



# Teachers' Motivation and Its Influence on Acquisition of Reading Skills among Pre-Primary Pupils in Belgut, Kericho County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Reading is an important literacy skill that needs to be established in early years of learning, yet many learners across the world, including Kenya, continue to struggle with reading. The input of the teacher in imparting reading skills is critically important. It is tenable that teachers' characteristics have a role. The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of the teachers' level of motivation on the learners' acquisition of reading skills in pre-primary. The study was conducted in Belgut, Kericho County, Kenya. The study location was purposively selected for its diverse socio-economic environments and the mixed performance in Primary school learning outcomes. This study was based on Lev Vygotsky's Interactionist theory. It adopted a descriptive survey design and targeted 240 pre-school teachers and 199 head-teachers. Krejcie and Morgan sample size table was used to arrive at a sample size of 148 teachers. 10% of the head-teachers were sampled for interviews. Stratified random sampling techniques were used to select participants. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used to gather data. The data were analysed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 25. Chi square analysis tested for associations between variables. Results revealed that there was modest association, between teachers' level of motivation with the learners' acquisition of reading skills. Among 13 motivation indicators used, financial motivation recorded the lowest score on a 5-point scale (2.76). It is recommended that stakeholders invest more in improving the overall work environment; particularly regarding preschool teachers' remuneration and provision of teaching/learning materials.

**Key words:** Preschool teachers, Motivation indicators, Reading skills, Preschool learners, Learning poverty

## Citation

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## 1. Introduction

Literacy comprises a field of information which allows individuals to achieve their goals, progress their understanding and contribute wholly to their community and the broader society. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2023) explains that literacy is a continuum involving learning and proficiency in reading, writing and numeracy. This definition by UNESCO indicates that literacy changes are incremental in nature and leads to the development of skills in reading and writing. Reading, being one of the literacy skills, if not well established in the early years of learning, may cause effects that spread over from pre-

primary to the other levels and ultimately to the tertiary level (Ndiujye, Moneva, & Dadi, 2024). Whereas this long-term effect of early learning has been recognized, many countries, developed and developing, still face many challenges. Some studies have suggested that limitations of teaching/learning resources and parents' attitudes are among the challenges faced in early years of teaching/learning (Marisin & Ouko, 2018).

In the teaching/learning concept, it is recognized that there are two human elements interacting: the learner on the one hand and the teacher on the other, with the learner as the main subject (Prihatin, Raharjo, & Arisni, 2020). Teaching and learning are thus interconnected processes. They are interconnected in the sense that the teaching is

a deliberate presentation of knowledge and skills, whereas learning is the acquisition or modification of knowledge and skills. This process of interaction between the teacher and the learner results in establishment and improvement of reading skills. Globally, there is, however, an increasing concern in numerous nations around the world that learners have deficiency in essential reading skills (UNESCO, 2021). Whereas the development of reading skills among preschool learners is a product of several factors, including social-economic and institutional, the central role of a teacher as a facilitator in the learning process is imperative. Studies worldwide indicate growing concern in many countries about learners' lack of essential reading skills, which is hindering their ability to achieve educational goals both in early schooling and later at the tertiary level (UNESCO, 2021).

In the United States of America (USA), for instance, as of 2020, approximately 20% of 10-year-olds were unable to read and comprehend a simple text. In Sub Saharan Africa, about 70% of 10-year-olds in low and middle-income countries faced a similar challenge. Kenya reflected this trend, with 74% of school-going children unable to achieve minimum reading proficiency by the end of primary school (World Bank Group, 2024). In several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of the children attain lower than their grades in reading; largely attributed to classroom and teachers' factors such as training (World Bank, 2018). The observations made across countries in sub-Saharan Africa suggest that there is dismal performance among early school learners in their English reading capabilities.

Recent assessments elsewhere in South Africa showed that, in overall learners' reading abilities are below par. Approximately 81% of grade 4 learners in the country are unable to read in any language, suggesting a high rate of learning poverty (Independent Online [IOL], 2023). The high rate of low literacy has been attributed to a number of factors, among them concerns about the quality of teaching. Could the teacher-based factors have an influence? In the East African context, Uwezo (2019) reports indicated low level of learning in institutions. According to the reports, research had shown that some teachers had insufficient skills to deliver knowledge to learners. The report recommended that the teacher training colleges needed to do more in equipping the teacher trainees with new strategies and skills. Are they motivated and do they have the relevant qualifications, experience? Could this be the cause why some children cannot read, leading to low levels of reading skills acquisition and low overall educational realization?

