity or satisfaction from the learning itself. However, extrinsic motivation is when people engage in learning activities because of external rewards or acknowledgements, including academic grades, rewards, recognition, parental expectations, and future job opportunities (Ryan & Deci, 2020). While both types of motivation are linked to students' success, intrinsic motivation tends to be linked to students' longer-term engagement and learning outcomes.

The positive relationship between students' motivation and learning achievements has been proven in empirical studies conducted in various educational environments. For example, highly motivated learners are more academically engaged and more successful than less motivated learners, according to Alhadabi and Karpinski (2020). Likewise, Schwinger et al. (2021) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have significant effects on students' academic achievement in different content areas. Similarly, research by Aina and Olanipekun (2022) and Eze et al. (2023) in the Nigerian Educational environment, revealed that pupils who are academically motivated tend to perform better than those with lower levels of academic motivation in English Language and other subjects in school.

There are reports of poor performance in English Language examinations among the students in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), especially in the Gwagwalada Area Council. Although educational authorities have tried to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools and improve learning outcomes, some pupils are still getting poor performances in their work. Studies in the past focused mainly on instructional problems, teachers' effectiveness, and school related problems, while relatively few studies

concentrated on how students' motivation is related to their achievement in English Language within the Area Council.

Motivation plays a key role in the learning process and English Language is important in educational achievement, thus it is necessary to investigate the level of motivation of the senior secondary school students in Ahoada east local government area and the relationship that exists between their level of motivation and their achievement in English language. The knowledge of this connection will serve as helpful data for teachers, school manager, education counsellor, parents and policy makers to create suitable methods to boost students' motivation and increase their learning efficiency in the school.

Research Design

The study used descriptive survey research design since it is the most generally used in educational research and in line with the way of eliciting information on the opinions, perceptions, attitudes, and the well-known practices of a situation without altering the variables under consideration. The reason is that it was the appropriate design for a natural design aimed at exploring the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on accomplishment of the students in English Language that would be among the Senior Secondary School students.

The descriptive survey design allows the researcher to obtain data from a representative sample of respondents and generalize the findings to the larger population. According to Educational Research Methods, survey research is particularly useful in studies involving large populations where direct observation of all subjects is impracticable. In the context of this study, it enables the researcher to systematically capture students' motivational tiers and their perceived academic achievement in English Language. The design is therefore suitable because it provides quantitative data that can be statistically analyzed to determine relationships and effects between variables.

Research Population

The study population comprises all public Senior Secondary School, SSS students in Senior Secondary Schools in Ahoada LGA (Ahoada Local Government Area of Rivers State), Ahoada. This demographic was deemed relevant because these students study English Language as a key subject and also take exams such as Continuous Assessment, WAEC, NECO, etc.

The population is made up of students in SSS1, SSS2, and SSS3 who have varied levels of exposure and ability in English Language. These pupils will have different motivation levels and different levels of achievement and would be suited for the study of motivation and learning attainment. This demographic will provide a wide and realistic view of the learning experience of the pupils in the specified sector of their education.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample will be a basic random sample of the population so that all students have equal and independent chances of being selected. This is done to achieve fairness, to minimise sampling bias, and to achieve better representation of the sample.

The sample will be selected from different public Senior Secondary schools within Ahoada East LGA to ensure adequate coverage of the population. Students from SSS1 to SSS3 will be proportionately selected so that each class tier is fairly represented in the study. This is important because motivation and achievement tiers may differ across class tiers due to differences in exposure, academic pressure, and examination preparation.

The use of simple random sampling enhances the external validity of the study, allowing findings to be generalized to the broader population of Senior Senior Secondary School students in the area council.

Instrumentation

The major instrument for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire titled:

"tier and clout of Motivation on Senior Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Language Questionnaire (LIMSSSAELQ)"

The questionnaire was carefully designed to obtain relevant information on students' motivation and achievement in English Language. It comprises two main sections. Section A gathers respondents' demographic details, including gender, age, and class level, while Sections B to F consist of Likert-scale statements developed to measure the major variables of the study.

