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## MOTIVATION AS A COROLLATE OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST YEAR EARLY CHILDHOOD UNDERGRADUATES IN KWARA STATE

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### Abstract

*This study investigated the relationship between motivation and school adjustment among first-year Early Childhood Education undergraduates in Kwara State University. The research adopted a descriptive design of correlational type, involving 130 participants from federal and state universities. A researchers' designed instrument was used to gather data. The validity of the instrument was established through face and content validity by expert in the field of test measurement and evaluation, with a reliability coefficient of 0.80 established through the test-retest method. Both descriptive and inferential statistics of the percentage, mean, percentage, Pearson correlation and the independent sample t-test were employed for data analysis. Findings revealed that undergraduates exhibited high levels of self-motivation (weighted average = 3.01) and school adjustment (weighted average = 3.17). A significant positive relationship was found between self-motivation and school adjustment ( $r = 0.151$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, there were no significant differences in self-motivation or adjustment based on school type ( $p > 0.05$ ). It was concluded that motivated students were more likely to adapt well academically, socially, and emotionally to the university environment. The study recommends the implementation of programmes aimed at enhancing student motivation and adaptation, such as mentorship initiatives, motivational workshops, and counseling services.*

**Keyword:** Motivation, Correction, Social Adjustment, Early Childhood, Undergraduates

## Introduction

School adjustment is a critical factor in determining the success of students, especially during their initial years in higher education. The transition from secondary school to university is often marked by significant changes in academic expectations, social dynamics, and personal responsibility. In particular, first-year students, such as those pursuing Early Childhood Education (ECE) in universities, may experience challenges related to academic stress, time management, social integration, and personal development. The ability to navigate these challenges is heavily influenced by various factors, among which self-motivation is considered a key determinant of how well students adjust to the demands of higher education. School adjustment, which refers to the ability of students to adapt to the academic, social, and emotional demands of university life, is a critical factor for academic success and personal development, self-motivation, the internal drive to achieve goals and persist through challenges, is believed to be a significant correlate of successful school adjustment.

Social adjustment involves adapting one's behaviour and mindset to align with the social environment, fostering a sense of acceptance and belonging. Social interactions contribute to improve social adjustment, while social anxiety can hinder process. Social adjustment plays a crucial role in various aspects of life, particularly in social settings, and significantly influences an individual's overall well-being (Urzua et al., 2020). Liu et al. (2019) finds that the environment in which students' families reside has a significant impact on their academic performance. Children from rural areas tend to have lower communication skills compared to their urban counterparts. Additionally, the characteristics of an environment play a crucial role in shaping parental involvement in education and influencing parents' academic expectations for their children.

Tsagem and Jamilu (2022) define emotional intelligence as the ability to recognise both our own emotions and those of others, to self-motivate, and to effectively manage emotions in relationships. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a cognitive ability that encompasses traits and social skills essential for positive interpersonal interactions. Intelligence, in general, refers to the capacity for goal-directed adaptive behaviour, while emotional intelligence specifically focuses on the aspects of intelligence that regulate self-awareness and social adaptation.

Motivation is regarded as a significant affective concept in education, considering its relevance as a learning motivator as an underlying students' activities and engagements (Odanga, 2018). Motivation is seen as the fundamental reasons of behaviour and being a state that energises, directs, and sustain behaviour and willingness to act (Nur'aini et al., 2020). Motivation is a meta concept with inherent constructs such as academic engagement, persistence with assigned task to finish, interest in assigned activities, and self-actualisation (Irvine, 2018; Nur'aini et al., 2020). There are different types of motivation which included primary or basic, secondary, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Irvine, 2018). Other types of motivation are hinged on achievement, behavioural, self-enhancement, affiliation, socialisation, competence, power, attitudinal, change, incentive, fear motivation and aggression motivation (Zhao, 2012).

