Research Article

Demographic-based motivation and engagement in English language learning among public junior high school students in Sulu

Satrana I. Malik

School of Graduate Studies, Sulu State College, Jolo Sulu, 7400, Philippines

* Corresponding author: Satrana I. Malik, gs@sulustatecollege.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Proficiency in the English language is essential for academic success and career advancement, particularly in multilingual contexts such as the Philippines. This study examines the motivation and engagement levels of public junior high school students in Sulu in learning English, focusing on cognitive and social engagement. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 200 students through survey questionnaires. The findings indicate that students generally exhibit moderate to high levels of motivation and engagement, with cognitive engagement being strongly associated with motivation. A significant relationship between cognitive and social engagement was also observed, emphasizing the role of peer interactions and collaborative learning in language acquisition. Statistical analyses revealed a strong positive correlation between motivation and engagement, demonstrating that highly motivated students are more actively involved in English learning. These results highlight the need for instructional strategies that enhance both motivation and engagement to improve language proficiency. The study underscores the importance of fostering supportive learning environments, implementing culturally responsive teaching methods, and developing targeted interventions that consider demographic factors influencing language learning outcomes.

Keywords: demographic-based; motivation, engagement; English language learning; public junior high school students; sulu

1. Introduction

Language serves as an essential medium for communication, education, and social integration, significantly contributing to academic and professional success. In multilingual countries like the Philippines, English proficiency is a crucial factor influencing students' future opportunities. However, language acquisition extends beyond cognitive abilities, as motivation and engagement play a pivotal role in determining how students participate in and persist in learning English. Motivation is often regarded as a driving force behind success in language learning. As highlighted by Hayikaleng et al.[1], motivation is a critical factor in students' achievement in English language learning. It can be defined as the inclination toward a specific behavior or the underlying factors that drive individuals to repeat or discontinue certain actions[2].

Although motivation and engagement are interrelated, they represent distinct aspects of the learning process. Motivation is categorized into integrative and instrumental types, with the former referring to a desire to connect with a language community and the latter emphasizing practical benefits such as academic achievement or employment[3]. Engagement, meanwhile, consists of cognitive and social dimensions, shaping how students interact with English as a subject[4]. Research suggests that students with intrinsic motivation exhibit higher academic achievement and active engagement, while those driven by extrinsic motivation are more likely to demonstrate only ritual compliance or passive involvement[5].

In the Philippines, various cultural, social, and educational factors shape students' motivation and engagement in learning English. The prominence of English in global communication and its role in career advancement contribute to students' enthusiasm for language acquisition[6]. Additionally, family and community support significantly influence motivation. According to Philominraj et al.[7], students from families that value education and encourage English learning are more likely to engage in language acquisition. In Sulu, where students encounter diverse educational challenges, analyzing demographic-based motivation and engagement in learning English is crucial. Factors such as cultural diversity, economic conditions, and access to educational resources all shape students' learning experiences[8]. Understanding these influences is essential for educators to develop effective teaching strategies.

Beyond individual motivation, the role of the education system and instructional methodologies must also be considered. Teachers play an integral role in fostering a learning environment that enhances motivation and engagement. Implementing interactive teaching methods, integrating culturally relevant materials, and adopting student-centered approaches can increase students' interest and participation in English language learning[9,10]. When students find learning meaningful and connected to their real-life experiences, they are more likely to maintain long-term motivation in acquiring the language.

This study aims to examine the demographic-based motivation and engagement of public junior high school students in Sulu. It seeks to assess how students' backgrounds influence their motivation—whether integrative or instrumental—as well as their engagement across cognitive and social dimensions. Exploring these relationships, the study intends to provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers in developing strategies that foster a more engaging and supportive language learning environment.

1.1. Objectives

1. To determine the level of motivation in learning English among public junior high school students in Sulu.

2. To evaluate the level of engagement in learning English among these students, focusing on cognitive and social aspects.

3. To examine how demographic factors (age, gender, socioeconomic status) influence students' motivation and engagement in English language learning.

2. Literature

According to Kim[11], language learning is a complex and dynamic process that entails gaining and honing the linguistic abilities required for successful communication in a new language. The significance of individual learning styles in language acquisition has long been stressed by the language education community[12]. According to research, students' varied learning preferences significantly influence how they acquire languages[13,14]. According to research on learning styles, each person processes and absorbs information differently, which has an impact on their level of engagement, comprehension, and overall

language learning results[15]. Additionally, students' cognitive engagement, retention, and capacity to use language skills effectively are determined by their preferred methods of learning[16-18].

2.1. Motivation in English language learning

Motivation serves as a crucial factor in language learning, as it influences students' willingness to engage and persist in their studies. Collie and Martin[19] conceptualized motivation and engagement as the energy and drive students apply to learning, directly affecting their interest and enjoyment in school. Rone et al.[20] further emphasized that motivation is fundamental in drawing attention among learners and teachers. Over the decades, motivation has been regarded as the backbone of learning, particularly in the classroom setting.