In Kenya, a large number of children go through school without mastery of reading, a situation that raises concern in view of the central role of literacy in the attainment of sustainable development goals as argued by Marima, Kamau-Kang'ethe, and Runo (2016). The link between reading skills and sustainable development is tenable since studies suggest that learners with

problems in English reading skills have problems in school performance in general (Marima *et al.*, 2016). The early literacy experiences are directly associated with future reading proficiencies (Çelik & Yiğit, 2024).

The current study was motivated by the need to understand the influence of teacher-based factors in acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary pupils in Belgut Sub-County in the Rift Valley Region, cognizant of the diverse results reported in studies conducted in different contexts. Does motivation influence the performance of the preschool teacher in the delivery of services for better reading skills among learners? Do motivation factors have an influence in the learning outcome?

Regarding the learning outcomes, Murungu, Okwara, and Odongo (2014), states that Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres are tasked with development of children as it is important for school children to acquire all the necessary skills that form the basis of their foundation in education. The pre-primary teachers are part of the foundation of imparting the skills and are expected to do so effectively when they are adequately motivated; satisfied in their jobs and professionally competent. Some authors have emphasized the vital part that teachers play in putting ECD courses into practice in a way that leads to effective learning results (Murungu *et al.*, 2014). According to the authors, the majority of teachers do not perform all of the duties that are assigned to them within the curriculum. The scholars have gone so far as to recommend that pre-school teachers need to undergo in-service training, but could motivational factors be having a role?

In their report, Ogott and Odera (2012) brought out concerns on pre-school teachers' job satisfaction influencing implementation of the curriculum in a study that positively associated the teachers' satisfaction to academic, professional qualifications and experience. Some authors have viewed the problem as primarily being the result of inadequate teacher-preparation (Chung & Frelow, 2007). The authors called for the "professionalization" of teacher education by lengthening duration of training or overhauling it through components of teachers' qualification, certification, and advancement aligned with values. Which teacher-based factors, then, have an influence on young learners' acquisition of reading skills? Could motivation be among? It is against this background the current study was conducted.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

School learning outcomes and performance in various learning areas largely depend on the learners' ability to read, but the teachers' input is critically important in supporting their learning. The central role of the teacher is to assist the learner to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes through a variety of ways.

The way the teacher goes about this role was thought to depend on individual characteristics of the teacher. Whereas several researchers have studied several aspects related to teacher characteristics such as age, experience, qualifications and motivation, their findings have been highly varied and appeared to be context specific. Some studies have been carried out in higher learning institutions, in geographically diverse environments, resulting in conflicting results. This study was intended to answer the question on the relevance of the teachers' motivation on its influence on the learning outcomes of preschool children in Belgut Sub County of Kericho County, Kenya. Dismal performances in reading skills at primary school level have been blamed by stakeholders on a number of factors, including inadequacy of teachers and teaching/learning materials (Marisin & Ouko, 2018). However, there are conflicting results regarding teacher-based factors that could be linked to the dismal performance. The acquisition of reading skills is the principle learning outcome of interest in this study. Studies suggest that acquiring reading skills early in life significantly impacts a learner's future progress in other subjects within the school curriculum. Whereas the acquisition of reading skills has a long-term impact on progress in other subjects, reports indicate dismal performances in the same among early learners. The influence of teachers' motivation on the acquisition of reading skills among learners is not well understood and seems to be context specific. For example, Comighud and Arevalo (2021) suggest it has an insignificant role, while Shafiwu and Salakpi (2013) report the opposite. Some studies have been conducted in secondary school contexts, but studies at the pre-school level are scanty.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to investigate teachers' motivation and its influence on acquisition of reading skills among pre-primary pupils in Belgut Sub-County, Kericho County, Kenya. The study was guided by a specific objective; to establish the influence of the level of teachers' motivation on the pre-school learners' acquisition of reading skills in the area of study. The study aimed to answer a specific research question; what is the influence, if any, of the level of motivation among preschool teachers on the acquisition of reading skills in pre-primary schools of Belgut in Kericho County, Kenya?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on Lev Vygotsky's interactionist theory of social learning, which emphasizes that learning is fundamentally a social process influenced by interactions and cultural contexts (McLeod, 2024). According to the theory, learners acquire literacy skills as they interact with teachers, parents and older peers. The interaction

helps children acquire new knowledge and skills (Cheruiyot, 2024). With this theory in mind, teachers are expected to encourage verbal expressions amongst children so as to build their language skills. They are expected to do so in an environment of positive relationship between the teacher and the learners (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020).