Motivation can also be construed as intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation stems from personal interest and genuine passion for learning. Extrinsic motivation relies on external rewards and punishments. The importance of intrinsic motivation in sustaining long-term academic success (Legault, 2016). Motivation Constructs is defined as the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviours (Cherry, 2016). The MLP (Motivatio, Learning and Personality) model applies five constructs for each dimension. The five constructs reflecting motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) are intrinsic, extrinsic, self-efficacy, achievement and a motivation (IESAA). These constructs are discussed as follows: Intrinsic motivation is defined as motivation in which the source is the "inherent satisfaction" an individual derives from the behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Motivation can be high where people do not require the use of external incentives to prompt them towards achieving their goals as they are self-driven, while the reverse is the case for those with low self-motivation (Aloysius, 2012). The role of well-defined goals in fostering self-motivation is pivotal to academic success. This may encompass aspects like academic honesty, integrity, time management, commitment to learning and

studying, among others. Some factors that drive study ethics are appropriate time management which is important for academic success, effective study techniques, and self-discipline (Joseph et al., 2010; Sabarmah, 2020).

Studies suggest that the type of school environment significantly impacts students' psychological and academic adjustment (Ogunleye, 2016). In addition, Asikhia (2010) found that private school students tend to report higher level of academic motivation and school satisfaction due to more favourable learning conditions. This study is motivated by the need to fill two major gaps: motivation as correlate of school adjustment of first year early childhood undergraduates in kwara State universities.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Many first-year undergraduates experience difficulties in adjusting to university life, leading to academic underperformance, emotional distress, and social withdrawal. These issues are especially prominent among students in their first year of study, as they face an array of new responsibilities and challenges. While school adjustment has been widely studied, there is limited research on the specific role that self-motivation plays in helping students, particularly Early Childhood Education undergraduates, adjust to university life in Kwara State.

Despite the importance of self-motivation, research in the Nigerian context, particularly in Kwara State, has been sparse. While several studies have explored school adjustment and motivation among university undergraduates, limited attention has been given to the specific role of self-motivation in the school adjustment of Early Childhood Education undergraduates. Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies that focus on the unique challenges faced by first-year students in this discipline. Understanding the relationship between self-motivation and school adjustment in this specific population is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that can enhance students' transition to higher education. The situation in Kwara State, with its mix of urban and rural communities, adds another layer of complexity to the adjustment process. Many students in the state face socio-economic challenges, which can affect their mental and emotional well-being. Self-motivation could serve as an important personal resource for these students, enabling them to overcome external barriers and thrive in their academic environment. As such, investigating self-motivation as a correlate of school adjustment among first-year Early Childhood Education undergraduates in Kwara State is timely and necessary.

This study therefore aims to explore the relationship between self-motivation and school adjustment among first-year Early Childhood Education Undergraduates at universities in Kwara State. By examining how self-motivation influences students' ability to adjust to the academic and social demands of university life, this research hopes to provide insights that could inform interventions aimed at improving student success and well-being in higher education.

### ***Research Questions***

1. What is the level of motivation among first-year early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State Universities?
2. What is the level of school adjustment among first-year early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State Universities?

### ***Research Hypothesis***

The following hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of this study:

**Ho1:** There is no significant relationship between the level of motivation and school adjustment among first-year early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State Universities.

**Ho2:** There is no significant difference in the level of motivation among first-year early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State Universities based on school type.

## Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design of correlational type to investigate the relationship between self-motivation and school adjustment among first-year early childhood education undergraduates. This design is appropriate as it allows for the collection of data from a specific population to describe existing phenomena and identify potential correlations between variables of motivation and social adjustment without manipulating the environment. The population for this study comprises all 100-level Undergraduates of Early Childhood Education in universities in Kwara State for the 2023/2024 academic session. The sample size of 62 100-level Early Childhood Education Undergraduates in Kwara State University, Malete and 68 100 level Primary Education and Adult Education undergraduates from the University of Ilorin were sampled for the study making a total of 130 respondents.