In language acquisition, motivation is frequently divided into two categories: instrumental and integrative. According to Aspurin et al.[21], instrumental motivation is goal-driven and centers on observable advantages like job prospects and academic success, whereas integrative motivation is a learner's desire to connect with a linguistic community. According to Williams and Williams[22], one of the most important things that teachers should focus on in order to enhance learning outcomes is motivation. Additionally, Ryan and Deci[23] contended that as students who are more motivated actively participate in academic assignments, motivation is a necessary condition for student involvement. Christiana[24] provided support for this claim by pointing out that pupils who are highly motivated typically perform better academically.

2.2. Cognitive and social engagement

Engagement in language learning encompasses students' cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social involvement in learning activities. Fuertes et al.[25] described engagement as the energy students exert in learning, which significantly impacts academic performance. Cognitive engagement involves active participation in learning through critical thinking and problem-solving, emphasizing the role of intellectual involvement in the learning process. Social engagement pertains to students' interactions with peers and their broader learning community. A Social engagement pertains to students' interactions with peers and their broader learning community. Korpershoek et al.[26] argued that fostering social engagement cultivates a sense of belonging, which in turn enhances motivation and participation in school activities. Collaborative learning environments where students actively communicate, share knowledge, and practice language skills contribute to higher engagement levels. Additionally, group-based learning strategies and peer-assisted instruction have been identified as effective methods for improving language proficiency and social interaction[27].

2.3. Demographic factors in language learning

Students' enthusiasm and involvement in studying English are strongly influenced by demographic factors. Studies conducted in Sulu have revealed that students' views toward language acquisition are influenced by a variety of factors, including gender, grade level, and parental socioeconomic background. Students' educational experiences are also greatly influenced by the income and educational attainment of their parents. Students from higher-income families typically have greater access to learning materials, which enhances their motivation and academic performance. Additionally, motivation is further strengthened by exposure to English in a variety of contexts, including the media, social interactions, and extracurricular activities[28,29]. However, socioeconomic differences could restrict kids' access to language learning opportunities, making it more difficult for them to become proficient. Targeted interventions that assist disadvantaged kids in their English language learning process are necessary to address these inequities.

2.4. Implications for English language education in Sulu

According to the literature, demographics are one of the internal and environmental factors that affect motivation and engagement in learning English[30]. Because Sulu students come from a variety of backgrounds, teachers need to use teaching methods that encourage participation in both social and cognitive domains. Creating inclusive teaching strategies that address each student's particular learning requirements can improve motivation and linguistic competency in general. A more encouraging and stimulating language learning environment can be produced by customizing educational interventions to the demographic backgrounds of pupils[31]. In order to help Sulu's public junior high schools create efficient English language teaching methods, this project will investigate the connections among demographic characteristics, motivation, and engagement. The results will give educators and legislators important information for creating interventions that cater to the individual requirements of children, guaranteeing that studying English will continue to be interesting and accessible for all kids.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study adopted a descriptive-correlational research design to evaluate the levels of motivation and engagement among junior high school students in public schools in Sulu as they learn English. The descriptive aspect aimed to measure and characterize students' motivation and engagement, while the correlational component examined the relationship between these two variables. This research design was chosen because it provides a comprehensive understanding of how various demographic factors impact students' motivation and engagement levels[32]. Employing this approach, the study was able to present both an in-depth description of students' motivation and engagement and an analysis of their interrelation. The primary objective of the research design was to explore these dynamics within the context of English language learning[33].

3.2. Research instrument

The survey questionnaire was designed to assess students' motivation and engagement in learning English. It consisted of three sections: demographic information (age, gender, grade level, parents' educational background, and family income), motivation (integrative and instrumental), and engagement (cognitive and social). To ensure content validity and reliability, the questionnaire underwent expert evaluation and pilot testing before full-scale distribution. These steps ensured clarity, cultural relevance, and appropriateness for the target respondents. Additionally, interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' experiences, perspectives, and motivations in learning English[34].

3.3. Sampling

The study's participants were students enrolled in public junior high schools within the Sulu Division during the Academic Year 2024-2025. Students from various grade levels (first-year, second-year, third-year, and fourth-year junior high school) were included to ensure a broad representation of learning experiences. No restrictions were placed on marital status, allowing for a comprehensive and inclusive sample. To select participants, the study utilized purposive sampling[35]. This method was chosen to specifically target students who were actively engaged in learning English and could provide valuable insights into their motivation and engagement levels. The **Table 1** shows students from different socio-economic backgrounds, the study aimed to provide a holistic perspective on the factors influencing English language learning within Sulu's public junior high schools.

Table 1. Distribution of the target samples among students of public junior high schools students in sulu division.

