

Learning Motivation As Determinant Of Psychosocial Adjustment Among Early Adolescents In Oyo State

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Abstract

Despite the recognized importance of learning motivation in educational outcomes, limited empirical evidence exists regarding its predictive role in psychosocial adjustment within the unique socio-cultural context of Oyo State. This study investigates the influence of learning motivation on the psychosocial adjustment of early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were gathered from 1,089 Junior Secondary School II students across public schools using the "Psychosocial Adjustment and Learning Motivation Questionnaire" (PSYCELM-Q). Descriptive statistics, multiple regression, and t-tests were used for analysis. Findings revealed a high level of learning motivation among adolescents, with a weighted mean score of 3.35. Regression results showed that learning motivation significantly predicted psychosocial adjustment ($\beta = 0.160$, $t = 5.870$, $p < 0.05$), supporting the hypothesis that motivational forces play a critical role in adolescent adjustment. Gender-based analysis indicated no significant difference in learning motivation scores between males (Mean = 3.34) and females (Mean = 3.35), but a significant gender difference was observed in psychosocial adjustment, with males (Mean = 3.54) reporting slightly better adjustment than females (Mean = 3.47). The study concludes that balanced motivational strategies enhance psychosocial outcomes and recommends that teachers create classroom environments that integrate intrinsic engagement with positive extrinsic reinforcement, such as praise and recognition.

Keywords: Learning motivation, psychosocial adjustment, Nigerian adolescents, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, educational psychology

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I. Introduction

Early adolescent psychosocial development sets the stage for a lifetime of growth with long-term implications for mental health, social adjustment, and quality of life. The transition during this period is characterized by rapid and profound biological, cognitive, and social transformations, and is thus a time of heightened opportunity and extreme vulnerability (Reef et al., 2011). As the teen navigates the tenuous journey of identity formation and self-discovery, they inevitably encounter developmental challenges that can elicit emotional distress, confusion about identity, and acting out. Successful adaptation to these changes is crucial; however, when hindered, it can lead to academic deficiencies, poor interpersonal relationships, and emotional instability, with effects reverberating to the individual, their family, and society as a whole (Fine, 2020). Thus, the protective factors that can buffer these risks and promote resilience are essential to healthy development (Santrock, 2021).

For most early adolescents, secondary school transition, as well as those of puberty onset, is followed by a cluster of stressors that challenge their coping skills. The demands to perform academically, establish peer relationships, and negotiate a new identity can be daunting (Lu et al., 2018). Adjustment problems during this phase have been associated with a variety of ill effects, such as withdrawal from social life, anxiety, and a low sense of self-worth (Domitrovich et al., 2019). Since most adult mental health disorders have their roots in early adolescence, identification of factors that support healthy adjustment is an important agenda for policymakers, teachers, and counselors.

Learning motivation is one of the fundamental psychological processes that contribute to the determinants of adolescent thriving. As the internal force that initiates, directs, and maintains behavior aimed at achieving goals, motivation in a learning setting is a positive predictor of both academic and personal success

(Ryan & Deci, 2020). The drive fuels a student's involvement, persistence, and commitment to studying. Motivation entails cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that influence a student's intention to learn, persistence in the face of challenges, and achievement of competence (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). This is often described using a two-dimensional model: intrinsic motivation, which is an internal motivation composed of personal interest, enjoyment, and the joy of learning, and extrinsic motivation, which is an external motivation composed of forces outside oneself, such as the need for reward, parental and teacher approval, or avoidance of punishment.

While motivation and academic achievement are widely seen as having a direct correlation, their existence as a direct causative of psychosocial adjustment requires more empirically based focus. Motivation is not merely about achieving good grades; it is closely related to a student's intentional sense, self-efficacy, and emotional control (Steinmayr et al., 2018). For instance, students with high intrinsic motivation are more likely to be resilient, curious, and sociable with their peers. Conversely, over-reliance on extrinsic motivators can sometimes cause tension and anxiety, negatively impacting overall adjustment (Steinmayr et al., 2018). Motivation to learn is, therefore, not just a portal to academic success. However, it could be a significant determinant of psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents, influencing their psychological well-being as they face challenges in school life.

Despite the educational significance of learning motivation, a documented lack of empirical investigations establishes a linear, quantitative relationship between learning motivation and psychosocial adjustment, particularly in Nigeria's unique socio-cultural context (Verdugo & Sánchez-Sandoval, 2022). Most literature concentrates on school or home determinants, with the exceptional contribution of the pupil's motivational forces being consistently underestimated. This literature gap is important since better conceptualizing this relationship will enable mental health practitioners and educational psychologists to make informed, evidence-based practice suggestions to ensure sustainable human development.