This research specifically examined the interaction between young learners and their teachers in early childhood settings. In Vygotsky's theory, more knowledgeable others, the teachers in this case, play a vital role by guiding learners within their zone of proximal development (Chaiklin, 2003). They do this by modelling tasks, providing hints and assessing the learners' abilities and what requires assistance. Teachers are expected to observe children to identify what they can do on their own, then design activities that challenge them just beyond their current abilities while providing support. Furthermore, they are required to foster a supportive environment where learners feel safe to make mistakes and seek help (Bluefield University, 2024; NAEYC, 2020). In this study, it is argued that for the teacher to effectively engage in activities that align well with this theory, the teacher should be adequately motivated.

#### 2.1.1. Motivation

The concept of motivation has been described as the process through which goal-oriented activities are started and maintained. It is the anticipation of achieving success and the perceived worth or importance (Cook & Artino, 2016). The source of motivation is either inherent, within the individual, or external, driven by external factors (Cook & Artino, 2016). Extraneous job satisfaction and motivation refer to factors external to the individual, provided by the organization or institution to encourage workers to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. This implies that aspects like rewards and remuneration are key components of external motivation.

For teachers to guide and inspire young learners positively, they need to possess a deep passion for teaching and a sense of intrinsic motivation; engaging in the profession because it is inherently satisfying rather than for external incentives (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Intrinsic motivation, characterized by interest, enjoyment and personal satisfaction, is a crucial attribute of early childhood educators. This study explored the extent to which early childhood educators derived enjoyment and fulfilment from their jobs. However, could external factors also influence their motivation?

Natural or intrinsic motivation occurs when individuals engage in an activity without external prompts or the expectation of rewards (The University of Kansas, 2023). When people regulate their effort on a task independently of external influences, they are considered internally

motivated. They pursue the activity knowing it will not yield rewards but derive satisfaction from the process itself (The University of Kansas, 2023).

While intrinsic motivation is essential, external factors such as recognition and rewards, also contribute by providing extrinsic motivation. Unlike intrinsic motivation, which comes from within, extrinsic motivation is driven by external influences (Liu, Li, & Zou, 2019). A combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is often linked to greater job satisfaction. This study was based on the premise that both forms of motivation would enhance the overall satisfaction of pre-school teachers. A motivated teacher, in turn is likely to engage more effectively with young learners, fostering improved learning outcomes.

A teachers' feeling of competence has been said to contribute to intrinsic motivation and is linked to the efficacy with which the teacher performs his/her tasks. It supports the development of the teacher in the profession (Liu *et al.*, 2019) since it is based on the values and beliefs of the teacher. There is sometimes an overlap between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; according to Liu *et al.* (2019) teachers' extrinsic motivation can be transformed into intrinsic motivation over time. This observation suggests that a teachers' internal satisfaction with his/her work can improve over time when the extraneous motivation is applied.

### 2.1.2 Motivation and Learning outcomes

This study aimed to explore how teachers' motivation levels might influence learning outcomes among pre-school children. Researchers like Shafiwu and Salapki (2013) argue that teacher motivation has a positive impact on student achievement. Similarly, Han and Yin (2016) identify intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic motivations as key factors driving educators to teach. These authors distinguish altruistic motivation from intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, possibly to highlight that some educators are motivated by a desire to benefit others without expecting external rewards. While altruistic motivation can be categorized as intrinsic if it provides personal fulfilment, it may also be considered extrinsic if it stems from a desire for social recognition (Li & Guo, 2024). Altruistic motivation has been shown to enhance teachers' commitment to their profession (Li & Guo, 2024) and was expected to contribute to improved learning outcomes among pre-school learners in this study.

Whereas some studies in higher learning institutions have shown positive influence of teacher motivation on learning outcomes such as that reported by Kumari and Kumar (2023), some have shown insignificant influence

(Comighud & Arevalo, 2021). However, few studies have documented on the same at the preschool level. In one such case, a study conducted in Malava, Kenya found a positive link between teacher motivation and acquisition of skills by learners (Nkirote & Thinguri, 2020). To comprehensively address all types of motivation, this study incorporated various indicators representing intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivations. These indicators were tested for their influence on learning outcomes, specifically on early literacy skills.

