

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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A study of the motivational systems used by teachers in 8th-grade reading classrooms and students' attitudes toward reading

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Abstract

One of the main challenges faced by primary school students in learning to read is a lack of motivation and negative attitudes toward reading activities, both in school and at home. This stems not only from students' low interest and motivation but also from teachers' inability to employ effective motivational techniques. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the motivational system teachers use in reading classes and students' attitudes towards reading. This study involved 118 students (50 males and 68 females) and three English language teachers. A descriptive study design was utilised, employing student questionnaires, interviews with teachers, and classroom observations as primary data collection methods. The findings revealed a discrepancy between students' self-reported positive attitudes toward reading English texts and teachers' observations. While students expressed enthusiasm for reading, teachers noted a decline in reading interest, attributing it to a lack of Resources and insufficient parental support. Although students generally exhibited positive cognitive attitudes, teachers reported a lack of interest in reading, both in and out of the classroom. Students demonstrated a positive trend in reading behaviour at home and discussing texts; however, teachers highlighted a shortfall in reading motivation. The study identified a gap in the application of motivational strategies, with teachers failing to implement strategies that could enhance students' interest and motivation in reading.

Keywords: Motivational system, reading attitude, students' engagement, primary school.

Introduction

Reading is a vital skill that shapes individuals' future opportunities and success (Şahbaz, 2012). It stimulates the mind and enhances cognitive functions such as critical thinking, imagination, decision-making, and exploration (Kirsch et al., 2002). Beyond these cognitive benefits, reading also contributes significantly to emotional and social development, fostering creativity, empathy, and problem-solving skills. River (1981) emphasised that reading supports language development and overall comprehension, making it a foundational skill for academic and lifelong learning.

Despite its importance, students' reading performance and engagement are influenced by various factors, including students' motivation, their attitude toward reading, and the instructional strategies employed by teachers to foster a reading culture. Motivation is the internal drive that compels students to pursue goals, overcome challenges, and engage

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Received 29.01.2025

Revised 21.03.2025

Accepted 07.04.2025

meaningfully with learning tasks (Ullah & Fatema, 2013; Tisa et al., 2021). According to Namaziandost et al. (2021), motivated readers are more likely to comprehend texts effectively and improve their reading proficiency. Similarly, students' attitudes play a crucial role in their willingness to read. Positive attitudes can lead to deeper engagement and improved academic performance (Baryaktar & Firat, 2020; Gessa, 2018), while negative attitudes may hinder reading motivation and long-term success (Seitz, 2010).

A substantial body of research has explored the relationship between motivation, attitude, and reading practices. For instance, Carol (1980) examined motivational techniques used among inner-city high school students and identified strategies that enhanced reading comprehension. Similarly, Sánchez (2017) conducted action research with 10th-grade students in Colombia, aiming to address their challenges in reading comprehension in English. His study revealed that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies helped students become more efficient readers.

Seitz (2020) conducted a case study at a summer reading clinic in upstate New York, observing and interviewing three students to examine their motivation and attitudes toward reading. His findings indicated that those students' attitudes were multidirectional and complex, making them challenging to assess. Subedi (2018) examined motivational techniques used by teachers and their attitudes toward motivation at the basic education level. Collecting data from 30 teachers in Nepal's Morang district using questionnaires and classroom checklists, Subedi found that teachers were familiar with various motivational strategies and generally held positive attitudes toward using them.

In the local context, Temesgen Atinafu (2015) investigated motivational techniques used in reading classes at Agaro and Gembe high schools, focusing on grade ten students. Data sources included teacher and student questionnaires, teacher interviews, and classroom observations. The study found that little attention was given to students' preferences in selecting and using reading materials. There was also a lack of supplementary reading materials or content that connected reading to students' real-life experiences. Unlike Temesgen's study, which focused on a single variable (teachers' motivational techniques), the current research examines both teachers' strategies and students' attitudes toward reading.

Building on these insights, the present study explores the interplay between motivational techniques used by teachers and students' attitudes toward reading in secondary school reading classrooms. This dual focus aims to bridge a gap in the existing literature by examining both elements simultaneously, particularly in EFL contexts where language barriers may further impact reading motivation and engagement.

To ensure contextual relevance and methodological rigour, this study adapts and builds on validated frameworks from prior research. The findings aim to provide practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to foster a reading culture that motivates learners and cultivates positive attitudes toward reading. Ultimately, the goal is to design more engaging and effective reading environments that support the development of lifelong readers. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of motivational systems do teachers typically use in reading classes to engage students?
2. How frequently do teachers use motivational and interest-arousing activities in reading classes?

3. What are students' attitudes toward reading?

Background theory

Motivation plays a crucial role in students' learning and engagement with reading. Subedi (2018) explains that motivation guides behaviour toward specific goals, boosts effort and energy, fosters the initiation and persistence of activities, enhances cognitive processing, and ultimately leads to better performance. In the context of reading, this underscores the importance of understanding what drives students to read in the first place. Effective motivational strategies can only be impactful when they align with students' internal drives and attitudes.

