EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS' LEARNING ATTITUDES AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATION IN ESL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Motivation is a crucial factor that impacts the success and performance of English as a second language (ESL) learner. In ESL learning environments, students' attitudes toward learning play a significant role in bolstering their motivation to acquire the language. In this regard, this study aims to investigate how students' attitudes can promote their academic motivation to learn English in ESL learning environments. The research utilized a quantitative correlational design with the help of questionnaires to collect data, which was then subjected to various statistical tests. The results revealed that all three components of students' learning attitudes, namely cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects, significantly contribute to boosting their academic motivation in ESL learning environments. The study's implications suggest that instructors should take into account all aspects of students' learning attitudes when designing ESL activities, curricula, and policies to enhance their academic motivation to learn English. In addition, teachers can encourage academic motivation in language students by cultivating a constructive and encouraging learning environment, defining learning objectives in a way that is both specific and attainable, organizing learning activities that are both meaningful and engaging, and providing learners with constructive feedback and encouragement.

INTRODUCTION

In today's more globalized and interconnected world, the ability to communicate effectively in English is more vital than it ever was before the advent of the internet and other technologies (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022; Akram et al., 2021; Akram et al., 2022). Because of this, having proficiency in the English language is currently more important than it has ever been. In relation

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to the English as a second language learning (ESL) learning environment, academic motivation plays a crucial role in English as a second language learning (ESL) learning. In this regard, language learners require high levels of academic motivation to acquire the language effectively, persist through challenges, and achieve their learning goals (Purnama, Rahayu, & Yugafiati, 2019). Similarly, Liu (2022) also concluded that motivated English language learners are more likely to be interested in the language and the learning process, which can lead to more active engagement with the language, higher levels of understanding, and more effective language acquisition (Mujico & Lasagabaster, 2019). In addition, academic motivation can help learners stay committed to their language learning goals and persist in their language learning journey, leading to greater language proficiency and accuracy over time (Rose et al., 2020). Moreover, motivated learners often have greater confidence and self-efficacy in their language abilities, which can lead to increased participation in language-related activities, greater willingness to take risks, and a more positive attitude towards language learning (Yu, Wang, & Liu, 2022).

A considerable number of studies have explored student academic motivation and its possible precursors, such as classroom instructor-related factors (Li, 2021; Tao, & Gao, 2022), contextual factors (Dewaele, Albakistani & Kamal Ahmed, 2022), and personal factors (Chen, Sun, & Yang, 2022) that support academic motivation. The rationale for this interest is due to the numerous empirical investigations that have been conducted into the academic motivation of students (Zaccoletti et al., 2020). Nonetheless, there is a paucity of research on the influence of students' attitudes toward learning on the degree of academic motivation they exhibit within an ESL context. At the same time, learning attitudes of students in an ESL classroom have a crucial role in boosting their motivation to learn English as a foreign language (Orfan, 2020) and have also been recognized as a critical factor affecting language learning outcomes (Pan et al., 2022).

According to research, students express dissatisfaction with their level of academic engagement due to various reasons, including inadequate teaching and a lack of available resources (Akram & Yang, 2021). Consequently, the attitude of students towards learning plays a critical role in enhancing their motivation to learn. Therefore, learning attitudes and academic motivation are considered significant determinants in language learning environments, and numerous studies have investigated the impact of these emotional aspects on learning. However, it has been challenging to determine how learning attitudes of students affect their

academic motivation in the context of ESL learning. Thus, the aim of this study was to address this gap by investigating the following objectives.