## 2.2 Early Literacy skills

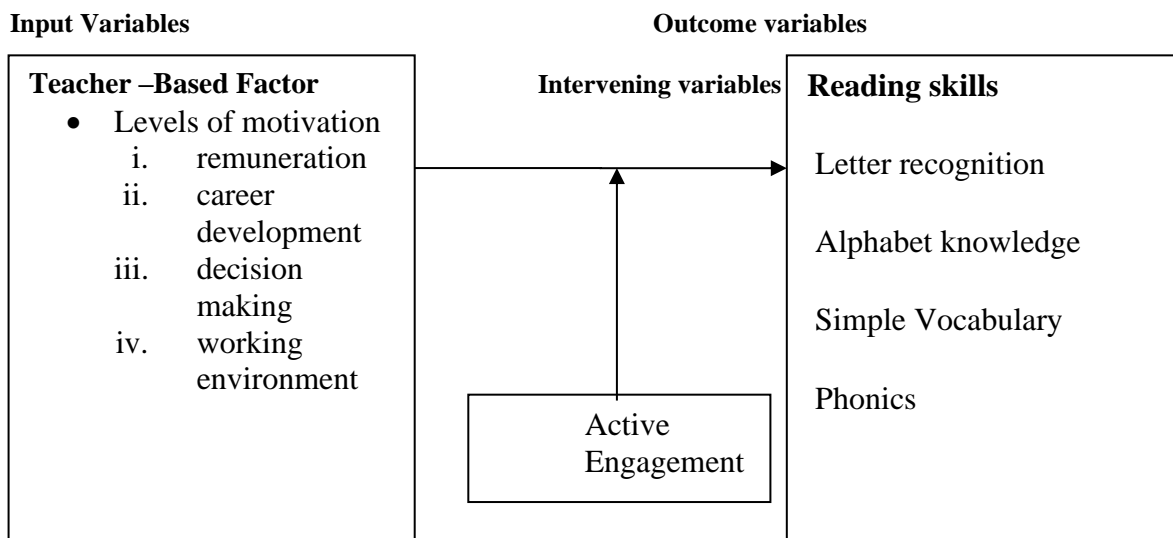
Early literacy skills are essential for success in higher levels of education (Cheruiyot, 2024). These foundational skills play a key role in children's ability to read accurately and comprehend text (Farrell, 2019). Ndijuye *et al.* (2024) further emphasize that early learning achievements are strong predictors of later academic success, highlighting the long-term significance of acquiring early literacy skills.

Despite the importance of early literacy skills, the World Bank estimates that 70% of children in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read by age 10 (World Bank, 2019). This inability to read and comprehend short, age-appropriate texts by this age is referred to as "learning poverty". The concept of learning poverty suggests a form of deprivation that underscores the severity of the issue (World Bank, 2021).

In developing countries such as Kenya, several factors contribute to early literacy challenges. These include inadequate teachers training, socio-economic barriers, poor learning resources and limited parental support (World Bank, 2019). This partly explains why majority of early grade learners in Kenya are not able to read (Thuo, 2024). This study focused on teacher-related factors, specifically motivation, as a potential contributor to the challenges facing early literacy development among pre-school learners.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is as illustrated in Figure 1. The framework proposed a link between teacher-based factors as input variables and acquisition of reading skills by learners as outcome variables. It was conceptualized that reading skills were influenced by teacher-based factors such as motivation. For learners to acquire better reading skills, the school should ensure that teachers are subjected to good working conditions. The interactions of these factors ideally should be in one accord so as to improve the acquisition of reading skills as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

The teacher-based attributes shape the socio-cultural environment in which the child is actively engaged with in the process of acquiring letter knowledge and reading skills. The reading skills were measured using an appropriate assessment record as often done by the pre-primary teachers. Motivation levels are categorical variables which were measured on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the teachers' satisfaction with his/her job and other work place conditions such as involvement by the administration on decision making. A number of indicators were used to measure the concept of motivation.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey approach has the merit of describing the phenomenon as observed, answering the question of how variables are related and when. The descriptive research answers the questions of what, how and when, thus effectively describing the population or the phenomenon under study (Manjunatha, 2019). It has the advantage of collecting primary data from the subjects to describe their characteristics, rather than relying on secondary data for information. Rakesh (2015) argues that a descriptive study evaluates the nature of existing conditions, thus characterizing something as it is.