The research instrument utilised a structured rating scale developed by the researcher. The instrument comprised three sections: Section A captured demographic information on school type; Section B focus on Motivation Rating Scale, which assessed observable indicators of motivation, including goal-setting, persistence, effort, and initiative; while Section C comprised School Adjustment Rating Scale, which measured emotional, and social adaptation to school life. The validity of the rating scale was established through face and content validity. Specialists in Early Childhood Education evaluated the instrument to ensure that it aligns with the study's objectives and adequately measures self-motivation and school adjustment. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was employed. The instrument was administered to a group of Early Childhood Education students who are not part of the study sample and re-administered after two weeks. The results were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to determine the consistency of the responses. The reliability coefficient of ( $r=0.80$ ) was realised. Collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The percentage was used to describe the demographic information of respondents. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research research questions, while inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's Product Correlation Coefficient and independent sample t-test were used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

**Research Question One:** What is the level of self-motivation of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State?

**Table 1:** Table showing Level of Self-Motivation of First-year Early Childhood and Primary Education Undergraduates

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	I set clear academic goals for myself at the beginning of each semester.	3.00	High
2	I push myself to complete tasks even when they are difficult or boring.	2.80	High
3	I am usually self-driven to study without being reminded by others.	2.82	High
4	I put in my best effort even when the outcome is uncertain.	2.90	High
5	I take initiative to seek extra learning materials beyond what is taught in class.	3.01	High
6	I remain focused on my academic objectives despite distractions.	2.92	High
7	I stay motivated to succeed even when	3.16	High

	I face setbacks.		
8	I often reflect on my progress and find ways to improve.	3.27	High
9	I believe in my ability to achieve what I set out to do.	3.13	High
10	I do not give up easily when things go against the plan.	3.10	High
<b>Weighted Average</b>		<b>3.01</b>	
<b>Decision:</b>	<b>Low: 1.00 – 2.49</b>		<b>High: 2.50 – 4.00</b>

Table 1 shows the level of self-motivation of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State. The weighted average is **3.01** which is greater than 2.49 the base line for positive opinion. This therefore shows a numeric indicator that the level of self-motivation of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State was high.

**Research Question Two:** What is the level of social adjustments of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State?

**Table 2:** Mean Analysis Showing the Level of Social Adjustments of First-year Early Childhood and Primary Education Undergraduates

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	I have adjusted well to the academic demands of university.	3.37	High
2	I feel confident participating in discussion and activities.	3.03	High
3	I am able to manage my time effectively to meet school obligations.	3.24	High
4	I feel emotionally stable even when I am under academic pressure.	3.13	High
5	I got along well with my classmates and peers.	3.14	High
6	I have developed effective ways to cope with academic stress.	3.20	High
7	I feel a sense of belonging in the university environment.	3.22	High
8	I find it easy to approach lecturers or tutors when I need help.	3.33	High
9	I have built supportive friendships within the school.	3.10	High
10	I am satisfied with how I have adapted to university life so far.	3.01	High
<b>Weighted Average</b>		<b>3.17</b>	
<b>Decision:</b>	<b>Low: 1.00 – 2.49</b>		<b>High: 2.50 – 4.00</b>

Table 2 shows level of social adjustments of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State. The weighted average is **3.17** which is greater than 2.49 the base line for positive opinion. This therefore shows a numeric indicator that the level of social adjustments of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduate in Kwara State was high

**Research Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between self- motivation and social adjustment among first year early childhood undergraduate in Kwara State.

**Table 3: Summary of PPMC Showing the Relationship between Self-motivation and Social Adjustment among First-year Early Childhood Undergraduates**

Variable	N	Mean	Std.d	R	df	Sig.	Remark
Self-Motivation	130	30.15	2.280	.151	129	.038	Significant
Social Adjustment		31.81	2.219				

Table 3 there is no significant relationship between motivation and social adjustment among first-year early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State. It was revealed that the mean and standard deviation of social adjustment were 31.81 and 2.219, while the mean and standard deviation of self-motivation were 30.15 and 2.280.

The calculated value of r-cal was -.151 and degree of freedom was 129, the observed P-value ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis that states that there is no significant relationship between motivation and social adjustment among first year early childhood undergraduates was rejected. This implies that motivation determines social adjustment.