Public Higher Education Institutions In Sulu	Students
1. Jolo National High School	20
2. Timbangan Indanan National High School	10
3. Maimbung Technical Vocational High School	10
4. Siasi Munincipal High School	10
5. Panglima Estino National High School	10
6. Pangutaran National High School- Annex	10
7. Parang National High School	10
8. Luuk National High School	10
9. Sulu National High School	10
10. Tongkil National High School	10
11. Pata National High School	10
12. Talipao National High School	10
13. Hji. Panglima Tahil National High School	10
14. Panamao National High School	10
15. Lugus National High School	10
16. Kalingalan Caluang National High School	10
17. Tapul National High School	10
18. Kamlon Memorial High School of Fisheries	10
19. Pandami National High School	10
TOTAL	200

3.4. Data gathering procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained official authorization from educational authorities and school officials to conduct the study[36]. To ensure compliance with ethical research standards, informed consent was secured from both the students and their parents or guardians. Upon approval, the survey questionnaires, accompanied by detailed instructions, were distributed to the selected respondents. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered, all of which were successfully retrieved. Following a thorough review for completeness and consistency, it was confirmed that 100% (200/200) of the responses were valid, as no questionnaires contained missing or incomplete data.

To uphold ethical considerations, strict measures were implemented to maintain confidentiality and anonymity throughout the data collection process, allowing respondents to provide honest and uninfluenced responses[37]. This approach ensured the integrity and reliability of the dataset for subsequent analysis.

3.5. Data analysis

This study employs a descriptive-correlational design to analyze the relationship between motivation and engagement among junior high school students. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize motivation and engagement levels. To assess the relationship between motivation and engagement, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted. Additionally, ANOVA and independent t-tests were applied to determine significant differences in motivation and engagement across demographic groups (e.g., age, gender, grade level). These inferential tests helped identify variations in

student motivation and engagement based on demographic factors, providing deeper insights into their impact on English language learning.

4. Results

Table 2 shows the majority of student-respondents (64.5%) fall within the 14-16 age range, with 26.0% being 13 years old or younger and only 9.5% aged 17 and above. This indicates that the respondents are primarily within the typical junior high school age bracket, suggesting a concentrated distribution in this range.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the student-respondents in terms of age.

Age	Number of Students	Percent
13 years old & below	52	26.0%
14-16 years old	129	64.5%
17 years old & above	19	9.5%
Total	200	100%

The **Table 3** below reveals that female students dominate the sample, comprising 68.0% of respondents, while males account for only 32.0%. This suggests that female students significantly outnumber their male counterparts in the junior high school population for the academic year 2024-2025.

Table 3. Demographic profile of student-respondent in terms of gender.

Gender	Number of Students	Percent
Male	64	32.0%
Female	136	68.0%
Total	200	100%

In the **Table 4**. below, respondents are relatively evenly distributed across grade levels, except for Grade 9, which has the lowest representation at 13.5%. The largest proportion is in Grade 10 (31.5%), followed by Grade 7 (29.0%) and Grade 8 (26.0%). This distribution suggests that higher-grade levels are slightly more represented.

Table 4. Demographic profile of student-respondents in terms of grade level.

Grade Level	Number of Students	Percent
Grade 7	58	29.0%
Grade 8	52	26.0%
Grade 9	27	13.5%
Grade 10	63	31.5%
Total	200	100%

In **Table 5**, students generally exhibit a moderate to high level of integrative motivation in learning English, indicating a strong interest in engaging with the language beyond academic requirements. The results suggest that students recognize English as a valuable tool for communication and personal development.

Table 5. Level of motivation in learning English.

	Motivation	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	Learning English helps me comprehend pop music, movies, e-books, and other media	3.7550	1.0727	Agree
2	Learning English has improved my comprehension and appreciation of native English speakers' lifestyles.	3.8600	.98756	Agree
3	Being able to communicate with friends who live abroad is made possible by learning English.	3.8150	.99787	Agree
4	Learning English has allowed me to converse with folks from diverse cultural backgrounds about fascinating subjects.	3.7850	1.0069	Agree
5	Learning English enables me to share my expertise and knowledge with others.	3.9450	.83994	Agree
6	Among other cultural groups, learning English enables me to engage freely in professional, social, and intellectual activities.	3.8500	.94444	Agree
7	Learning English has improved my comprehension and appreciation of literature and the arts in English-speaking societies.	3.9650	.87038	Agree
8	I appreciate both my teachers and my peers in the English class.	3.8100	.92095	Agree
9	Learning English helps me to become an open-minded and sociable person.	3.8150	.96719	Agree
10	Learning English helps me to have more friends.	3.8150	.92469	Agree
	Total Weighted Mean	3.8415	.64685	Agree

Table 6 presents the Cognitive engagement in English learning is moderately high, implying that students actively process information, apply critical thinking, and seek deeper understanding in their English studies. This indicates a strong cognitive investment in language learning.