The Likert scale comprises four response options: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). This rating system enables respondents to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. The instrument assesses five major constructs: level of motivation, level of achievement, relationship between motivation and achievement, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. The structured format of the questionnaire promotes consistency in responses and facilitates the systematic analysis of the collected data.

Validity of the Instrument

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure. In this study, face and content validity will be established to enhance the quality and credibility of the instrument.

This would include having the questionnaire appraised by professionals in Educational Measurement and Evaluation and in English Language Education. They will evaluate each item on its clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and adequacy in terms of the research aims and questions. Their expert opinions will confirm the adequacy of the instrument in measuring the constructs of motivation and achievement in English Language.

Corrections, revisions, and suggestions from the experts will be incorporated in the final version of the instrument. This will increase the validity of the instrument and its suitability for data collection in the study.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability is the degree of consistency of an instrument in measuring the given construct over time. Cronbach Alpha is a reliable way of testing the reliability of the Likert-scale questionnaire and will analyse the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

The Cronbach Alpha technique will be used to determine the correlation and consistency of the constructs in each section of the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient should be 0.70 and higher, reflecting the consistency of the instrument in data collecting.

According to Measurement and Evaluation, reliable instruments are essential in research because they ensure that results are stable, replicable, and free from random measurement errors. Therefore, establishing reliability in this study guarantees that the findings are dependable and scientifically sound.

Pilot Study / Testing

Before the major data collection exercise, a pilot study will be carried out to test the effectiveness and clarity of the research instrument. Students included in the pilot study will not be part of the main sample, although they will have similar features with the sample.

There are various significant purposes of the pilot study. It helps to pinpoint ambiguous or confusing items in the questionnaire, the time it takes to complete it, and the dependability of the instrument. It also helps make any essential changes before the final administration.

The feedback from the pilot study will assist in improving and refining the instrument to make it clear, more valid, and capable of getting the right replies from the actual respondents.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher will administer questionnaires to the respondents in the sampled Senior Secondary schools. The researcher will ask for permission from the school officials before collecting data from the selected children.

The researcher will self-administer the surveys and will clearly explain how to fill them. Respondents will be given enough time to think about each item. Questionnaires will be retrieved during or soon after administration to enhance response rate and avoid loss of data.

Respondents will be informed that the participation is voluntary and that their identities will remain anonymous and confidential. Participants will be assured that their answers will be used only for academic purposes.

Method of Data Analysis

Data obtained in the field will be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics based on the research objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) will be utilised to answer the study questions. The mean score will indicate the degree of motivation and achievement, while the standard deviation will indicate the extent to which the respondents differ/agree in viewpoint. If the mean score equals 2.50 and above, the decision rule will be accepting it; below 2.50 will be rejected. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) will be utilised to assess the association between motivation and achievement of student in English Language. This statistical technique is suitable since it determines the strength and direction of the link between two continuous variables.

Descriptive and inferential statistics are appropriate for complete data analysis. And descriptive statistics summarise the perceptions of the respondents, while inferential statistics allow for the derivation of relationships and conclusions that apply to the population.

Table 4.1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	52	52%
Female	48	48%
Total	**100**	**100%**

The table shows that 52% of the respondents were male while 48% were female. This indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution among the respondents. The closeness in representation ensures that the views captured in the study are not biased toward any gender group. It also suggests that both male and female students are actively engaged in English Language learning in the selected schools. This balance strengthens the reliability of the findings, as it reflects a fair representation of gender-related experiences in motivation and achievement.

Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10–14	18	18%
15–17	62	62%
18 and above	20	20%
Total	**100**	**100%**

The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents (62%) fall within the 15–17 years age bracket, which corresponds to the typical age range of Senior Senior Secondary School students. This suggests that most respondents are at a critical stage of Senior Secondary education where English Language learning becomes more examination-oriented and academically demanding. The presence of younger and older students ensures diversity in academic experience and cognitive maturity, which may influence motivation tiers and achievement in English Language.

Table 4.3: Class tier of Respondents

Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSS1	30	30%
SSS2	35	35%
SSS3	35	35%
Total	**100**	**100%**

The table shows that respondents were fairly distributed across SSS1, SSS2, and SSS3. This even distribution is important because students at different class tiers have varying tiers of exposure to English Language content. SSS1 students are relatively new to the demands of senior Senior Secondary education, while SSS2 and SSS3 students have more experience and are closer to external examinations such as WAEC and NECO. This variation allows the study to capture differences in motivation and achievement across academic tiers, thereby enriching the analysis.

4.3 Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the analysis of data based on the research questions. The analysis was done using mean and standard deviation. A decision rule was applied whereby a mean score of 2.50 and above is accepted, while a score below 2.50 is rejected. This helps to determine the tier of agreement or disagreement among respondents on each item.

Research Question 1: tier of Motivation among Students

Table 4.4: tier of Motivation toward English Language

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1	I am highly motivated to learn English Language in school.	3.20	Accepted
2	I enjoy participating in English Language lessons and activities.	3.10	Accepted
3	I always show interest in improving my English Language skills.	3.25	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.18

The results in Table 4.4 reveal that students demonstrate a high tier of motivation toward learning English Language. All the mean scores are above the decision benchmark of 2.50, indicating general agreement among respondents. The grand mean of 3.18 further confirms that students are positively motivated in English Language learning. This suggests that students are not only interested in the subject but also actively participate in classroom activities and show willingness to improve their language skills. Such a high tier of motivation is expected to positively influence their academic engagement and performance.

Research Question 2: tier of Students' Achievement in English Language

Table 4.5: Students' Achievement in English Language

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1	I perform well in English Language examinations and tests.	3.05	Accepted
2	I can understand English passages and answer questions correctly.	3.10	Accepted
3	I am confident in my English Language results and class performance.	2.95	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.03

The findings in Table 4.5 indicate that students generally demonstrate a good tier of achievement in English Language. The mean scores show that respondents are able to understand comprehension passages, perform reasonably well in tests, and express confidence in their academic performance. The grand mean of 3.03 suggests that students' achievement is above average. This tier of performance may be attributed to the relatively high motivation observed among the respondents, as motivation often enhances learning outcomes and academic success.

Research Question 3: Relationship between Motivation and Achievement

Table 4.6: Relationship between Motivation and Achievement

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1	My tier of motivation affects how well I perform in English Language.	3.30	Accepted
2	When I am motivated, my performance in English improves.	3.40	Accepted
3	Lack of motivation leads to poor achievement in English Language.	3.15	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.28

Table 4.6 shows a strong perceived relationship between motivation and students' achievement in English Language. All the mean values are significantly above the acceptance threshold, indicating that students strongly agree that motivation influences their academic performance. The grand mean of 3.28 suggests that motivation is a key determinant of achievement. This implies that when students are motivated, they are more likely to engage actively in learning activities, which leads to improved performance in English Language.

Research Question 4: Influence of Intrinsic Motivation

Table 4.7: Intrinsic Motivation and Achievement

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1	I study English Language because I enjoy learning it.	3.10	Accepted
2	I read English materials even when it is not compulsory.	3.00	Accepted
3	My interest in English Language helps me perform better academically.	3.25	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.12

The results in Table 4.7 indicate that intrinsic motivation has a strong positive influence on students' achievement in English Language. Students reported that personal interest and enjoyment of the subject encourage them to engage in voluntary reading and independent study. The grand mean of 3.12 confirms that intrinsic motivation contributes significantly to improved academic performance. This suggests that students who are internally driven tend to achieve better outcomes because they engage in learning beyond classroom requirements.