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Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) noted that reading motivation relates to an individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs about reading. Their research found that students with a high interest in reading tend to read more frequently and for more extended periods, resulting in improved conceptual understanding. Roberts (2019) classified motivation into two types: intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external). Intrinsically motivated students are creative, seek challenges, and read for their own enjoyment, while extrinsically motivated students read for external rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is associated with higher levels of curiosity, greater reading diversity, and increased time spent reading (Guthrie et al., 2015, as cited in Roberts, 2019).

Various demographic and psychological factors also influence motivation to read. Roberts (2019) noted that motivation varies by age, grade level, gender, and expectations. For example, motivation often declines between years 1 and 4 as students begin to compare themselves to others, and this pattern may continue into middle school (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, as cited in Roberts, 2019). Research also indicates that boys tend to have lower reading motivation than girls (McKenna, 1995). Additionally, a student's expectations about a text, and whether those expectations are met, can significantly impact their motivation to read.

Given these complexities, motivating students to engage in reading activities, both in and outside the classroom, is essential for developing linguistic skills, especially for those with limited opportunities to practice English. Teachers play a key role in this process and can apply various motivational techniques to foster engagement. These include keeping students active, encouraging creativity, introducing healthy competition, providing timely feedback, and setting achievable goals. McCarthy and Siccone (2001) recommend that teachers guide students thoughtfully, assess their interests, and choose texts that resonate with them. Similarly, Wells (1980) emphasises the importance of a relaxed atmosphere, sustained silent reading, and materials that connect with students' lived experiences. Using interactive methods, such as acting out scenes or demonstrating vocabulary, alongside pre-reading tasks and clear lesson objectives, can significantly elevate students' interest and participation.

While teachers can implement a wide range of strategies, the success of these efforts depends on multiple contextual and individual factors. It is therefore essential to explore not only what teachers do to foster reading motivation, but also how students perceive reading and what

attitudes they hold toward it. Gaining insight into both teacher practices and learner perspectives can help educators design more supportive, engaging, and sustainable reading environments, ones that nurture lifelong readers.

Theoretical framework

Motivation serves as the driving force behind human actions, acting as an internal process that propels us toward our objectives. This cognitive decision-making process involves the intention to engage in behaviours aimed at achieving specific outcomes (David & Anderzej, 2010). Though several key theories of reading motivation exist, the present study's discussion focuses on a model adapted from McGeown (2013), as illustrated in Figure 1:



Figure 1 Theory of motivation, adapted from McGeown (2013)

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as highlighted by McGeown (2013), is crucial for understanding student engagement and performance. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive to engage in activities for their inherent satisfaction and pleasure, stemming from curiosity and a preference for challenges. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors such as competition, recognition, grades, and social pressures. While extrinsic motivators can encourage reading behaviour, they may not foster deep understanding or long-term engagement. Recognising the balance between these motivational frameworks is crucial for educators in developing effective strategies that foster a love of reading and promote lifelong learning.

Reading attitude

Attitude is a psychological construct that influences how individuals react to situations, tasks, or experiences. Geektonight (2021) defines attitude as a mental state that prepares individuals to respond in a predetermined manner. Lestari (2016) notes that attitude encompasses predispositions, beliefs, or judgments that influence how people approach challenges. Attitude has a significant impact on emotions, motivation, and cognitive responses, influencing both decision-making and performance.

Within the academic context, reading attitude refers specifically to an individual's feelings and disposition toward the act of reading. According to Pelila and Soliba (2020), reading attitude is a psychological orientation toward reading in English, shaped by past experiences and expected outcomes. Tekalign (2019) describes it as a predisposition to evaluate reading with varying degrees of agreement or disagreement.

Students who expect positive outcomes from reading are more likely to demonstrate constructive reading behaviours and attitudes, which are crucial for literacy development. McKenna *et al.* (1995) categorise reading attitude into three interrelated components: affective (emotions toward reading), cognitive (beliefs about the value of reading), and behavioural (observable

reading actions). A positive attitude across these domains supports engagement, persistence, and academic achievement in reading.

However, when students encounter unfamiliar texts or face persistent comprehension difficulties, their reading attitudes can deteriorate. Seitz (2010) highlights that those students who dislike reading often experience reading as a frustrating task, which diminishes their willingness to engage. Similarly, studies by Pelila and Soliba (2020) and Logan and Johnston (2009) emphasise that poor comprehension skills and lack of reading fluency limit practice and reduce motivation, leading to long-term disengagement. Together, these findings underscore the importance of understanding students' attitudes toward reading, not only as an outcome of literacy instruction but also as a key predictor of reading success. Therefore, it is both timely and essential to examine how teachers' motivational practices influence students' reading attitudes in authentic classroom contexts. The present study addresses this need by examining the interplay between the motivational strategies employed by grade 8 teachers and the multifaceted attitudes students hold toward reading in English, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Method

Research design and procedure

The researcher used a descriptive research design for the study. Descriptive design aims to describe the observed phenomena rather than explain the underlying reasons (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). Common data collection methods in descriptive research include observations and surveys (Manjunatha, 2019). In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. Quantitative data were gathered using closed-ended Likert-scale items, designed for easy response by grade 8 students.