Table 6. Level of engagement in learning English (cognitive engagement).

	Cognitive Engagement	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I try to better understand the content I'm studying in English by connecting it to things I already know.	3.8950	.88765	Agree
2	I consider how the knowledge I gain from studying English could be applied in the actual world.	3.8950	.88197	Agree
3	I make an effort to express concepts in my own words when I'm studying English.	4.0200	.74321	Agree
4	To better grasp the key ideas I study in English classes, I create my own examples.	3.9650	.92632	Agree
5	I look for connections with other things I already know when I'm learning English.	3.7250	1.0463	Agree
6	I frequently attempt to relate what I'm studying in English classes to what I've learned about the same or related topics in other classes.	3.7700	.94422	Agree
7	I make an effort to identify the parallels and discrepancies between what I already know and what I learn in English classes.	3.6600	1.0146	Agree
8	I make an effort to comprehend how the concepts I study in English classes relate to one another.	3.6850	1.1234	Agree
9	I make an effort to align what I am learning in English classes with what I already know.	3.8800	.88289	Agree
10	Instead of studying, I try to consider the English themes and determine what I should learn from them.	3.7400	.95759	Agree
	Total Weighted Mean	3.8235	.66173	Agree

Social engagement in English learning is relatively strong which is presented in **Table 7**, suggesting that students frequently interact with peers and teachers using English. This highlights the role of collaborative learning and social interactions in developing language proficiency.

Table 7. Level of engagement in learning English (social engagement).

	Social Engagement	Mean	S.D.	Rating
1	I have the same work values as my peers in the English class.	3.8350	.75540	Agree
2	My students and I have similar work objectives in the English class.	3.6000	1.1163	Agree
3	I have the same work attitudes as my peers in the English class.	3.7000	.89105	Agree
4	I pay attention and do as I am told in the English lesson.	3.9750	.87073	Agree
5	I respect the contents and environment in the English class.	3.9500	.82517	Agree
6	I transition between the tasks in the English class in a suitable manner.	3.7050	.84352	Agree
7	I take on tasks in the English class.	3.8750	.82021	Agree
8	In the English class, I respect my classmates and teachers.	4.0850	.79431	Agree
9	I resolve disputes in the English class.	3.6850	.89990	Agree
10	I collaborate with my peers in the English class.	3.9900	.85649	Agree
	Total Weighted Mean	3.8400	.61571	Agree

The results presented in **Table 8** indicate that the variations in mean values for Cognitive and Behavioral Engagement among Junior High School students were assessed using a Post Hoc Analysis with the Tukey Test. These differences were determined by calculating the mean difference between grade-level groups, specifically by subtracting the higher group mean from the lower group mean.

Table 8. Post hoc analysis: Variations in mean levels of junior high school students' engagement in learning English across grade levels in the contexts of cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Variables	(I) Grouping by Grade Level	(J) Grouping by Grade Level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Cognitive Engagement	Grade 7	Grade 8	-.22958	.12448	.256
		Grade 9	-.11220	.15186	.881
		Grade 10	-.34606*	.11861	.020
Behavioral Engagement	Grade 7	Grade 8	-.33760	.14223	.086
		Grade 9	-.09080	.17351	.953
		Grade 10	-.46223*	.13553	.004

Table 9 presents the correlation between students' motivation and engagement in learning English. The analysis shows a very high positive correlation, with Pearson's r values being statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. This strong correlation suggests that students who report high levels of motivation in learning English also exhibit high levels of engagement in the subject. The findings reject the hypothesis stating that no significant correlation exists between motivation and engagement, confirming that motivation plays a critical role in enhancing student participation and involvement in learning English.

Table 9. Correlation between demographic factors, motivation, and engagement in English language learning.

Variables		Pearson *r*	Sig	N	Description
Dependent	Independent				
Motivation in Learning English	Engagement in Learning English	.796*	.000	200	Very High

5. Discussion

5.1. Age distribution of student-respondents

The distribution of student responders by age is shown in **Table 2**. 52 pupils (26.0%) of the 200 respondents are 13 years of age or younger, and 129 students (64.5%) are between the ages of 14 and 16. Furthermore, 19 responders (9.5%) are at least 17 years old. According to the data, the majority of responders are between the ages of 14 and 16, which is in line with junior high school students' normal age range. This research highlights the significance of creating language learning plans tailored to students at this stage of their cognitive and academic development. Given that cognitive development influences how children process and retain information, age plays a crucial role in language learning[38]. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, adolescents in the formal operational stage, which starts at age 11, have improved abstract thinking and problem-solving skills, which enable them to understand complicated language concepts more easily[39]. Understanding these cognitive skills enables teachers to adapt their teaching methods to the developmental stage of their pupils, which in turn promotes more motivation and interest in learning English.