The descriptive survey design is appropriate in determining the frequency with which certain phenomenon occurs or is associated with something else. A descriptive study is neither used to pursue cause-effect relationships nor is it used for predictive purposes, but rather describes the situation as it is (Rakesh,2015). The study design is based on data collected about the variables without changing the environment or manipulating any of the variables. They are suitable for

identifying problems with current practices, making judgements and justifications for the current practice (Jones & Bartlett Learning, 2023).The Descriptive research is neither qualitative nor quantitative, but utilizes both qualitative and quantitative approaches within the same study or sometimes qualitative or quantitative separately (Association for Educational Communications and Technology [AECT], 2001). The descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate for this study as it led to the collection of primary data from pre-school centres so as to describe the relationships between teacher-based characteristics and the learning outcomes; in particular, the acquisition of literacy skills among pre-school learners. In the descriptive-survey study, the researcher has no control over the variables. The researcher gathers data as they are from the study participants for purposes of describing the situation as it is (Manjunatha, 2019). This design was applicable for this study because it entails describing, documenting, doing analyses, and producing reports on current or past conditions. The researcher gathered information from respondents based on how pre-primary learners in Belgut Sub-County, Kenya, are acquiring reading abilities.

#### 3.2 Location of Study and Target Population

This study was conducted in Kericho County's Belgut Sub-County which has 5 administrative wards. The Sub County was purposively chosen for the study due to its diverse socio-economics. Tea and flower farms are concentrated within Belgut Sub County. Food, cash crops and livestock rearing are also important socio-economic activities in the Sub County (County Government of Kericho [CGK], 2014). Most schools are close to each other with the exception of the tea plantations, where schools are far apart due to the location of villages in accordance with the firms'

planning the allocation of such utilities. The region is heavily populated considering that the majority of areas are productive because of regular rainfall. The Sub County has both urban and typical rural set ups (CGK, 2014), thus providing a diversity of the catchment areas for the pre-school learners. All the public ECD centres

and preschool instructors in Kericho County's Belgut Sub-County was the study's target demographic. There are 199 public schools, including pre-schools, in Belgut Sub-County. A sample was selected from the targeted public pre-schools as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Target Population**

Category	Target Population
Pre-School Teachers	240
Head teachers	199
Total	439

Source: Belgut Sub-County Education Office (2022)

### 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

This study used the Krejcie and Morgan Table to select an appropriate sample size from the preschool teachers (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Based on that Table of determining the sample size, 148 pre-school teachers

were selected to participate in the study. A smaller sample constituting 10% (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2010) of the 199 head-teachers were sampled as shown in Table 2. Whereas a large sample of preschool teachers was required to provide quantitative data, a small sample of head-teachers was selected to provide some qualitative data as suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (2010).

**Table 2: Sample Size of the Respondents**

Category	Number of individuals	Sample size	Sampling Technique
Pre-school teachers	240	148	stratified sampling
Head teachers	199	20	Purposive
Total	439	168	Total

(Source: Researchers' own calculations, 2022)

### 3.4 Research Instruments and Piloting

The study utilized questionnaires to collect data from pre-school teachers, and an interview schedule for the head-teachers. An assessment record sheet was used to collect secondary data on the assessment outcomes, for pre-school children, on acquisition of reading skills. A questionnaire is a list of questions created to elicit data for a survey. Before the real study, data gathering tools were evaluated using a small sample of the population in order to make the necessary adjustments if required. The nearby Ainamoi Sub-County, which was not included in the study, hosted the piloting.

main data collection instruments was evaluated using the test-retest method. A small sample was drawn from a pilot area in Ainamoi, separate from the main study area, and the instruments were administered twice, with a two-week interval between administrations. Spearman's correlation analysis was used to assess the correlation between the two sets of data. A correlation coefficient of .81 indicated that the instruments exhibited high reliability.

### 3.5 Reliability and Validity

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2010), the reliability of a research instrument is determined by its ability to consistently produce the same findings across multiple trials. In the current study, the reliability of the

Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha. Indicators measuring the same construct produced a Cronbach's alpha value greater than .7, aligning with the threshold suggested by Mugenda and Mugenda (2010). The validity of the indicators used to measure the concept of motivation was assessed through consultation with experienced teachers and educational researchers. Indicators deemed insufficient for accurately measuring motivation were eliminated, ensuring that only robust items were included in the final instrument used for data collection.