Research Question 5: Influence of Extrinsic Motivation

Table 4.8: Extrinsic Motivation and Achievement

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1	I study English Language to pass examinations.	3.35	Accepted
2	My parents and teachers encourage me to perform well in English.	3.40	Accepted
3	Rewards and grades motivate me to study English Language harder.	3.20	Accepted

Grand Mean = 3.32

Table 4.8 reveals that extrinsic motivation also plays a significant role in influencing students' achievement in English Language. The high mean scores indicate that external factors such as examinations, parental encouragement, teacher influence, and rewards strongly motivate students. The grand mean of 3.32 shows that extrinsic motivation is slightly stronger than intrinsic motivation in this context. This suggests that students are highly driven by external expectations, which is common in examination-oriented educational systems.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation significantly influence students' achievement in English Language in Ahoada LGA The high tier of motivation recorded among students suggests that learners are generally positively disposed toward English Language learning.

The results align with the findings of Ryan and Deci (2020), who emphasized that motivation is a key determinant of academic engagement and performance. Similarly, Schunk and Greene (2022) argue that motivated learners are more likely to achieve higher academic outcomes due to increased effort and persistence.

The study further reveals that extrinsic motivation appears slightly stronger than intrinsic motivation among students. This may be attributed to the examination-driven nature of the Nigerian educational system, where success in English Language is often linked to passing external examinations such as WAEC and NECO.

However, intrinsic motivation remains crucial because it promotes deeper learning and long-term academic success. This supports Dörnyei and Ushioda (2021), who noted that intrinsic motivation leads to sustained engagement in language learning activities.

Overall, the findings confirm that motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—is a significant predictor of students' achievement in English Language.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical evidence generated from the study, it is concluded that motivation is a critical determinant of students' achievement in English Language in Senior Secondary Schools within Ahoada LGA The study clearly demonstrates that students who exhibit higher tiers of motivation—whether intrinsic or extrinsic—are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes in English Language than those with low motivation.

The findings further indicate that although both motivational dimensions are important, extrinsic motivation appears to play a more immediate and visible role in influencing students' academic behaviour. This is largely due to the examination-oriented structure of the Nigerian educational system, where success in English Language is closely tied to performance in external examinations such as WAEC and NECO.

However, intrinsic motivation remains essential for sustaining long-term learning outcomes, as it fosters deeper engagement, independent learning, and sustained interest in the subject. In line with established motivational theories such as the Self-Determination Theory, students perform better when they experience both internal satisfaction and external support in learning activities.

In summary, the study concludes that improving students' motivational tiers is fundamental to enhancing their achievement in English Language, and that effective teaching strategies, supportive learning environments, and parental involvement are key to achieving this goal.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, the following evidence-based recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should adopt interactive and learner-centred instructional strategies such as group discussions, storytelling, debates, dramatization, and peer teaching. These strategies will enhance students' intrinsic motivation by making English Language learning more engaging and meaningful.
2. Schools should create a supportive and language-rich environment where students are encouraged to communicate in English both inside and outside the classroom. This will help improve students' confidence and communicative competence.
3. Government and educational authorities should equip schools with adequate instructional resources, including well-stocked libraries, language laboratories, ICT tools, and digital learning platforms. These resources will strengthen both motivation and achievement in English Language.
4. Teachers should provide consistent feedback, encouragement, and recognition to students. Positive reinforcement has been shown to strengthen students' extrinsic motivation and improve academic performance.
5. Parents and guardians should actively support students' learning of English Language by monitoring academic progress, providing learning materials, and encouraging the use of English at home.
6. Guidance counsellors should support students with low motivation or language anxiety, helping them build confidence and develop positive attitudes toward English Language learning.
7. Assessment practices should be diversified, moving beyond rote memorization to include communicative tasks that assess real-life language use such as speaking and writing projects.

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