5.2. Gender distribution of student-respondents

Table 3 indicates that there are 136 female students (68.0%) and 64 male students (32.0%) in the sample. With over two-thirds of the respondents being female students, the findings show a notable gender gap. This implies a higher junior high school enrollment or retention rate for female students, which can be a reflection of their greater interest in or dedication to language-related courses. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that female students are more motivated to learn languages than their male counterparts. Research indicates that when learning a language, female students typically exhibit higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation[40-42]. Furthermore, Nguyen[43] emphasizes that female students use more successful language learning strategies, especially in the areas of metacognition and social learning, which improve language acquisition results. In order to provide equal opportunities for language development, these gender-based disparities highlight the necessity of instructional strategies that accommodate the learning styles and difficulties of both male and female students.

5.3. Grade level distribution of student-respondents

Table 4. illustrates the grade level distribution of respondents, showing that 58 students (29.0%) are in Grade 7, 52 students (26.0%) are in Grade 8, 27 students (13.5%) are in Grade 9, and 63 students (31.5%) are in Grade 10. The data indicate that while Grades 7, 8, and 10 have relatively balanced representation, the number of Grade 9 students is noticeably lower. This discrepancy may be attributed to retention challenges or shifts in enrollment patterns at this grade level.

The academic engagement of students varies across different grade levels, as each stage presents unique cognitive and social demands. According to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), students learn most effectively when instructional materials are slightly beyond their current abilities but accessible through guided support[44]. This principle highlights the importance of scaffolding techniques, which provide structured assistance tailored to the specific needs of students at different grade levels, ultimately enhancing their ability to acquire and apply language skills. This study is primarily grounded in Vygotsky's[45] Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. Within this framework, motivation and engagement are understood as socially mediated processes. Additionally, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory[46] informs our understanding of age-related differences in engagement, while Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory[23] explains the intrinsic and extrinsic

motivation observed in students. Fredricks et al.[4] further contribute by defining cognitive and social engagement, which shape the analytical focus of this study

5.4. Level of motivation in learning English

5.4.1. Motivation

Table 3 indicates that students exhibit a high level of motivation, with a weighted mean score of 3.8415 and a standard deviation of 0.64685. Respondents expressed agreement that learning English enables them to engage with global media, understand different cultures, and communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. This suggests that students are not solely motivated by academic requirements but also by a desire to integrate into a broader global community.

Since motivation cultivates social and emotional ties with the target language, it is essential to language acquisition. High-motivation learners are more likely to achieve long-term competence because they view language acquisition as a chance for cultural and personal enrichment rather than just a topic at school, according to Nurhidayah[47]. Deeper language understanding and fluency are eventually facilitated by this type of motivation, which promotes consistent effort and a greater readiness to interact with real-world language resources.

5.5. Level of engagement in learning English

5.5.1. Cognitive engagement

Table 4 presents findings on cognitive engagement, where students reported a high level of mental involvement in English learning, reflected in a weighted mean of 3.8235 and a standard deviation of 0.66173. The data suggest that students actively employ strategies such as summarization, application of concepts, and critical thinking to enhance their understanding of the language.

Cognitive engagement is a fundamental component of language learning, as it determines how effectively students process and internalize new information. According to Sesmiyanti[48], cognitive engagement requires students to think critically while completing academic tasks, fostering a deeper understanding of subject matter. Ajayi[49] further asserts that learners who actively engage in metacognitive strategies—such as self-monitoring and elaboration—demonstrate higher academic performance. Metacognitive strategies involve guiding students to reflect on and regulate their own learning processes[50]. Encouraging students to adopt these strategies can significantly enhance their comprehension and retention of English concepts, ultimately leading to more effective and independent learning.

5.5.2. Social Engagement

Table 5 reveals that students display a high level of social engagement in learning English, with a weighted mean of 3.8400 and a standard deviation of 0.61571. Respondents acknowledged that collaborative learning, peer discussions, and group activities contribute to their language development. These findings underscore the importance of social interaction in enhancing students' communication skills and confidence in using English.

Social engagement plays a vital role in enhancing learning outcomes by promoting peer collaboration and meaningful communication. Finn and Zimmer[51] highlight that students who participate in interactive learning environments develop stronger language proficiency and interpersonal skills. Additionally, Jie et al.[52] suggest that social interaction reduces feelings of isolation, fostering greater academic motivation and achievement. These insights underscore the importance of incorporating collaborative learning strategies into English language instruction to improve both linguistic and social competencies.

5.6. Post hoc analysis

A post hoc analysis using the Tukey test was conducted to determine which grade-level groups exhibited significant differences in mean scores across various aspects of engagement in English learning among junior high school students. The results, presented in **Table 6** reveal that the differences in mean values for Cognitive and Behavioral Engagement were determined by subtracting the higher group mean from the lower group mean.