### 3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data collected was analysed to generate descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and frequencies. Chi Square test was used to examine the associations between the input variables and the categorical outcome variables. Motivation levels were categorical variables measured on a scale of 1 to 5. On the other hand, the outcome variables; reading skills among the preschool children, was also measured as the categorical variable from below expectation to exceeding expectation and later re-grouped into low, medium and high based on the secondary data attained from the assessment records. The measurement of input and outcome variables as categorical variables made the Chi Square test the appropriate tool to test the influence of the input variables on the outcomes.

The data collected through questionnaires and the secondary data from the assessment records of preschool children was coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists, SPSS version 25. The computation also generated *Phi* and *Cramer's V* coefficients which indicated the strength of links between the two sets of variables: between the input variables and the outcome variables respectively (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2023). From the sample size of 148 pre-school teachers, there were 144 filled questionnaires, out of which 141 had all the required responses; this represented about 95% response rate.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to recommended ethical research protocols. A research permit was sought and obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology

and Innovation (NACOSTI) before the commencement of the study. Participants were requested to provide their informed consent prior to data collection. The objectives and significance of the study were clearly explained to the participating teachers before soliciting their voluntary participation. Participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential and would not appear in any research reports; only their data would be used, anonymously. Secondary data were obtained from the preschool teachers' records, ensuring no disclosure of the children's identities. All collected data were subsequently coded to eliminate any identifiable links to specific teachers or institutions.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Motivation Level of Pre-School Teachers

The motivation level of pre-school teachers was measured through a number of indicators. The indicators for motivation included; satisfaction with working conditions, rating for clean secure work environment, adequacy of teaching materials, support from administration, teachers' regular meetings with administration, provision for career development and involvement in decision making. The responses are as indicated in Table 3. When the respondent teachers were asked for response on the statement "*I can change my career if an opportunity arises*", 24.8% strongly agreed and 34% agreed, bringing the total of those who agreed to 58.8%. 14.2% strongly disagreed and another 22.7% disagreed, 4.3% were undecided (neutral). Further responses on the selected indicators of motivation are as captured in Table 3.

**Table 3: Responses on Motivation Indicators (N = 141)**

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Satisfactory remuneration	Frequency	17	49	32	37	6
	%	12.1	34.8	22.7	26.2	4.3
Clean atmosphere	Frequency	0	3	32	78	28
	%	0	2.1	22.7	55.3	19.9
Adequacy of T/L materials	Frequency	9	14	27	83	8
	%	6.4	9.9	19.1	58.9	5.7
Adequate security	Frequency	0	11	24	50	56
	%	0	7.8	17.0	35.5	39.7
Administrative support	Frequency	3	9	29	68	32
	%	2.1	6.4	20.6	48.2	22.7
Conducive environment	Frequency	0	11	15	76	39
	%	0	7.8	10.6	53.9	27.7
Regular meetings	Frequency	15	5	21	74	26
	%	10.6	3.5	14.9	52.5	18.4
Room for career development	Frequency	3	13	18	84	23
	%	2.1	9.2	12.8	59.6	16.3
Nearby Teachers houses	Frequency	2	38	14	41	46
	%	1.4	27.0	9.9	29.1	32.6
Involved in School decisions	Frequency	10	6	14	82	29
	%	7.1	4.3	9.9	58.2	20.6
Reward learners	Frequency	11	23	9	78	20
	%	7.8	16.3	6.4	55.3	14.2
Appreciated by administration	Frequency	14	12	14	77	24
	%	9.9	8.5	9.9	54.6	17.0
I Appreciate my job	Frequency	12	6	4	43	76
	%	8.5	4.3	2.8	30.5	53.9

## 4.2 Motivation Level of Pre-School Teachers and its influence on learners reading skills

All the indicators of motivation for each respondent were summed up and a mean obtained. The respondents were divided into low (to represent low motivation levels) and high (to represent high motivational levels) based on their mean scores. Scores above the mean were rated as high, otherwise rated low. Based on this, a mean score less than 4 was rated low and mean score of 4 and above

as high. The motivation levels of the pre-school teachers were then tested, using Chi square method and the associated *Cramer's V* coefficient, for interdependence with the learners' ability to read. The result showed a non-significant association at 95% confidence interval:  $\chi^2(3, N = 144) = 2.888, P = 0.409$  with a *Cramer's V* coefficient of 0.142. According to Kotrlík, Williams, and Jabor (2011), such a coefficient indicates a weak association between the two attributes. The Chi square finding suggests insufficient evidence for interdependence, however, the *Cramer's V* coefficient of 0.142 indicates some level of association; an association that cannot be regarded as negligible (Kotrlík *et al.*,