Context and participant

This study was conducted in three selected primary schools within the South West Ethiopia People's Regional State (SWEPRS) area of the Kafa Zone, specifically in Mera, Dakiyerasha Mamo, and Kayi-Kella, which are located in Addio woreda, Gimbo woreda, and Bonga town administrations, respectively. The Kafa Zone comprises 13 woredas, from which three were selected using a lottery method to represent different geographical directions: East, West, and North, thereby ensuring the broader generalizability of the findings. Within each selected woreda, one primary school was purposefully selected based on its location and accessibility. A combination of sampling techniques was employed for participant selection. Purposeful sampling was used to include all three grade 8 English language teachers, as only one teacher was available per school. For student selection, simple random sampling (the lottery method) was used at Kayi-Kella Primary School, where two sections existed, and one was randomly chosen. At Mera and Dakiyerasha Mamo Primary Schools, where only one section was available in each, convenience sampling was applied due to the limited number of sections. A total of 118 out of 172 grade 8 students participated in the study. Prior to sampling, the researcher met with school administrators to explain the study's purpose and gather current information on enrollment and section distribution, ensuring that the sampling process was informed and properly coordinated.

Instruments

In this study, three key data-gathering instruments were employed to assess students' attitudes toward reading and teachers' motivational strategies. Questionnaires, as highlighted by Best and Kahan (1989), were developed to quickly gather information, consisting of two sections: one with 16 closed-ended Likert-scale items measuring students' reading attitudes, and another with 23 items focused on teachers' motivational strategies. This format allowed participants to express their agreement with various statements, facilitating a good evaluation of attitudes (Ary et al., 2010). Classroom observations were conducted to validate the findings from the questionnaire and teacher interviews. A semi-structured checklist adapted from Subedi (2018) guided these observations. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with 8th-grade English teachers provided qualitative insights into students' reading motivation, the strategies employed, and challenges faced. Each interview lasted 15-20 minutes in a quiet setting, using sound recorders for accurate documentation.

Data collection and analysis

The quantitative data from the students' survey were analysed by categorising responses based on themes and using descriptive statistics to determine frequency, mean, and standard deviation using SPSS version 20. Following the quantitative analysis, the qualitative data from the semi-structured teacher interviews were analysed using deductive thematic analysis. The eight interview questions served as predefined themes, guiding the coding process. After transcribing the interviews, responses were sorted and categorised under each guiding question, and key patterns or contrasting perspectives were identified. Verbatim quotations were presented to illustrate findings and enhance credibility and trustworthiness by grounding interpretations in participants' actual words. While the themes were structured in advance (deductively), attention was given to any unique insights that emerged, allowing for flexibility within the coding. This systematic approach ensured alignment between the research questions and the interpretation of qualitative data. By merging these two data forms, the study aimed to confirm or disconfirm results and provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings, particularly how the qualitative insights aligned with the quantitative results.

Findings

Results of attitude survey questionnaire

Table 1 Results of affective features of attitudes towards reading

Items	Statements	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std.
1	I like reading in English	N 90 % 76.3	18 15.3	7 5.9	1 0.8	2 1.7	4.64	.781
2	I like reading different texts written in the English language	N 61 % 51.7	38 32.2	10 8.5	6 5.1	3 2.5	4.25	.989
3	I have a reading interest but I don't have reading space.	N 33 % 28	15 12.7	16 13.6	30 25.4	24 20.3	3.03	1.527
4	I like to read books, but I don't have a library in our school.	N 36 % 30.5	15 12.7	15 12.7	25 21.2	27 22.9	3.07	1.578
5	I have an interest in reading but my parents don't encourage me to read at	N 22 % 18.6	11 9.3	10 8.5	26 22	49 41.5	2.42	1.549

Keys: SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, N: Neutral, D: Disagree, and SD: Strongly Disagree

Table 1 above indicates a strong inclination towards reading among the surveyed students. The

affective feature results of students' attitudes towards reading reveal several key insights. A significant majority of students enjoy reading in English (mean = 4.64, SD = 0.781), with 76.3% strongly agreeing. Many students also like reading different texts written in English (mean = 4.25, SD = 0.989), with 51.7% strongly agreeing. However, there are notable challenges, such as a lack of reading space (mean = 3.03, SD = 1.527) and the absence of a school library (mean = 3.07, SD = 1.578). Additionally, a significant number of students feel that their parents do not encourage them to read at home (mean = 2.42, SD = 1.549), with 41.5% strongly disagreeing. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing reading environments and providing parental support to cultivate a positive attitude towards reading.