The findings in Cognitive Engagement indicate that Grade 10 students demonstrated a mean difference of -0.34606 with a Standard Error of 0.11861 and a p-value of 0.020, which is statistically significant at an alpha level of 0.05 when compared to Grade 7 students. This suggests that among the grade levels, Grade 10 students showed the most distinct level of engagement in learning English in terms of Cognitive Engagement.

In Behavioral Engagement, the analysis shows that Grade 10 students exhibited a mean difference of -0.46223 with a Standard Error of 0.13553 and a p-value of 0.004, which is also significant at an alpha level of 0.05 compared to Grade 7 students. This indicates that in the category of Behavioral Engagement, Grade 10 students had the most notable difference in engagement levels compared to other grade levels.

5.7. Correlation between motivation and engagement in learning English

Table 9 illustrates the relationship between motivation and engagement in English learning among junior high school students. The calculated Pearson correlation coefficients (Pearson r) indicate a statistically significant relationship at an alpha level of 0.05. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between motivation and engagement, suggesting that students with higher levels of motivation also exhibit greater involvement in their learning. This highlights the crucial role of motivation in fostering active participation in the learning process. As a result, the hypothesis stating that "There is no significant correlation between motivation and engagement in learning English among junior high school students" is rejected. These results confirm that motivation and engagement in language learning are closely interconnected, emphasizing the need to cultivate both aspects to enhance students' academic performance.

Motivated and engaged students are more likely to participate actively in academic activities, which is essential for effective learning. According to Filgona et al.[53], these factors reflect the level of effort and commitment students invest in their learning experience, directly influencing their academic success. Highly motivated students are more inclined to persist in their studies, reinforcing the significance of motivation in shaping learning outcomes. Additionally, Steinmayr et al.[54] assert that students who demonstrate both motivation and engagement tend to achieve higher academic performance and adopt more positive learning behaviors. Similarly, Vu et al.[55] emphasize that motivation serves as a foundation for engagement, enabling students to fully immerse themselves in the learning process, ultimately leading to improved academic results.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between demographic factors, motivation, and engagement in English language learning among junior high school students in Sulu. The findings revealed that students generally exhibited moderate to high motivation levels, with a strong correlation between motivation and engagement. Among the demographic variables, grade level and gender significantly influenced students' motivation and engagement. Female students displayed higher motivation, while Grade 10 students demonstrated the highest levels of cognitive and behavioral engagement, suggesting a developmental progression in language learning. The results highlight the importance of implementing targeted instructional strategies that consider demographic factors to sustain students' motivation and engagement. Educators

should implement culturally responsive teaching methods and collaborative learning activities that foster both cognitive and social engagement. Additionally, interventions should focus on younger students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure equitable learning opportunities. Future research should explore additional socio-cultural and environmental factors that influence students' motivation and engagement. Expanding the study to include qualitative insights or a larger sample size may provide a deeper understanding of how different variables shape students' language learning experiences. Strengthening these aspects can contribute to more effective language education policies and teaching strategies, ultimately improving students' English proficiency and academic success.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

1. Hayikaleng, N., Nair, S. M., & Krishnasamy, H. N. (2016). The Students Motivation on English Reading Comprehension. Utara Malaysia University: Malaysia.
2. Alizadeh M. (2016) The Impact of Motivation on English Language Learning
3. Chavez, J.V., Adalia, H.G., and Alberto, J.P. (2023). Parental support strategies and motivation in aiding their children learn the English language. Forum for Linguistic Studies 2023; 5(2): 1541. http://doi.org/10.59400.fls.v5i2.1541
4. Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., &Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. Review of Educational Research, 74 (1), 59 109.
5. Quynh, Ngo & Hoai, Nguyen & Thu, Nguyenthingoc. (2021). The roles of student engagement motivations in learning and managing.. International Journal for Innovation Education and Research. 9. 223-234. 10.31686/ijier.vol9.iss4.3043.
6. Comeros, N.A., Cuilan, J.T., Chavez, J.V., 2024. Parental Discretionary Influence on Their Children's Manner of Learning English Language Forum for Linguistic Studies. 6(4): 284-299. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i4.6656
7. Philominraj, Andrew & Ranjan, Ranjeeva & Arellano Saavedra, Rodrigo & Andrés, Claudio & Urzúa, Cerón. (2022). Systematic Review Article Family's Role and their Challenging Commitment to English Language Learning -A systematic Review. Journal of Language and Education. 8. 2022. 10.17323/jle.2022.12680.
8. Anyichie AC and Butler DL (2023) Examining culturally diverse learners' motivation and engagement processes as situated in the context of a complex task. Front. Educ. 8:1041946. Doi: 10.3389/feduc.2023.1041946
9. Kerimbayev, N., Umirzakova, Z., Shadiev, R. et al. A student-centered approach using modern technologies in distance learning: a systematic review of the literature. Smart Learn. Environ. 10, 61 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00280-8
10. Kamran, Farrukh & Kanwal, Ayesha & Afzal, Dr & Rafiq, Shahid. (2023). Impact of Interactive Teaching Methods on Students Learning Outcomes at University level. 7. 86-102
11. Kim, D., Learning Language, Learning Culture: Teaching Language to the Whole Student. ECNU Review of Education, 2020. 3(3): p. 519-541.
12. Arrosagaray, M., et al., A comparative study of Spanish adult students' attitudes to ICT in classroom, blended and distance language learning modes. Computers & Education, 2019. 134: p.31-40.
13. Ilçin, N., et al., The relationship between learning styles and academic performance in TURKISH Physiotherapy students. BMC Medical Education, 2018. 18(1): p. 291.
14. Alhamami, M., Learners' beliefs about language-learning abilities in face-to-face & online settings. International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 2019. 16(1): p. 31.
15. Bhagat, A., R. Vyas, and T. Singh, Students awareness of learning styles and their perceptions to a mixed method approach for learning. Int J Appl Basic Med Res, 2015. 5(Suppl 1): p. S58-65.
16. Huang, C.L., et al., Influence of Students' Learning Style, Sense of Presence, and Cognitive Load on Learning Outcomes in an Immersive Virtual Reality Learning Environment. Journal of Educational Computing Research, 2020. 58(3): p. 596-615.
17. Rogowsky, B.A., B.M. Calhoun, and P. Tallal, Providing Instruction Based on Students' Learning Style Preferences Does Not Improve Learning. Frontiers in Psychology, 2020. 11.
18. Pangandaman, H., Effects of flipped classroom videos in the return demonstration performance of nursing students. Sch J Appl Sci Res, 2018. 1(4): p. 55-58.

