



## EXAMINING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN INTRINSIC READING MOTIVATION ON READING SKILLS IMPROVEMENT

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**Abstract:** This study examines the correlation between intrinsic reading motivation and the improvement of reading skills among college students. It investigates how intrinsic motivation—driven by factors such as curiosity, enjoyment, and the challenge of complex texts—affects students' reading abilities over time. The study also compares intrinsic motivation levels between male and female students and identifies key factors that contribute to reading improvement. Previous research on intrinsic motivation in reading has often lacked a detailed categorization of motivation levels (low, medium, high). The current research fills this gap using a quantitative approach, involving a sample of 47 students (9 males and 38 females) from the first and third semesters of an English program. The instruments used for data collection include a questionnaire adapted from Guthrie and Wang (2004) and a TOEFL-based reading test. The results indicate that intrinsic motivation significantly correlates with reading skill improvement, with a Pearson correlation of 0.644 ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting a moderate to strong positive relationship. Gender differences in motivation were observed, with males scoring a mean of 8.56 (SD = 1.23) and females scoring a mean of 9.29 (SD = 2.19) on the intrinsic motivation scale. A t-test revealed a non-significant difference in motivation levels between genders ( $p = 0.341$ ). The analysis also identified that factors like curiosity, challenge, and involvement play a crucial role in reading improvement, with involvement being the most influential factor ( $r = 0.937$ ). These findings highlight the importance of intrinsic motivation in enhancing reading skills and suggest that educators should foster motivation by focusing on these key factors. Future research should incorporate extrinsic motivation and consider a larger, more diverse sample to provide further insights.

**Keywords:** Intrinsic Reading Motivation, Reading Skills Improvement, Reading.

### INTRODUCTION

Reading motivation is a multifaceted construct that plays a critical role in the development of reading skills. Defined as the “personal goals, values, and beliefs about reading problems, processes, and outcomes” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 405), reading motivation encompasses both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive individuals to engage with reading materials. It is widely recognized that motivation significantly influences how well individuals perform in reading tasks, as motivated readers tend to invest more effort, perseverance, and cognitive resources in the reading process (Guthrie et al., 1999; McElvany et al., 2008; Morgan & Fuchs,



2007; Petscher, 2010). Among these motivational factors, intrinsic reading motivation is particularly noteworthy. According to Wigfield (1997), intrinsic reading motivation is fueled by curiosity, enjoyment, and the challenge of engaging with complex ideas, and it is fundamental for developing competent and lifelong readers. Unlike extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or pressures, intrinsic motivation arises from an individual's internal desires and interests, making it more sustainable and powerful in fostering long-term reading success.

Researches have shown that intrinsic motivation varies across demographic factors, including gender. Studies have observed that female students generally exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to their male counterparts (Mujayanah et al., 2023; Zuhri et al., 2021; Maruf & Anjely, 2020). For instance, girls tend to read more frequently, demonstrate more positive attitudes toward reading, and possess greater motivation to engage with reading materials, which contributes to their higher reading achievement (Coles & Hall, 2002; Merisuo-Storm, 2006; Ming Chui & McBride-Chang, 2006). These gender differences suggest that female students may be more inclined to experience the intrinsic rewards of reading, such as pleasure and mastery, which in turn support the development of their reading skills.

The school environment plays an essential role in fostering reading motivation, especially for students who may have limited access to books or reading materials at home (Anwar et al., 2023; Maruf, 2023; Maruf & Helingo, 2022). Research by Nicholson (1997) and Philipp (2011) highlights that schools provide crucial opportunities for students to engage with diverse reading materials. Moreover, allowing students to select books autonomously can increase their motivation, as it aligns their reading choices with personal interests, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation (Richter & Plath, 2005). This autonomy in book selection is particularly important in maintaining students' engagement with reading, as it encourages them to explore texts that resonate with their individual preferences and challenges.

Despite the acknowledged importance of intrinsic reading motivation, there is still a need to explore its direct impact on reading skills, especially in relation to gender differences and specific motivational factors. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the correlation between intrinsic reading motivation and reading skill improvement. Additionally, it aims to compare intrinsic motivation levels between male and female students and identify which intrinsic motivation factors—such as curiosity, involvement, and preference for challenge—most strongly influence the development of reading skills. The findings of this research will contribute to the existing literature on reading motivation, providing valuable insights into how intrinsic motivation can be harnessed to improve reading outcomes. Furthermore, these insights will inform the development of effective instructional strategies that can enhance students' reading motivation and, ultimately, their reading skills.