Table 2 Results of cognitive features of attitude towards reading

Items	Statements		SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std.
6	I think reading broadens my knowledge	N %	88 74.6	18 15.3	- -	4 3.4	8 6.8	4.47	1.130
7	I think reading plays an important role in the English language learning.	N %	56 47.5	28 23.7	13 11	10 8.5	11 9.3	3.92	1.331
8	I think the English Reading class is boring because it is time-wasting.	N %	25 21.2	19 16.1	18 15.3	28 23.7	28 23.7	2.87	1.482
9	I think reading English textbooks alone can't develop my reading skills.	N %	32 27.1	28 23.7	18 15.3	19 16.1	21 17.8	3.26	1.464

In Table 2, item six, students were asked whether they believe reading can broaden their knowledge. The cognitive feature results of students' attitudes towards reading reveal several key insights. A significant majority of students believe that reading broadens their knowledge (mean = 4.47, SD = 1.130), with 74.6% strongly agreeing. Additionally, 47.5% of students believe that reading plays a crucial role in learning English (mean = 3.92, SD = 1.331). However, there is a notable perception that English reading classes are tedious and time-wasting, with 23.7% strongly disagreeing and another 23.7% disagreeing (mean = 2.87, SD = 1.482). Furthermore, 27.1% of students strongly agree that reading English textbooks alone cannot develop their reading skills (mean = 3.26, SD = 1.464). These findings highlight the need for more engaging and diverse reading materials to enhance students' interest and perceived value of reading in their language learning journey.

Table 3 Result of behavioural feature of attitude towards reading

Items	Statements		SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Std.
10	I only read when my teacher recommends me to read the available materials.	N %	24 20.3	19 16.1	16 22	26 22	23 19.5	2.96	1.411
11	I like reading with my friends and parents.	N %	64 54.2	24 20.3	10 8.5	12 10.2	8 6.8	4.05	1.287
12	I mostly prefer reading at home	N %	61 51.7	30 25.4	11 9.3	9 7.6	7 5.9	4.09	1.205
13	I like reading my classroom notes/exercise books when I face a shortage of reading materials.	N %	45 38.1	40 33.9	9 7.6	16 13.6	8 6.8	3.83	1.263
14	I like to share what I have read but I don't have books to read	N %	41 34.7	28 23.7	16 13.6	19 16.1	14 11.9	3.53	1.412
15	I like listening to the teachers when they read out loud in the classroom.	N %	71 60.2	21 17.8	10 8.5	7 5.9	9 7.6	4.17	1.263

16	I read different texts because it builds my knowledge.	N	79	24	7	5	3	4.45	.966
		%	66.9	20.3	5.9	4.2	2.5		

The survey results from item ten, in table 3, indicate a strong consensus among students regarding the value of reading diverse texts for knowledge enhancement. The survey results reveal several issues related to students' reading habits and preferences. A significant number of students only read when recommended by their teacher (mean = 2.96, SD = 1.411), indicating a lack of intrinsic motivation. While many students enjoy reading with friends and parents (mean = 4.05, SD = 1.287) and prefer reading at home (mean = 4.09, SD = 1.205), there is a notable lack of engagement in reading classroom notes or exercise books when materials are scarce (mean = 3.83, SD = 1.263). Additionally, students expressed a desire to share what they have read but often lack access to books (mean = 3.53, SD = 1.412). Although students enjoy listening to teachers read aloud (mean = 4.17, SD = 1.263) and recognise the value of reading for knowledge building (mean = 4.45, SD = 0.966), these findings highlight the need for more accessible reading materials and strategies to foster intrinsic motivation and engagement in reading activities.

Result of motivational survey questionnaire

Table 4 Results of motivational activities

No	Statements		AL	ST	R	Nev.	Mean	St. D.
			4	3	2	1		
1	The English teacher gives us passages to read.	N	11	27	37	43	2.95	.986
		%	9.3	22.9	31.4	36.4		
2	The English teacher makes time for continuous silent reading.	N	7	34	30	47	2.99	.965
		%	5.9	28.8	25.4	39.8		
3	The English teacher makes us to read fast and gives comments.	N	7	29	24	58	3.13	.983
		%	5.9	24.6	20.3	49.2		
4	The English teacher makes the school library inviting.	N	23	20	33	42	2.80	1.129
		%	19.5	16.9	28	35.6		
5	The English teacher provides a reading list.	N	16	17	31	54	3.04	1.073
		%	13.6	14.4	26.3	45.8		
6	The English teacher forms a reading club.	N	25	36	21	36	2.58	1.135
		%	21.2	30.5	17.8	30.5		
7	The English teacher brings different supplementary reading materials like newspaper, magazines, etc. that would appeal to the students' culture to the classroom	N	21	26	40	31	2.36	1.167
		%	17.8	22	33.9	26.3		
8	The English teacher offers a choice of books/textbooks for independent reading.	N	29	33	25	31	2.49	1.130
		%	24.6	28	21.2	26.3		
9	The English teacher encourages me to relate ideas in the reading text to what I knew before.	N	10	15	35	58	3.19	.963
		%	8.5	12.7	29.7	49.2		

Keys: AL: Always ST: Sometimes R: Rarely Nev: Never

The survey results presented in Table 4 reveal how often teachers use motivational strategies in the reading classroom. The survey results highlight several issues in the English reading instruction provided by teachers. A significant number of students feel that their teachers do not give enough passages to read (mean = 2.95, SD = 0.986) and do not make sufficient time for continuous silent reading (mean = 2.99, SD = 0.965). Additionally, many students believe that their teachers do not encourage fast reading with feedback (mean = 3.13, SD = 0.983) and do not make the school library inviting (mean = 2.80, SD = 1.129). The provision of reading lists is also lacking (mean = 3.04, SD = 1.073), and the formation of reading clubs is insufficient (mean = 2.58,

SD = 1.135). Furthermore, teachers are not providing enough supplementary reading materials that appeal to students' cultural backgrounds (mean = 2.36, SD = 1.167) and do not offer a choice of books for independent reading (mean = 2.49, SD = 1.130). Lastly, there is a lack of encouragement for students to relate ideas in the reading text to their prior knowledge (mean = 3.19, SD = 0.963). These findings suggest a need for more engaging and supportive reading practices to enhance students' reading experiences and motivation.