19. Collie, Rebecca & Martin, Andrew. (2019). Motivation and Engagement in Learning. 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.891.

20. Rone, Noeme & Guao, Nova & Jr, Medardo & Acedillo, Nanette & Balinton, Kim & Saro, Jeffry. (2023). Students' Lack of Interest, Motivation in Learning, and Classroom Participation: How to Motivate Them?. Educational Psychology. Volume 7. 636-645.

21. Aspuri, Nanda & Samad, Iskandar & Fitriani, Siti & Samad, Nanda. (2019). THE ROLE OF INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION AMONG EFL STUDENTS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING PROCESS. Journal of English Education. 4. 48-53. 10.31327/jee.v4i1.892.

22. Williams, K. C., & Williams, C. C. (2011). Five key ingredients for improving student motivation. Research in Higher Education Journal, 12(1), 1-23.

23. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

24. Christiana, I.O.. (2009). Influence of motivation on students' academic performance. Social Sciences. 4. 30-36.

25. Fuertes, Harvey & Jr, Israel & Marcellones, Ivan & Bacatan, Jovenil. (2023). STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, ACADEMIC MOTIVATION, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL STUDENTS. 10. 133-149. 10.5281/zenodo.8037103.

26. Korpershoek, H., Canrinus, E. T., Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., & de Boer, H. (2019). The relationships between school belonging and students' motivational, social-emotional, behavioural, and academic outcomes in secondary education: a meta-analytic review. Research Papers in Education, 35(6), 641–680. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1615116

27. Dhakal, Basanta. (2024). Differentiated Instruction: Tailoring Learning for Diverse Learners. 40. 167-176.

28. Stifikasis, N. C. (2019). ELF awareness in English language teaching: Principles and processes. Applied linguistics, 40(2), 288-306. Doi: 10.1093/applin/amx034

29. Chavez, J.V. (2022). Narratives of Bilingual Parents on the Real-Life Use of English Language: Materials for English Language Teaching Curriculum. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 13. Number3. September 2022 Pp.325-338 DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no3.21

30. Kimly, Chenda & Hoeurn, Sokha & Roeun, Sothunthea & Ron, Seihak & Khann, Sinath. (2024). Factors Affecting Learners' Motivation in English Language Education. Journal of Language and Linguistics in Society. 4. 45-58. 10.55529/jlls.45.45.58.

31. Markey, K., Graham, M. M., Tuohy, D., McCarthy, J., O'Donnell, C., Hennessy, T., … O' Brien, B. (2023). Navigating learning and teaching in expanding culturally diverse higher education settings. Higher Education Pedagogies, 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2023.2165527

32. Devi, Barkha & Lepcha, Mrs & Basnet, Shakeela. (2023). APPLICATION OF CORRELATIONAL RESEARCH DESIGN IN NURSING AND MEDICAL RESEARCH. Xi'an Shiyou Daxue Xuebao (Ziran Kexue Ban)/Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University. 65. 60-69. 10.17605/OSF.IO/YRZ68.