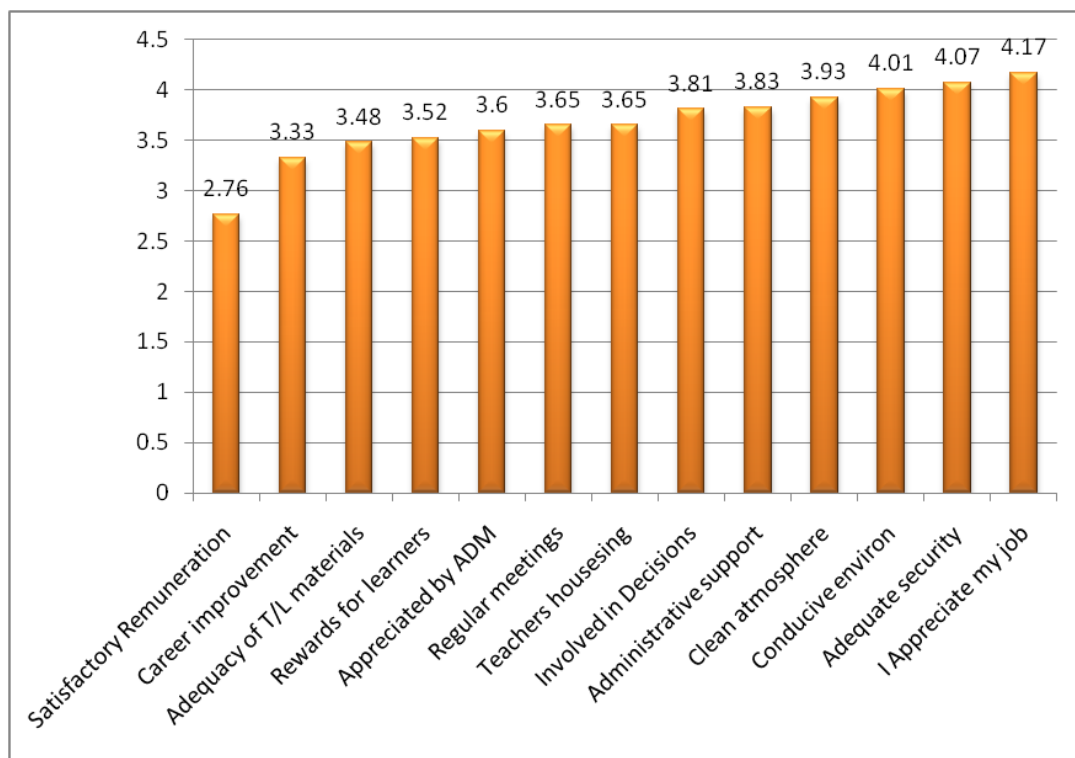
2011), but interpreted as being of weak strength or modest, though not strong enough to be distinguished at 95% confidence interval from random chances.

The motivation data was gathered using a 5-point scale, where respondents rated their agreement with positive statements about desired indicators for motivation. A score of 1 indicated strong disagreement while a score of 5 indicated strong agreement with these statements. After converting the data to numerical values and calculating the mean for each indicator, the motivation indicators of “*I appreciate my job*”, “*the neighbourhood is secure and conducive*” and “*the general environment is conducive for teaching/learning*”, showed the highest mean scores of 4.17, 4.07 and 4.01 respectively (Figure 2). The lowest scores were posted from the statements of “*I am satisfied with my current remuneration*” a score of 2.76, “*there is room for career progression*” a mean score of 3.33 and “*teaching /learning materials are adequate*” a score of 3.48 (Figure 2).