Table 5 Results of teachers' commitment to teach reading

	Statements		AI	ST	R	NV	Mean	St. D.
10	The English teacher teaches all the reading passages found in our textbook to build our reading skills.	N	11	29	35	43	2.93	.993
		%	9.3	24.6	29.7	36.4		
11	The English teacher passes to other sections without teaching the reading texts found in the textbook.	N	55	18	24	21	2.09	1.177
		%	46.6	15.3	20.3	17.8		
12	The English teacher is committed to teaching reading skills.	N	10	18	14	76	3.32	1.020
		%	8.5	15.3	11.9	64.4		
13	The English teacher gives equal weight to reading skills as he does to other skills.	N	18	19	31	50	2.96	1.097
		%	15.3	16.1	26.3	42.4		
14	The English teacher focuses on teaching grammar rather than reading lessons.	N	50	41	7	20	3.06	.870
		%	42.4	34.7	5.9	16.9		
15	The English teacher gives reading project/assignment with activities	N	11	24	38	45	2.99	.983
		%	9.3	20.3	32.2	38.1		

Table 5 above reflects teachers' commitment to teaching reading lessons from their textbooks. The survey results on teachers' commitments to teaching reading reveal several key insights. A significant number of students feel that their teachers do not teach all the reading passages in the textbook (mean = 2.93, SD = 0.993), with 36.4% never observing this practice. Many students also believe that teachers often skip reading texts in the textbook (mean = 2.09, SD = 1.177), with 46.6% always observing this behaviour. Additionally, there is a perception that teachers are not fully committed to teaching reading skills (mean = 3.32, SD = 1.020), with 64.4% never observing this commitment. Furthermore, students feel that teachers do not give equal weight to reading skills compared to other skills (mean = 2.96, SD = 1.097), and that there is a greater focus on teaching grammar rather than reading lessons (mean = 3.06, SD = 0.870). Lastly, the provision of reading projects or assignments with activities is also lacking (mean = 2.99, SD = 0.983). These findings suggest a need for more consistent and dedicated efforts from teachers to enhance students' reading skills and engagement.

Table 6 Reading interest-arousing activities

	Statements		AL	ST	R	NE	Mean	StD.
16	The English teacher encourages me to make portfolio of my beloved books/texts.	N	9	18	33	58	3.19	.960
		%	7.6	15.3	28.0	49.2		
17	The English teacher provides me with verbal praise for my good reading efforts in the classroom.	N	6	20	24	68	3.31	.929
		%	5.1	16.9	20.3	57.6		
18	The English teacher tells me the importance of reading for my future life.	N	12	15	29	62	3.19	1.015
		%	10.2	12.7	24.6	52.5		
19	The English teacher makes me aware of how to read.	N	10	17	23	68	3.26	.999
		%	8.5	14.4	19.5	57.6		
20	The English teacher starts the class with fun/brainstorming.	N	12	20	35	51	3.06	1.007
		%	10.2	16.9	29.7	43.2		
21	The English teacher helps me to feel that I am a good reader.	N	17	18	20	63	3.09	1.125
		%	14.4	15.3	16.9	53.4		
22	The English teacher provides me immediate feedbacks for my reading achievement.	N	15	28	28	47	2.91	1.070
		%	12.7	23.7	23.7	39.8		

23	The English teacher provides me extra scoring for my participation in reading.	N	39	18	27	34	2.47	1.224
		%	33.1	15.3	22.9	28.8		

Table 6 above illustrates the extent to which teachers use interest-arousing activities to increase students' motivation for reading. The survey results on reading interest-arousing activities reveal several key insights. A significant number of students feel that their teachers do not encourage them to make portfolios of their favourite books or texts (mean = 3.19, SD = 0.960), with 49.2% never observing this practice. Many students also believe that their teachers do not provide verbal praise for reasonable reading efforts (mean = 3.31, SD = 0.929), with 57.6% never receiving such praise. Additionally, students feel that teachers do not emphasise the importance of reading for their future (mean = 3.19, SD = 1.015), with 52.5% never having heard this message. There is also a lack of awareness on how to read effectively (mean = 3.26, SD = 0.999), with 57.6% never receiving guidance. Furthermore, teachers do not often start classes with fun or brainstorming activities (mean = 3.06, SD = 1.007), with 43.2% never having experienced this. Students also feel that teachers do not help them develop a sense of being good readers (mean = 3.09, SD = 1.125), with 53.4% never feeling this support. Immediate feedback on reading achievements is lacking (mean = 2.91, SD = 1.07), with 39.8% of participants never receiving it. Lastly, extra scoring for participation in reading is insufficient (mean = 2.47, SD = 1.224), with 28.8% never receiving extra points. These findings suggest a need for more engaging and supportive reading practices to enhance students' interest in and motivation for reading.