Thus, the present study attempts to fill this crucial gap by investigating the predictive function of learning motivation, its intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions on the psychosocial adjustment of early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria. Quantifying the relationship between these variables, this article endeavors to provide rigorous, region-specific scholarly research on the motivational function of learning as a key determinant of adolescent well-being, with significant implications for shaping caring learning environments and targeted guidance interventions.

II. Literature Review

Learning motivation is one of the fundamental psychological processes that contribute to the determinants of adolescent thriving. As the internal force that initiates, directs, and maintains behavior aimed at achieving goals, motivation in a learning setting is a positive predictor of both academic and personal success (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The drive fuels a student's involvement, persistence, and commitment to studying. Motivation entails cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that influence a student's intention to learn, persistence in the face of challenges, and achievement of competence (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023). This is often described using a two-dimensional model: intrinsic motivation, which is an internal motivation composed of personal interest, enjoyment, and the joy of learning, and extrinsic motivation, which is an external motivation composed of forces outside oneself, such as the need for reward, parental and teacher approval, or avoidance of punishment.

School learning motivation cannot be overstressed, as it is the "fuel" that ignites a student's academic life (Rapiudin, 2019). Aside from commencing tasks, motivation influences how students perceive their learning environment, how they absorb information, and thereby, how they cope with the demands of school life. Very high-achieving students exhibit specific cognitive and behavioural characteristics that positively impact their psychosocial outcomes. They are more conscientious in their responsibilities, more courageous when the going gets tough, and less prone to task boredom (Nevarez & Intriago, 2021). They are also more likely to take the lead, continually challenge themselves to higher levels, and knowingly instil habits that lead to success, including seeking advice, questioning, and engaging in cooperative learning (Liao et al., 2019).

Motivation guides a student's behavior towards specific objectives and determines the decisions they make. It aids psychological processing by encouraging learners to listen more attentively and engage in a deeper understanding of knowledge, rather than merely acquiring surface-level learning. Critically, motivation also impacts students' mindset of consequences; for the highly motivated student, a good mark is an effective reinforcer, and a poor mark is a vivid cue that modifying strategy is warranted (Guzmán-Zamora & Gutiérrez-García, 2020). Being a primary predictor of academic achievement, motivation has a personal relationship with task completion. It relies on factors such as self-efficacy, procrastination, and fear of failure, all recognized predictors of psychosocial adjustment (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023).

The association between learning motivation and psychosocial adjustment is underpinned Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Conceptualized by Ryan and Deci (2020), this theory posits that people have

three innate psychological needs: autonomy (feeling master of their behaviors and objectives), competence (desiring to excel in activities and attain multiple skills), and relatedness (experiencing a sense of belonging and attachment towards other people). SDT theorizes that the extent to which these needs are met determines an individual's motivation and psychological well-being. Intrinsic motivation thrives in environments that support these needs and is invariably linked to positive psychosocial adjustment, including higher academic motivation, self-esteem, and improved psychological well-being. Extrinsic motivation, conversely, is on a continuum. While some types may be internalized and promote autonomy, pure motivation driven by extrinsic rewards or pressures may devalue basic needs, leading to a decline in intrinsic interest and potentially adverse adjustment outcomes, such as stress and anxiety (Steinmayr et al., 2018).

Similarly, Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory is another major approach, with self-efficacy as a key concept, that describes a person's belief in their ability to execute behaviours that will lead to specific performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1997). These self-efficacious students have high goals, work hard to overcome setbacks, and see academic activities as mastery challenges rather than threats to avoid. This proactive engagement and adaptability are immediately accountable for favorable psychosocial adjustment. Further, Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism principle outlines that motivation is not a universal attribute but a dynamic, ongoing interplay amongst internal determinants (e.g., belief, affect), action (e.g., effort, persistence), and the environment (e.g., teacher reinforcement, parent reinforcement) (Bandura, 1999). Therefore, a facilitative environment in which a student is supported and given opportunities for success can enhance a student's self-efficacy, boost motivation and ensuring better overall adjustment.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the educational significance of learning motivation, a documented lack of empirical investigations establishes a linear, quantitative relationship between learning motivation and psychosocial adjustment, particularly in Nigeria's unique socio-cultural context (Verdugo & Sánchez-Sandoval, 2022). Most literature concentrates on school or home determinants, with the exceptional contribution of the pupil's motivational forces being consistently underestimated. This literature gap is important since better conceptualizing this relationship will enable mental health practitioners and educational psychologists to make informed, evidence-based practice suggestions to ensure sustainable human development. Thus, the present study attempts to fill this crucial gap by investigating the predictive function of learning motivation—its intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions, on the psychosocial adjustment of early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This paper investigates learning motivation as a determinant of psychosocial well-being among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria. The following objectives were also achieved:

1. To assess the level of learning motivation among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the significant relative influence of learning motivation on psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.
3. To determine the significant gender difference in learning motivation among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research question was raised and answered by this paper:

1. What is the level of learning motivation among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There will be no significant influence of learning motivation on psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.
2. There will be no significant gender difference in learning motivation among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

III. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to systematically describe the relationship between learning motivation and psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents without manipulating any variables. The participants comprised 1,089 Junior Secondary School II (JSS 2) students from public schools across Oyo State, Nigeria, representing a total population of 98,547 early adolescents. A multi-stage sampling technique ensured representativeness. Data were collected using the "Psychosocial Adjustment and Learning Motivation Questionnaire" (PSYCELM-Q). Two key scales were employed: the 15-item Learning Motivation Scale and the Adolescents' Psychosocial Functioning Inventory (APFI), a reliable tool (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$)

designed by Akpa, Bamgboye, and Baiyewu (2015). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics, specifically multiple regression analysis and t-tests, to examine the hypotheses. Remarks were reached based on this decision rule (1-2.00 (low), 2.01-3.00 (moderate), 3.01-4.00 (high)).

IV. Results

Research Question One: What is the level of learning motivation among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive Summary of the Level of Learning Motivation among Early Adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
I have an inner urge to learn in the classroom	1089	3.07	.574	High
I want to learn as much as I can	1089	3.12	.653	High
I desire to know more about my school subjects	1089	3.27	.503	High
I have an innate interest in knowledge and skills	1089	3.34	.534	High
I like to learn for self-satisfaction	1089	3.32	.575	High
I find fulfilment in learning lessons	1089	3.23	.594	High
I find learning personally enjoying	1089	3.37	.535	High
My parents expect me to learn optimally	1089	3.40	.543	High
I learn better when I remember celebrations	1089	3.38	.630	High
I am interested in learning because of gifts	1089	3.46	.499	High
My teachers say that it is good to learn	1089	3.46	.576	High
I am under pressure to learn in school	1089	3.40	.575	High
The school environment gears me to learn	1089	3.50	.529	High
I have to learn to get rewards and tokens	1089	3.36	.559	High
I learn in the classroom to avoid punishment	1089	3.51	.529	High
Weighted Mean=3.35				High level

As shown in Table 1, the weighted average mean of 3.35 indicates that early adolescents in Oyo State exhibit a high level of learning motivation.

Hypothesis One: There will be no significant influence of learning motivation on psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Summary of the Relative Influence of Predictors on Psychosocial Adjustment

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Psychosocial Adjustment	1.036	.220		4.718	.000
Learning motivation	.183	.031	.160	5.870	.000

The analysis (Table 2) reveals that learning motivation has a statistically significant positive influence on psychosocial adjustment ($\beta = 0.160$, $t = 5.870$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis regarding its influence is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There will be no significant influence of learning motivation on psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 3: T-Test Summary of Gender Difference in Learning Motivation							
Gender of participants		Test Value = 0					
		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Male	Learning motivation	184.988	405	.000	3.34433	3.3088	3.3799
Female	Learning motivation	248.248	682	.000	3.34807	3.3216	3.3746

Table 3 reveals that for males, the mean learning motivation score is 3.34, with a t-value of 184.988 (df = 405) and a p-value of .000, indicating statistical significance. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from 3.3088 to 3.3799. For females, the mean learning motivation score is 3.35, with a t-value of 248.248 (df = 682) and a p-value of .000, also indicating statistical significance. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference is between 3.3216 and 3.3746. Both male and female participants exhibit high levels of learning motivation, with mean scores exceeding 3.3. The statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) for both genders suggest that learning motivation is a prominent factor across both groups. Despite the statistically significant t-values for both genders, the mean scores for male and female adolescents are almost identical indicating that both genders have a comparable level of sexuality education. Therefore, although the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected based on statistical significance, there is no significant gender difference in the level of learning motivation among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria.

V. Discussion Of Findings

The findings reveal that learning motivation is high among early adolescents in Oyo State. This indicates a strong synergy that internal and external drivers underpin the high motivation to learn, as discovered. Adolescents reported feeling genuine enjoyment of learning and an innate interest in acquiring knowledge, indicating a high internal drive for learning. Concurrently, they exhibited high external sensitivity to factors such as parental pressure, teacher encouragement, and fear of punishment. This duality suggests positive psychological adjustment of the early adolescents.