Low mean scores were posted in regard to a statement on satisfactory remuneration, suggesting that a majority of the respondents were in disagreement with the statement. Frequency data showed that 17% strongly disagreed,

49% disagreed (Table 3). This observation means that about 66% felt that their remuneration was inadequate. Another 32% were neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, 43% either agreed or strongly agreed (Table 3). With a majority appearing dissatisfied as judged from their responses, this suggests that remuneration may have significant implications on the motivation levels of the pre-school teachers. As reported by Kapur (2019), teacher motivation has a significant role in teaching effectiveness. A study in Vietnam revealed that financial compensation was the second most important motivating factor, after an intrinsic motivator of responsibility (Hung, 2020). In the current study, the high score for “*I appreciate my job*”, indicates high levels of intrinsic motivation among the pre-school teachers.

Another notable area was in regard to the mean score for teaching/learning materials, where a low score was posted (Figure 2). The low score suggests that the preschool teachers may be having some challenges in accessing adequate instructional materials. This observation has implications since materials like story books and educational games are expected to reinforce learning concepts. They cater for different learning styles ensuring that all children can benefit (Saracho, 2020).



**Figure 2: Mean Scores for Selected Indicators of Motivation**

The current study reveals a weak or modest association between teachers’ motivation indicators and learners’ reading ability. A *Cramer’s V* coefficient of 0.142 is slightly above the 0.1 which can be regarded as negligible (Kotrlík *et al.*, 2011) and therefore cannot be

ignored. Based on the Chi-square test of association, there was no sufficient evidence of relationship between the two variables at 95% confidence interval. The *Cramer’s V* value, however, suggests that there is some non-negligible strength of association between pre-

school teachers' motivation levels and pre-school learners' acquisition of reading skills.

A study conducted by Comighud and Arevalo (2021) in the Philippines observed that the relationship between the level of teachers' motivation and the level of teachers' job performance was found to be insignificant. Yet in another study conducted by Kumari and Kumar (2023) it was found that motivation significantly influenced teacher job performance. Their study revealed that self-determined and non-self-determined motivation significantly influenced teacher job performance. In their context, the non-self-determined motivation was used in reference to extrinsic factors, while self-determined motivation involved intrinsic motivation; based on the self-determination theory (SDT) put forward by Ryan and Deci (2000). Another study by Shafiwu and Salakpi (2013) also reported that teacher motivation positively affected student achievements. The authors recommended improving teacher motivation in Ghana for positive social change.

The current study found a statistically weak or modest link between pre-school teacher motivation and the learners' ability to read. The weak link nonetheless cannot be ignored; it suggests that the motivation of pre-school teachers has a role to play. The positive effect has an impact. It suggests that motivated teachers probably create engaging learning environments that capture children's interest better. They likely foster a positive classroom atmosphere where children feel encouraged to explore and improve on their reading skills. Motivated teachers arguably tend to nurture the pre-school learners better and provide encouragement that is crucial for the child's cognitive development. Motivated teachers are expected to be more creative in their teaching methods, a factor that arguably can contribute to better reading skills among pre-school learners. Some scholars have suggested that motivation of the teacher empowers them to work with affection (Kumari & Kumar, 2023). This view suggests that well motivated teachers are likely to show more care and warmth to the pre-school learners. They are probably more likely to show genuine interest in their work. Care and warmth is an important attribute for a preschool teacher; as explained by Bluefield University (2024); caring and compassion is one of the critical desired attributes of an early childhood educator.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the influence of motivation levels on the learners' acquisition of reading skills. There were high levels of intrinsic motivation among the pre-school teachers as judged from a high score posted for personal views on the statement "*I appreciate my job.*" Low scores were recorded for "*I am satisfied with my current remuneration.*" This study finds

that there was a complex mix of responses regarding the motivation indicators, with higher scores for intrinsic motivation indicators and lower scores for extrinsic motivation indicators such as remuneration. There were high levels of dissatisfaction with remuneration and access to teaching/learning materials. There was statistically no sufficient evidence, at 95% confidence interval, to suggest a link between teachers' motivation levels with the learners' acquisition of reading skills. There was, however, a weak or modest, non-negligible influence of the teachers' motivation on the learners' acquisition of reading skills. This study concludes that preschool teachers' motivation has a modest long-term impact on young learners' literacy acquisition.

### 5.2 Recommendations

This study found significantly low levels of satisfaction among preschool teachers regarding remuneration, career development and access to teaching/learning materials. It also identified modest, potentially long-term links between teachers' motivation and young learners' literacy acquisition. Therefore, this study recommends that stakeholders and policy makers implement interventions to improve preschool teachers' remuneration, career development, and access to teaching resources, thereby enhancing their efforts to support early literacy development among young learners.

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