Results of the teachers' interview

To explore teachers' perspectives on students' reading motivation and instructional practices, three Grade 8 English language teachers from three primary schools (Mera, Dakiyerasha Mamo, and Kayi-Kella) were interviewed using eight semi-structured questions. These questions addressed students' motivation to read, the use of supplementary materials, motivational strategies, reading advice, reward systems, reading attitudes, challenges, and potential solutions. Key findings are presented below.

Q1. Are your students motivated to read their textbook and other materials?

Teachers' responses to this question varied. Two teachers reported low student motivation, while one teacher observed some signs of student engagement.

Teacher 1 noted:

The students' interest is very low because of many problems, such as a lack of participation in reading activities, a shortage of family support, and insufficient textbooks. Overall, they have low interest in reading."

In contrast, Teacher 2 provided a more optimistic perspective:

"There are students who come to me and say, 'I have a problem of reading, please help me teacher.' This is an indication of motivation to read. They have a good interest to read. I believe that without reading, the teaching-learning process will not take place."

Teacher 3 echoed Teacher 1's view, stating:

"My students' motivation is very low, and their reading levels are also poor."

These responses suggest that while most teachers perceive low motivation among students, some individual students demonstrate initiative and interest in improving their reading skills.

Q2. To what extent do you use supplementary reading materials in teaching reading?

Teachers reported limited use of supplementary reading materials, primarily due to resource constraints.

Teacher 1 explained:

"I do not use other texts as supplementary materials due to the shortage of textbooks, reference materials, and other resources in my school. But I do use some teaching aids during reading lessons."

Teacher 2, however, demonstrated resourcefulness:

"There are textbooks and other reference books donated from Bonga College of Education. These materials include short texts and activities. I use them, and I select words from those materials and let students practice reading in the classroom. Sometimes I use lower grade textbooks for upper classes to compensate for the scarcity, such as using Grade 4 texts for Grade 5, and so on."

Teacher 3 admitted to limited use:

"I only use the textbook and teacher's guide due to a shortage of books and reference materials."

This indicates a lack of consistent access to supplementary materials across the schools, which may hinder reading skill development.

Q3. What methods do you use to motivate students to read textbooks or any other materials?

Teachers employed various motivational techniques, ranging from verbal encouragement to modelling reading behaviour.

Teacher 1 shared:

"I use many methods to motivate them. For example, clapping hands. I also give advice—encouraging them to read any materials, any words, or any written documents."

Teacher 2 utilised visual aids:

"I use textbooks with colored pictures. I also use my mobile to show students books with colored images to capture their attention."

Teacher 3 preferred demonstration:

"First, I read the textbook passages or words aloud. Then, I show students how to read them, and they follow me."

These approaches reflect efforts to engage students through both auditory and visual strategies.

Q4. How often do you advise students to read regularly and widely?

All three teachers reported encouraging students to read, but their methods varied.

Teacher 1 said:

"I always try to advise my students to read their textbooks and other materials written in English."

Teacher 2 described a more holistic approach:

"I discuss not only with students but also with their parents, both inside and outside the

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school, to help their children read at home. I give homework and ask parents to sign to confirm they assisted. I also test students' reading capacity by giving them 60 words to read in one minute."

Teacher 3 emphasised the importance of reading:

"I advise them by explaining that reading is the source of information and a basic skill of language learning. Without reading, they can't get any information."

These findings suggest that teachers value reading and try to reinforce it both in and out of the classroom.

Q5. What type of rewards do you give students to encourage further reading?

All teachers used verbal praise as a form of reward, while material rewards were rare due to financial constraints.

Teacher 1 noted:

"I reward students by clapping hands or giving a pen when possible."

Teacher 2 shared:

"I appreciate students by saying 'very good, you are improving your reading skills,' or by calling them by name in and out of the class to encourage them."

Teacher 3 also relied on verbal praise:

"I say things like 'Excellent,' 'Very good,' or 'Keep it up!' when students perform well."

When asked why material rewards were not used, Teacher 3 explained:

"Neither I nor the school can afford material rewards since we have no source of income."

Q6. How do you evaluate your students' reading attitudes?

Teachers' evaluations of students' reading attitudes varied.

Teacher 1 and Teacher 3 observed negative attitudes:

"Most students are not interested in reading and do not show enthusiasm in class."

However, Teacher 2 shared a more positive view:

"Some students have shown improvement in their reading habits and tell me that they've changed their reading styles. This indicates they have a good attitude toward reading."

This suggests a range of reading attitudes, with some students becoming more engaged.

Q7. What challenges do you face in motivating students to read in and outside the classroom?

All three teachers identified significant challenges, particularly resource shortages and a lack of parental support.

Teacher 1 explained:

"There is no reading space or well-equipped library. We lack reference books, and students show very little interest in reading."