33. Magno,J.M., Indal,R.S., Chavez,J.V., etal., 2024. Alternative Teaching Strategies in Learning Filipino Language among Dominant English Speakers. Forum for Linguistic Studies. 6(4):404-419. DOI:https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v6i4.6742

34. Bucoy RK, Enumerabellon KM, Amilhamja AJ, et al. 2024. Knowledge deficits and analysis on comprehension of teachers on their common legal rights as teachers. Environment and Social Psychology 2024; 9(9): 2559. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.2559

35. Savellon KIS, Asiri MS, Chavez JV. 2024. Public speaking woes of academic leaders: resources and alternative ways to improve speaking with audience. Environment and Social Psychology 2024; 9(9): 2871. Doi: 10.59429/esp.v9i9.2871

36. Garcia CS, Lastam JMP, Chavez JV, et al. Discourse analysis on learners halting their education due to early marriage. Environment and Social Psychology 2025; 10(1): 2558. Doi:10.59429/esp.v10i1.2558

37. Kang, Eungoo & Hwang, Hee-Joong. (2023). The Importance of Anonymity and Confidentiality for Conducting Survey Research. 4. 1-7. 10.15722/jrpe.4.1.202303.1.

38. Dey, Manna & Amelia, Rizky & Setiawan, Ananda. (2024). The impact of age on second language acquisition: a critical review. International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE). 13. 3560. 10.11591/ijere.v13i5.27958.

39. Pakpahan, Farida & Saragih, Marice. (2022). Theory Of Cognitive Development By Jean Piaget. Journal of Applied Linguistics. 2. 55-60. 10.52622/joal.v2i2.79.

40. Yeung, A. S., Lau, S., and Nie, Y. (2011). Primary and secondary students' motivation in learning English: grade and gender differences. Contemp. Educ. Psychol. 36, 246–256. Doi: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.03.001

41. McGeown, S., Goodwin, H., Henderson, N., and Wright, P. (2012). Gender differences in reading motivation: does sex or gender identity provide a better account? J. Res. Read. 35, 328–336. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9817.2010.01481.x

42. D'Lima, G. M., Winsler, A., and Kitsantas, A. (2014). Ethnic and gender differences in first-year college students' goal orientation, self-efficacy, and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. J. Educ. Res. 107, 341–356. Doi: 10.1080/00220671.2013.823366

43. Nguyen, Tran. (2021). The Relationship Between Language Learning Strategies and Gender in Learning English as a Second or Foreign Language. Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics. 3. 120-126. 10.32996/jeltal.2021.3.6.17

44. Harland, Tony. (2003). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Problem-based Learning: Linking a theoretical concept with practice through action research. Teaching in Higher Education. 8. 263-272. 10.1080/1356251032000052483.

45. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). 4-Vygotsky.

46. Piaget, J., & Cook, M. (1952). The origins of intelligence in children (Vol. 8, No. 5, pp. 18-1952). New York: International universities press.

47. Nurhidayah, Rafika. (2020). The Role of Motivation in Second Language Acquisition. Jurnal Ilmiah Spectral. 6. 096-104. 10.47255/spectral.v6i2.59.

48. Sesmiyanti, Sesmiyanti. (2018). Student's Cognitive Engagement in Learning Process. Journal Polingua : Scientific Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Education. 5. 48-51. 10.30630/polingua.v5i2.34.

49. Ajayi, Joaja. (2024). Metacognitive Strategies in the Classroom.

50. Zeitlhofer, I., Hörmann, S., Mann, B., Hallinger, K., & Zumbach, J. (2023). Effects of Cognitive and Metacognitive Prompts on Learning Performance in Digital Learning Environments. Knowledge, 3(2), 277-292. https://doi.org/10.3390/knowledge3020019

51. Finn, J. D., and K. S. Zimmer. 2012. "Student Engagement: What Is It? Why Does It Matter?" In Handbook of Research on Student Engagement

52. Jie Li, Xue Han, Wangshuai Wang, Gong Sun, Zhiming Cheng, How social support influences university students' academic achievement and emotional exhaustion: The mediating role of self-esteem, Learning and Individual Differences, Volume 61,2018,Pages 120-126,ISSN 1041-6080, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2017.11.016

53. Filgona, Jacob & Sakiyo, John & Gwany, D & Okoronka, Augustine. (2020). Motivation in Learning. Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies. 10. 16-37. 10.9734/AJESS/2020/v10i430273.

54. Steinmayr R, Weidinger AF, Schwinger M and Spinath B (2019) The Importance of Students' Motivation for Their Academic Achievement – Replicating and Extending Previous Findings. Front. Psychol. 10:1730. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01730

55. Vu, T., Magis-Weinberg, L., Jansen, B.R.J. et al. Motivation-Achievement Cycles in Learning: a Literature Review and Research Agenda. Educ Psychol Rev 34, 39–71 (2022). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-021-09616-7