**Research Hypothesis two:** There is no significant difference in motivation of early childhood undergraduate in Kwara State based on school type

**Table 4:** Summary of the Independent Sample t-test Showing the Difference in Motivation of Early Childhood Undergraduates Based on School Type

School Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.	Remark
Federal	68	31.66	2.657	-.825	128	.411	Not Significant
State	62	31.98	1.614				

Table 4 shows the significant difference in self-motivation of early childhood undergraduates based on school type. There was no significant difference in self-motivation of early childhood undergraduates in kwara state based on school type ( $t = -.825$ ;  $df = 128$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). Therefore, in the light of the result, the hypothesis is not retained, it implies that there is no significant difference in self-motivation of early childhood undergraduates based on school type since the significant level (.411) is greater than 0.05.

**Summary of the findings**

1. The level of self-motivation of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduate in Kwara

State was high.

2. The level of social adjustments of first year early childhood and primary education undergraduate in Kwara State was high.
3. There was significant relationship between self-motivation and social adjustment among first year early childhood undergraduate in Kwara State.
4. There was no significant difference in self-motivation of early childhood undergraduate in Kwara State based on school type.

### ***Discussion of Findings***

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between self-motivation and school adjustment among first-year Early Childhood Education undergraduates in Kwara State. The high levels of self-motivation (weighted average = 3.01) observed among the participants align with the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that intrinsic motivation is a critical driver of personal growth and academic engagement. Students who set clear academic goals, persist through challenges, and take initiative in their learning are more likely to thrive in a university environment. This finding is consistent with previous research (Vu et al., 2021; Koenka, 2020), which highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in fostering resilience and adaptability during transitional periods.

Similarly, the high level of school adjustment (weighted average = 3.17) reported by the participants underscores the importance of emotional, social, and academic adaptation for first-year students. The ability to manage time effectively, cope with academic stress, and build supportive relationships contributes to a smoother transition into university life. This result corroborates the work of Raju and Rahamtulla (2007), who emphasized the multidimensional nature of school adjustment and its impact on student well-being and success. The significant positive relationship between self-motivation and school adjustment ( $r = 0.151$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) further supports the hypothesis that motivated students are better equipped to navigate the demands of higher education. This finding is in line with SDT, which suggests that fulfilling psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness enhances both motivation and adjustment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The study adds to the existing literature by demonstrating this relationship specifically among Early Childhood Education students, a population that has received limited attention in previous research. Contrary to expectations, the study found no significant differences in self-motivation or school adjustment based on school type ( $p > 0.05$ ). This suggests that institutional factors, such as whether the university is federal or state-owned, may not play a decisive role in shaping students' motivation or adjustment. Instead, individual factors, such as personal drive and coping strategies, appear to be more influential. This finding contrasts with some international studies (e.g., Kourmoussi & Alexopoulos, 2023) but may reflect the relatively homogeneous nature of public universities in Nigeria.

The implications of these findings are significant for educators, policymakers, and university administrators. Programs designed to enhance self-motivation, such as goal-setting workshops and resilience training, could improve school adjustment and overall student success. Additionally, the lack of difference based on school type suggests that interventions should focus on individual student needs rather than institutional characteristics.

### ***Conclusion***

This study concludes that motivation is a strong correlate of school adjustment among first-year Early Childhood Education undergraduate students in Kwara State. Motivated students are more likely to adapt well academically, socially, and emotionally to the university environment. However, the type of school attended (federal or state) did not significantly impact self-motivation or adjustment levels. This suggests that individual factors, rather than institutional context, play a more dominant role in determining student success.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Curriculum Designers should integrate modules that foster motivation strategies such as goal setting,

reflective learning, and resilience training into the early undergraduate curriculum.

2. University Administrators should establish mentorship programs to help new students develop strong personal motivation and effective adjustment strategies.
3. Lecturers and Advisors should adopt teaching and counseling approaches that support autonomy and competence, helping students build internal motivation.
4. Policy Makers in higher education should consider psychological readiness (e.g., motivation and adaptability) when designing transition support programs for first-year students.

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