Teacher 2 added:

“Parental support is very limited. I don’t understand their role in their children’s education. We also lack textbooks and reference materials. I try to download resources on my mobile to compensate.”

Teacher 3 expressed frustration:

“There are no textbooks. Reading is dead. I keep reporting this to school leaders, but nothing changes. Students aren’t interested, and parents don’t care either.”

These comments highlight systemic challenges affecting reading motivation and success.

Q8. What do you recommend to solve the problems you mentioned?

Teachers offered practical recommendations to address the challenges.

Teacher 1 emphasised resource allocation:

“Administrative bodies should allocate budget to purchase reference books and solve the shortage of textbooks.”

Teacher 2 suggested early intervention:

“The government should give more attention to reading at lower grade levels, especially Grades 1–4. If students develop reading skills early, it becomes easier later. Parents should also be actively involved.”

Teacher 3 called for coordinated action:

“The government and education departments should solve the textbook shortage. School directors should engage with relevant authorities. Also, there must be discussion with parents about their children’s reading performance.”

Discussion

Attitude survey questionnaire

Scholars define reading attitude and its influence on reading performance in various ways. For example, Clark and Rumbold (2006, p. 17) describe reading attitude as “the beliefs and feelings an individual has with respect to reading.” Similarly, Todor (2016) emphasises that attitude is crucial in motivating students to read and learn English. Although students may possess positive attitudes, they may still lack the motivation to engage in their learning actively. To investigate this further, the research questions focused on exploring learners’ attitudes towards reading and teachers’ motivational strategies in the reading classroom. A questionnaire was designed to assess the perspectives of 8th-grade students on reading skills, consisting of 16 items adapted from various scholars. The researcher distributed this questionnaire to 118 participants across three primary schools, collected the data, and analysed the students’ attitudes by breaking them down into sub-components.

The study examined the affective component of students’ attitudes towards reading, revealing that personal experiences and contextual factors significantly shape emotional responses. Notably, students generally held a positive attitude towards reading in English, despite teachers from certain schools reporting low reading performance and negative attitudes. This discrepancy suggests that students may perceive their engagement with reading differently from their teachers. While many students expressed enjoyment in reading diverse texts, there were

conflicting sentiments about their overall interest in these texts. Some acknowledged a genuine interest, yet a considerable portion indicated a lack of enthusiasm, pointing to inadequacies in their reading environments. This aligns with Clark and Rumbold's (2006) assertion that reading interests are influenced by individual preferences and the context in which reading occurs. The findings also highlighted concerns about library access and its impact on students' reading habits. Although many students expressed an interest in reading, inadequate library resources likely contributed to a disconnect between their expressed interest and the actual reading opportunities available to them. In line with this, studies conducted by Asif and Yang (2021) and Rizaldi and Hamdani (2023) reflect the critical role of school libraries in promoting a reading culture and literacy. Without sufficient facilities, students may not fully recognise how these limitations affect their reading performance. Moreover, parental support emerged as a vital factor in shaping students' reading habits. While teachers noted a lack of parental encouragement, a significant number of students indicated that their parents actively supported their reading at home. This contradiction suggests a potential gap in perception between teachers and parents regarding their children's reading practices, reinforcing findings by Bendanillo (2021), which highlight the necessity of active participation from both parents and teachers in effective reading development.

In exploring the cognitive component of students' attitudes, the study found that students generally recognised the importance of reading for their academic success, which contrasts with teachers' observations of disinterest. Many students acknowledged that reading is crucial for learning English, highlighting their cognitive understanding of its role in language acquisition. However, some students described reading as tedious and time-consuming, indicating a mixed sentiment about the reading process. This suggests that while many find reading engaging, a significant minority perceives it in a negative light. Additionally, many students felt that relying solely on English textbooks was insufficient for developing their reading skills, aligning with Gilks (2011), who emphasises that exposure to diverse reading materials is essential for effective language learning.

Finally, the behavioural aspect revealed that nearly equal numbers of students preferred teacher-recommended readings and self-selected materials, underscoring their desire for autonomy. Their enthusiasm for shared reading experiences with friends and family further illustrates the role of social interactions in enriching their enjoyment of reading. The majority of students also recognised reading as a means of acquiring knowledge, affirming the value of diverse reading materials for personal growth. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of fostering both independent and collaborative reading practices to cultivate a positive reading culture and enhance students' overall learning experiences.

Motivational systems used by teachers

The findings regarding teachers' motivational activities reveal significant deficiencies in fostering reading among students. Many teachers rarely assign reading passages, and a notable number of students indicated that silent reading is seldom prioritised. This lack of emphasis is further compounded by minimal encouragement for rapid reading and insufficient feedback, suggesting a general disengagement in these critical areas of reading instruction.

Library visits are also infrequent. Many students reported they are rarely or never invited to use the school library, and the absence of teacher-generated reading lists further indicates a lack of

structured guidance to explore diverse reading materials. Although some teachers have reportedly established reading clubs, these initiatives appear to be inconsistently implemented, likely due to resource shortages and limited institutional support.