- To analyze the level of academic motivation among students in ESL learning settings.
- To evaluate the correlation between students' attitudes and their academic motivation to acquire English in ESL learning environments.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Motivation refers to the driving force or internal state that directs and energizes ones' behavior towards achieving a particular goal or satisfying a particular need (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013). It is the reason behind individuals' actions, and is essential for human beings to achieve their goals and aspirations, whether they are personal or professional. Similarly, Motivation plays a vital role in learning, as it is the driving force that directs and sustains ones learning behaviors (Dornyei, 2020; Kim & Pekrun, 2014). Motivation also defines how much effort students put into learning, how they approach and engage with learning activities, and how they persist in the face of obstacles and challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Motivation can impact learning in several ways. For instance, when a person is motivated to learn, they are more likely to be interested in the topic and engage actively with the learning activities, which leads to better retention and understanding of the material (Tokan & Imakulata, 2019). There are several factors that can influence a student's academic motivation, including:

1. Intrinsic motivation: This is motivation that comes from within the student. It refers to a student's natural interest and enjoyment of academic activities, such as learning new things, exploring new ideas, and achieving a sense of mastery (Esra & Sevilen, 2021).

2. Extrinsic motivation: This is motivation that comes from external factors, such as rewards or punishments. For example, a student may be motivated to study for an exam because they want to get a good grade, or they may be motivated to complete an assignment because they don't want to lose points (Pranitasari & Maulana, 2022).

3. Perceived value: This refers to a student's belief in the importance of academic activities. If a student believes that academic activities are valuable and relevant to their future goals, they are more likely to be motivated to engage in those activities (Jabbarov, 2020).

4. Social support: This refers to the support that a student receives from others, such as teachers, parents, and peers. Positive social support can increase a student's motivation to engage in academic activities (Rehman, Bhuttah, & You, 2020).

Overall, a student's academic motivation is influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, as well as their beliefs about themselves and their academic activities. Moreover, motivation increases effort and persistence of students, and motivated learners are more likely to put in the effort and time required to master the material and persist in the face of challenges and setbacks. In relation to the success, motivated learners are more likely to achieve their learning goals and perform better on assessments and exams (Peng & Fu, 2021). At the same time, motivation promotes lifelong learning, as motivation can instill a love of learning and a desire to continue learning beyond formal education, leading to ongoing personal and professional development of individuals (Chukwuedo, Mbagwu, & Ogbuanya, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Attitudes refer to a relatively stable inclination to respond positively or negatively towards something (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010). Essentially, an attitude represents a learner's predisposition to act in a particular manner. In the context of learning, attitudes are reflected in changed behaviors towards objects, values, events, and other related phenomena (Briñol & Petty, 2012).

Attitudes can have a significant impact on student learning. Positive attitudes towards learning and the subject matter can enhance a student's engagement and motivation, leading to better academic performance (Almarashdeh & Aljarrah, 2021). On the other hand, negative attitudes can hinder learning and decrease motivation, resulting in lower achievement. Teachers can play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes by creating a positive and supportive learning environment, providing engaging and relevant instructional activities, and offering constructive feedback and encouragement. By fostering positive attitudes towards learning, teachers can help students achieve their full potential and develop a lifelong love of learning (Mishra, Jha, & Nargundkar, 2021). Attitudes play a crucial role in students' learning of English. Positive attitudes towards the language can increase students' motivation to learn, resulting in better language acquisition (Asmali, 2017). On the other hand, negative attitudes can hinder students' progress and negatively impact their academic performance. Therefore, it is important for educators to create a positive learning environment that fosters students' positive attitudes towards English and promotes their motivation to learn the language.

Cognitive component

A person's views, thoughts, and understanding about something are examples of what the cognitive component of attitudes alludes to. For example, a student who believes that learning

English is essential for their future career may have a positive attitude towards the language (Sinaga & Pustika, 2021).

Affective component

The affective component of attitudes refers to the emotional response that an individual has towards a particular object, person, or situation. For example, a student may have a positive emotional response towards learning English because they enjoy the language, while another student may have a negative emotional response towards it because they find it difficult (Passiatore et al., 2019).

Behavior component

The behavioral component of attitudes is the observable actions or behaviors that result from an individual's attitudes. For example, a student who has a positive attitude towards English may actively participate in class, complete assignments on time, and seek out opportunities to practice their language skills (Getie, 2020).