This aligns with the submission that extrinsic reward factors identified in this research are powerful reinforcing factors for students' academic behaviour (Senados, 2023).

The regression test confirmed that motivation to learn significantly predicts psychosocial adjustment ($\beta = 0.160$, $p < 0.05$). The finding can be resonates within the framework of leading motivational theories. According to Bandura's (1999) Social Cognitive Theory, which linked motivation intrinsically to self-efficacy. Motivated learners tend to have a stronger belief in their capacity to perform academic activities. This enhanced self-efficacy gives them the confidence to deal with adversity, withstand setbacks, and have more control over their academic environment, which are key components of positive psychosocial adjustment. When students are realistic and competent, they are less prone to experience hopelessness or anxiety.

Connectedly, the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) proposes that well-internalized extrinsic motivation and behavior that relies on intrinsic motivation satisfy the basic psychological needs for competence and autonomy. The fact that students enjoy learning and possess a natural interest indicates that their competence needs are satisfied, a strong predictor of happiness. Incentivized students experience a sense of direction and control, which leads to higher self-esteem and improved emotional regulation (Morris et al., 2022). Learning motivation in this sense functions as a psychological booster, providing adolescents with the cognitive and affective competencies, such as resilience, self-confidence, and a sense of direction that enable them to adapt more successfully to the social and emotional complexities of their lives, leading to better overall adjustment.

The results of this research have significant implications for professionals working in Nigeria. The two-fold nature of student motivation means that the optimal teaching strategy will address intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. It is insufficient to rely on students' intrinsic motivation or external factors separately; instead, an equilibrium strategy should be employed.

Teachers must design a setting that is both motivational and encouraging to support intrinsic motivation. This is achieved by connecting learning to everyday life, sparking curiosity, and providing opportunities for independent discovery. When students view learning as valuable and fun, they are more engaged.

Meanwhile, the strength of extrinsic motivators must be utilized positively. Rather than using punitive roles that breed fear, parents and teachers should use external rewards, such as praise, effort-based praise, and celebration of academic achievement, to reinforce positive learning behaviors. This strengthens students' self-efficacy and reactivates their sense of competence without removing intrinsic motivation. The statistics indicate that a student's active "gearing" toward learning in a school setting is highly effective. Hence, schools need to create a healthy environment in which teachers, parents, and community members collaborate to establish a motivational system that supports the integral growth and development of each student (Beaumont et al., 2023).

Moreover, findings indicate a statistically significant gender difference in psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. The mean psychosocial adjustment scores show that males (3.54) score slightly higher than females (3.47). This suggests that male adolescents may perceive themselves as better adjusted or face fewer psychosocial challenges than females. One potential explanation for this difference could be rooted in societal expectations and gender roles, which often shape how boys and girls experience and respond to psychosocial stressors. Boys may receive more

encouragement to display emotional resilience or independence, leading to higher self-perceived psychosocial adjustment.

Research supports the notion that gender norms can influence adolescents' psychosocial experiences. For instance, it was found that boys often exhibit higher self-reported emotional regulation and social self-concept, which are critical components of psychosocial adjustment (Quílez-Robres, Moyano & Cortés-Pascual, 2021). In contrast, girls may face greater societal pressures related to appearance, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships, potentially affecting their psychosocial well-being (Haugan, Frostad & Mjaavatn, 2021). The slightly lower mean score for females could reflect these additional pressures, which may heighten their vulnerability to psychosocial stressors.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study stresses the critical role of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in fostering positive psychosocial adjustment among early adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria. High learning motivation, driven by internal enjoyment and external reinforcement, was found to significantly predict better emotional and social well-being, aligning with key motivational theories such as Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Determination Theory. These findings highlight the importance of a balanced educational approach that nurtures both self-driven learning and supportive external encouragement. Additionally, the observed gender differences in psychosocial adjustment, where male adolescents reported slightly better outcomes, suggest the influence of societal expectations and gender norms, with girls potentially facing greater emotional and social pressures. These insights call for gender-sensitive interventions and collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and communities to build environments that support all students' holistic development.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the results of this research, the following is suggested to be used in promoting the psychosocial adjustment of early adolescents through learning motivation development:

1. Teachers should design classroom experiences that simultaneously support students' intrinsic interest in learning and positively reinforce effort through extrinsic rewards like praise and recognition.
2. Schools should implement programs that address the unique psychosocial challenges faced by girls, including peer pressure, body image concerns, and academic stress, to foster greater emotional well-being.
3. Parents and educators should consistently affirm students' efforts and progress to strengthen their belief in their capabilities, which is key to building resilience and emotional regulation.

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