In terms of teacher commitment to reading instruction, the survey results reveal a troubling trend. Many students observed that reading passages in the textbook are often skipped, with entire reading lessons frequently omitted. This reflects a widespread perception that reading is not prioritised, while more focus is placed on grammar instruction. The lack of assigned reading projects further underscores this neglect, signalling a curriculum imbalance that undervalues reading as a foundational skill.

The data also highlight a concerning lack of interest-arousing activities. Students reported that motivational strategies such as encouraging the creation of reading portfolios, offering verbal praise, or teaching effective reading strategies are rarely used. Many students felt unrecognised for their efforts, and teachers seldom communicate the long-term value of reading for academic and personal success. This lack of encouragement contributes to a disengaged learning environment, contrasting sharply with strategies recommended in previous studies, such as interactive reading tasks and library visits, as practical means of cultivating interest in reading (Marin & Bocoş, 2021).

Teacher interviews support these findings, reinforcing the observation that student motivation to read is generally low. Teachers 1 and 3 expressed concern about students' lack of interest and motivation. Teacher 2, however, noted better engagement among his students and reported using alternative materials to compensate for the shortage of textbooks. All three teachers identified significant challenges to fostering reading motivation, most notably a lack of essential resources such as English textbooks, reference materials, and adequate library facilities.

In addition to resource-related issues, limited parental support was a recurring theme. Teachers described how families often fail to support or supervise their children's reading habits at home, further limiting students' engagement with reading outside the classroom. This combination of resource scarcity and minimal parental involvement presents substantial barriers to promoting an effective and sustainable reading culture.

Overall, the findings underscore the need for a multifaceted strategy that addresses resource gaps and reinforces motivational practices. Schools must prioritise reading instruction alongside grammar and writing, and teachers should be equipped with training and materials to implement engaging, student-centred reading practices. As emphasised by scholars such as Yılmaz (2000), cited in Bayraktar and Firat (2020), reading is essential for developing critical skills, including creativity, imagination, and problem-solving. Strengthening both school and home environments can play a transformative role in shaping students into lifelong readers.

Pedagogical implication

The findings of this study highlight several critical areas for improving reading instruction and fostering a culture of reading in schools. First, teachers need to enhance their commitment to reading by prioritising reading instruction alongside other skills, particularly grammar. This can be achieved by integrating more reading passages into the curriculum and consistently assigning reading projects. Second, the implementation of engaging activities, such as portfolio creation, verbal praise, and teaching reading strategies, is essential for motivating students. Teachers

should focus on creating a positive reading environment that encourages collaboration, such as reading clubs and group discussions. Moreover, providing adequate resources, including access to libraries and supplementary reading materials, is crucial. Schools should invest in these resources to support teachers and students effectively. Finally, fostering parental involvement in reading is vital. Schools could engage parents through workshops or reading events, emphasizing their role in supporting their children's reading habits at home. By addressing these areas, educators can cultivate a more effective reading culture that enhances student motivation and performance.

Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal critical issues regarding the affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of students' attitudes toward reading in the study areas. While a majority of students reported a positive attitude toward reading English texts, teachers presented a contrasting view, suggesting that many students exhibit a negative attitude toward reading. This discrepancy may be attributed to several challenges, including the lack of textbooks, limited reading spaces, and minimal parental support.

Research underscores the pivotal role of school libraries in cultivating a reading culture and improving literacy outcomes (Asif & Yang, 2021; Rizaldi & Hamdani, 2023). However, the absence of well-equipped libraries in the study schools continues to hinder students' reading development. Cognitively, although students expressed a generally favorable attitude when asked about reading, this did not align with teachers' observations of students' disengagement in and outside the classroom.

Behaviorally, while some students reported reading at home and occasionally sharing texts with family members, teachers emphasized a widespread lack of reading motivation. This disconnect suggests that students' reading behaviors may not be sufficiently supported by external reinforcement or structured classroom practices.

The study also highlighted a lack of effective motivational strategies used by teachers. Most educators did not employ supplementary reading materials, organize reading clubs, or provide diverse reading lists. Interest-arousing practices, such as praising students for reading accomplishments or linking reading to future success, were largely absent from observed lessons.

Differences in classroom environments also influenced student engagement. Schools A and C were found to have less conducive physical conditions compared to School B, which benefitted from better infrastructure. Teacher interviews further revealed that parental involvement in supporting reading habits was minimal, intensifying the challenges faced by students.

Another major barrier identified was the limited provision of new textbooks by local and central government bodies. As a result, reading instruction was often deprioritized in favor of listening activities, weakening the overall focus on literacy development. Additionally, the misplacement of teachers, for instance, assigning civics teachers to English classes, raised concerns about instructional quality and subject matter expertise.

In summary, the study underscores an urgent need for strategic interventions to enhance reading instruction in Ethiopian primary schools. This includes improving access to learning resources, strengthening teacher training, involving parents more actively, and implementing motivational

techniques that support sustained student engagement with reading.

Statement of researcher

Researcher's contribution rate statement

The author was responsible for conceptualizing the study, designing the tools, collecting data, writing the manuscript, and finalizing the work.

Support and thanks

The author thanks all participants who contributed to the data collection process. The author declares that no competing interests.

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