Together, these components interact to shape an individual's attitudes towards a particular object, person, or situation, including their attitudes towards learning English. The study employed these three elements to evaluate students' attitudes towards learning in an ESL environment.

Hypotheses of the study

To measure their academic motivation, the study proposed the following hypotheses:

H 1: The cognitive component of attitude has a positive impact on students' academic motivation to learn in an ESL setting.

H 2: The behavioral component of attitude has a positive impact on students' academic motivation to learn in an ESL setting.

H 3: The affective component of attitude has a positive impact on students' academic motivation to learn in an ESL setting.

METHODOLOGY

Design

The investigation at hand is quantitative and takes a correlational approach to its data analysis. Research that is based on correlation creates indexes that take into consideration the whole range of the variables being studied and indicate the amount and direction of correlations between the variables in question (Apuke, 2017). The relationship between the attitudes of students learning English as a second language and their academic motivation to learn is the

primary subject of this study. The disposition of the students in the classroom is categorized using three different approaches.

Participants

In order to carry out an investigation, a sample of senior high school students from Multan, Pakistan, who were enrolled in classes during the school year 2021-2022 was chosen to take part as participants. The poll included a total sample size of 214 students, all of whom had been selected at random using a sampling technique known as random sampling. The advantage of using this method is that it gives each unit in the population an equal opportunity to be chosen for the sample (Emerson, 2015).

Instrument

To ascertain the correlation between the academic motivation of ESL learners and their attitudes, the study employed two scales, namely, the Short Academic Motivation Scale (SAMS) and the English Language Learning Attitude (ELLA) scale, in the form of questionnaires.

The ELLA scale used to measure students' attitudes towards learning English was adapted from the work of Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Alzwari (2012) and includes indicators that were mandated for attitude assessment. The scale consists of 45 items and uses a seven-point Likert scale, with options ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree."

A 14-item scale, referred to as the Short Academic Motivation Scale (SAMS), was utilized to assess the academic motivation of students. Kotera, Conway, and Green (2021) conducted the original study from which the scale was adapted. The IMI scale implemented a seven-point Likert scale in which the initial point represented "Doesn't match up at all," and the fifth point represented "Matches up perfectly."

Reliability of the Instrument

The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient scale was employed to assess the instrument's dependability. The combined Alpha Coefficient values of all the questionnaire items demonstrated strong reliability (Bonett, 2003). Specifically, the overall value of 0.81 was sufficient to support the study.

Table No. 1. Reliability of the Questionnaire

Variable	No of Items	Alpha Value
English language learning attitude scale (ELLA)	45	.80
Academic Motivation Scale (SAMS)	14	.81

ANALYSIS

To explore the research hypotheses of the study, a combination of inferential and descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using the statistical software package SPSS (2008).

Descriptive statistical matrix

An investigation was conducted to determine the extent of motivation among high school students in an ESL setting, utilizing descriptive statistical measures such as Mean and Standard deviation. According to the findings presented in Table 2 (George & Mallery, 2018), the results indicated a positive trend, demonstrating that ESL students displayed a moderate level of motivation to learn English, with mean values exceeding 5.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis

Items	Mean	SD
1. Because of the excitement I get whenever I find something brand new that I have never seen before.	5.3	1.2.
2. Because my studies give me the opportunity to continue gaining knowledge on a wide variety of topics that I find interesting.	5.2	0.91
3. Because of the joy I feel when I am pushing myself to achieve something new and better, which is one of my own successes.	5.2	0.92
4. Because going to school enables me to pursue academic greatness, which in turn provides me with the opportunity to feel a sense of personal pleasure.	5.1	1.1
5. Because of the satisfaction I get from reading books written by fascinating authors.	5.1	1.2
6. Because it brings me great joy whenever I find myself totally engrossed in the work of particular authors and I can't stop thinking about it.	5.2	1.4
7. Because I believe that obtaining a school education will assist me in better preparing for the career that I have selected, I will be attending college.	5.2	1.3
8. Because in the long run it will make it possible for me to enter the employment market in an area that I find interesting.	5.2	1.1
9. Mostly due to the fact that when I do well in school, I get the feeling that I contribute something to the world.	5.1	1.3
10. Simply put, I want to prove to myself that I am capable of being successful in my studies.	5.2	1.4
11. In order to eventually land a position that is considered to be of higher prestige.	5.1	1.6
12. In order to have a higher income at a later point in time.	5.1	1.1
13. I don't see why I bother going to school, and to tell you the truth, I couldn't care less about it.	5.2	1.2
14. I have no idea; I have no clue what it is that I am supposed to be learning at school.	5.1	1.2

Regression analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess whether the components of Students' English learning attitudes accounted for their academic motivation. The results demonstrated that all components of the Students' English learning attitudes significantly related to their academic motivation (p-value < 0.5), as presented in Table 3 (R^2= 0.43). Therefore, all hypotheses were successfully confirmed. When comparing the three components of language learning attitudes, the cognitive aspect of attitude had a more significant impact on

students' academic motivation (β= 0.46, p < 0.01), whereas the affective component had the least influence (β= 0.21, p < 0.01).

Table 2. Multiple Regression Analysis

Academic motivation			
Components of learning attitudes	**β**	**significance**	**R-Square**
Cognitive component	.29	.00**	.43
Behavioral component	.24	.01**	
Affective component	.19	.00*	

DISCUSSION

The study had dual objectives, namely, to assess the degree of academic motivation among students in English language learning environments, and to examine the feasibility of a hypothetical four-factor model in explaining the correlation between English learning attitudes and academic motivation. Additionally, the research aimed to identify the key factors that influence this process and determine the most effective course of action. The statistical evidence obtained from the study supports the conceptual framework of academic motivation utilized by secondary-level students. The results revealed that students displayed a satisfactory level of academic motivation, which is consistent with earlier research conducted by Jiang, Rosenzweig, and Gaspard (2018) and Alkan and Arslan (2019). Similarly, in his work, Dornyei (2013) presents a complete account of the psychological elements that influence second language acquisition. One of these factors, academic motivation, is one of the factors he discusses.

In addition, the findings of the study supported the premise that students' good attitudes about studying English have a positive influence on their academic motivation. The results are also aligned with the study conducted by Zhang and Zhang (2019), who found a significant positive correlation between students' English learning attitudes and their academic motivation, suggesting that students with more positive attitudes towards English are more likely to have higher levels of academic motivation. Similarly, a study by Hussein et al. (2020) revealed that students who held positive attitudes towards English learning were more motivated academically, indicating that positive attitudes towards English may lead to a greater level of academic motivation. In terms of the study's implications for practice, the findings suggested that teachers can encourage academic motivation in language students by cultivating a constructive and encouraging learning environment, defining learning objectives in a way that is both specific and attainable, organizing learning activities that are both meaningful and engaging, and providing learners with feedback and encouragement.

After analyzing the study results and literature review, the subsequent recommendations can be suggested for future research to avoid plagiarism. To enhance the validity of the present study, researchers can conduct further investigations with a larger sample size. Additionally, it is advisable to examine the impact of a variety of demographic factors, such as different subjects, medium of instruction, socioeconomic status, and types of schooling, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the outcomes.

Conclusion

The study's results expand our comprehension of the essential role that attitudes toward English learning play in explaining children's academic motivation. Future research could incorporate additional individual differences elements, such as the learning environment, self-directed learning, self-efficacy, and desire for cognition, to further explain student academic motivation. This study is a crucial initial step towards demonstrating significant correlations between personality, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the importance of English learning attitudes in the classroom. Furthermore, it provides a useful framework for further research and suggests potential ways for educators to enhance student motivation and achievement by considering the influence of their personalities.

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