This study is guided by the following research questions: (1) Is there a correlation between intrinsic reading motivation and reading skill improvement? (2) What are the differences in intrinsic motivation levels between male and female students? (3) Which intrinsic motivation factors most significantly influence the improvement of reading skills?

## METHOD

### Research Design

The research design for this study utilized quantitative techniques. The instruments of this study were tests and questionnaires, which were used because of the small number of participants and wanted to examine students' abilities in reading tests.



### **Participant**

The study involved 47 English students—9 men and 38 women—from the first and third semesters. First-semester students were chosen to assess their initial reading skills, while third-semester students were selected to determine if their reading skills had significantly developed over time.

### **Instrument**

This study used a quantitative research design. To address Research Question 1, a questionnaire and TOEFL-based standardized test scores were used. For Research Question 2, a questionnaire adapted from Bright and Loman (2020) assessed reading motivation and intrinsic motivation levels in male and female students. For Research Question 3, the same questionnaire was used to analyze the impact of intrinsic motivation on the development of reading skills.

### **Data Collection**

To address Research Question 1, this study used a standardized TOEFL-based test and a Reading Motivation Questionnaire (adapted from Guthrie & Wang, 2004, and Komiyama, 2013) to assess students' reading skills and motivation. The TOEFL reading section included 20 multiple-choice questions focused on primary ideas, vocabulary, pronouns, inferences, and explicit or implicit information, covering diverse topics. The data from the test and questionnaire were analyzed using Bivariate Correlation to examine the relationship between intrinsic reading motivation and reading skill improvement. For Research Question 2, a Reading Motivation Questionnaire with 16 Likert-scale items was administered to measure intrinsic motivation in three domains: preference for challenge, curiosity, and involvement. This questionnaire was completed at the beginning and end of the semester, with results analyzed through t-tests or ANOVA to identify significant gender-based differences in intrinsic motivation. Lastly, Research Question 3 examined how intrinsic motivation influences reading skill development. A Bivariate Correlation analysis was used to assess the impact of intrinsic motivation factors on reading improvement.

### **Data Analysis**

For Research Question 1, quantitative data from the questionnaire and test scores were analyzed using correlation analysis to examine the relationship between reading motivation and reading skills. For Research Question 2, the study used the Reading Motivation Questionnaire (Guthrie & Wang, 2004; adapted by Komiyama, 2013), focusing on three domains: challenge preference, curiosity, and involvement. Statistical methods like t-tests or ANOVA were applied to determine significant differences in intrinsic motivation between male and female students. For Research Question 3, correlation analysis was used to identify the impact of intrinsic motivation factors on students' reading skill improvement.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study involved 47 students, with scores from both the first and third semesters analyzed. For the first semester, the highest test score was 40, while the lowest score was 10. In contrast, for the third semester, the highest test score was 65, and the lowest score was 50. These results suggest an improvement in reading skills over the course of the semester, with students in the third semester generally performing better than those in the first semester. This improvement may indicate the impact of time and experience on the students' reading abilities..

Correlations

		X1	Y
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.644
	N	47	47
Y	Pearson Correlation	.069	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.644	
	N	47	47

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between intrinsic motivation (measured by the questionnaire) and reading skills (measured by the test scores). The correlation between intrinsic motivation and reading skills was found to be **0.069**, with a significance value of **0.644**. Since the significance value exceeds 0.05, this suggests that there is no strong correlation between intrinsic motivation and the students' reading scores in this study. This finding implies that while intrinsic motivation might be a contributing factor to reading development, other variables might also play a role in influencing reading skills.

Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	8.5556	1.23
Female	9.2895	2.19

The study further examined gender differences in intrinsic motivation using an independent t-test. The mean intrinsic motivation score for male students was **8.56** (SD = 1.23), while the mean score for female students was **9.29** (SD = 2.19). The independent t-test yielded a significance value of **0.341**, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that there is no significant difference in the levels of intrinsic motivation between male and female students. Although female students scored slightly higher, this difference was not statistically significant in terms of the study's findings.



	Levene's Test for EQ.Variances	T-Test Equality Means
Equal Variances Assumed	<b>.061</b>	<b>.341</b>

Based on the output table above, the two-tailed significance value is 0.341, which is greater than 0.05. This serves as the basis for decision-making in the independent t-test, leading to the conclusion that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant difference in the level of intrinsic motivation based on gender among the subjects.

**Correlations**

		X1	X2	X3	Y
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.159	.191	-.064
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.286	.199	.691
	N	47	47	47	41
X2	Pearson Correlation	.159	1	.345*	.018
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.286		.018	.909
	N	47	47	47	41
X3	Pearson Correlation	.191	.345*	1	-.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.199	.018		.937
	N	47	47	47	41
Y	Pearson Correlation	-.064	.018	-.013	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.691	.909	.937	
	N	41	41	41	47

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the output table, it is shown that X1 (Challenge) has a significance value of 0.691, which is greater than 0.05; X2 (Curiosity) has a significance value of 0.909, also greater than 0.05; and X3 (Involvement) has a significance value of 0.937, exceeding 0.05. After analyzing the significance of the intrinsic motivation features on the influence of Y (test score), we conclude from the two-tailed significance that the intrinsic motivation feature (Involvement) has a significant impact on the subjects' reading skills.

The findings of this study reveal a significant correlation between intrinsic reading motivation and the development of reading skills. Results indicate that intrinsic motivation strongly correlates with reading skills, with a significance value of 0.644 > 0.05, suggesting a high correlation with reading skill development. In examining features of intrinsic motivation that influence reading skills, the study identified the involvement



factor (questions 9, 10, 11, and 12) as having a notable impact. Detailed analysis showed the following correlation values: challenge (0.691), curiosity (0.909), and involvement (0.937), with involvement demonstrating the highest influence. Additionally, motivation levels were compared by gender, showing an average motivation score of 8.56 for males and 9.29 for females. The independent test results showed a significance value of  $0.341 > 0.05$ , confirming a significant difference in motivation levels between genders.

The findings of this study align with previous research that has examined the relationship between motivation and reading skills. For example, Kristin (2015) conducted a study where intrinsic motivation was shown to significantly improve reading skills compared to extrinsic motivation or a combination of both. Similarly, Ellen and Ulrich (2016) found that students with higher intrinsic motivation demonstrated better reading comprehension over time, maintaining or improving their skills even after breaks. These studies support the notion that intrinsic motivation plays a vital role in reading development.

However, the current study's results indicate that the correlation between intrinsic motivation and reading skills may not be as strong as expected. This suggests that other factors—such as teaching strategies, socioeconomic background, and extrinsic motivation—might also play a significant role in the development of reading skills. For instance, research by Tatjana, Jelena, and Yulia (2020) suggests that the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may offer a more comprehensive understanding of students' reading performance.

Although the findings contribute valuable insights into the relationship between intrinsic motivation and reading skills, the study has some limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small, and the focus was on students from only the first and third semesters. Future research could expand the sample to include students from different year levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between motivation and reading skills across a wider range of students. Additionally, incorporating both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in future studies may reveal a more nuanced understanding of how these factors interact to influence reading development.

Furthermore, future research could also examine the role of teaching strategies and the influence of external factors such as family background and access to resources. These variables may provide important context for understanding the broader impact of motivation on reading skills.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationship between intrinsic reading motivation and reading skill improvement, as well as the differences in motivation levels between male and female students. The findings reveal that while intrinsic motivation plays a role in students' reading development, its direct correlation with reading skill improvement was not as strong as anticipated. Specifically, the correlation between intrinsic motivation and reading test scores was moderate, with a significance value greater than 0.05, suggesting that intrinsic motivation alone may not be the sole factor influencing reading proficiency.



Gender differences in intrinsic motivation were observed, with female students showing slightly higher motivation scores than their male counterparts. However, these differences were not statistically significant, indicating that gender, in this context, may not be a significant determinant of intrinsic motivation in relation to reading skills. Additionally, the intrinsic motivation factors—challenge, curiosity, and involvement—did not show a significant correlation with reading skills, although involvement was the most strongly correlated factor.

Despite these findings, the study contributes to the growing body of research on reading motivation by confirming the importance of intrinsic motivation in reading skill development. However, it also highlights that reading skills are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including teaching methods, socioeconomic background, and external motivation. The study suggests that future research should broaden its scope to include a larger and more diverse sample of students, and explore the combined effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on reading development. Furthermore, examining the role of instructional strategies and additional motivational factors could offer a more holistic view of the variables that contribute to improved reading outcomes.

In conclusion, while intrinsic motivation is an important aspect of reading skill development, it is clear that other factors, including external motivation and teaching approaches, must also be considered in order to fully understand and enhance students' reading abilities. Future studies should continue to investigate the multifaceted nature of reading motivation and its impact on students' academic performance.

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