The Motivational Factors for Creating a Positive Environment for Learning English as a Foreign Language Among Intermediate Students in the Eastern Province

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Abstract

This study explores the motivational factors that contribute to a positive learning environment for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among intermediate students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The research utilizes a cross-sectional survey administered to 245 male students from first to third grades of public schools in both urban and rural settings. The questionnaire, adapted from Holbah (2015) and based on Gardner's socio-educational model and Self-Determination Theory, assesses five motivational dimensions: students' attitudes toward learning English, teacher motivation, family encouragement, school environment, and societal support. The findings reveal an overall high level of perceived motivation, with societal motivation being the most significant factor. Notably, urban students report higher levels of motivation across all dimensions compared to their rural counterparts. Significant differences in motivation are observed based on academic achievement, with higher-achieving students perceiving more support from teachers, families, and the school environment. The study also highlights the need for tailored interventions in rural areas to foster a more supportive learning environment. The findings are aligned with the broader goals of Saudi Vision 2030, which emphasizes enhancing educational outcomes and aligning them with national development

needs. The study concludes with practical recommendations to improve motivational support in EFL classrooms, focusing on both urban and rural educational contexts.

Keywords: Intermediate students, Saudi Arabia, EFL education, Motivational environment, Societal motivation, Urban-rural differences, Saudi Vision 2030

1. Introduction

Studies in second and foreign language indicate that that student attitude and motivation are core determinants of the long term involvement and success (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 2010). The study of L2 motivation has developed throughout the years to include early social-psychological explanations to classroom-oriented and socio-dynamical orientations that understand motivation as context-specific and malleable (Dornyei, 2005, 2009). Subsequent paragraphs are devoted to the positive learning environment and major motivational support sources in the Saudi EFL learning environment.

The educational environment is comprised of physical, social, and intellectual conditions that influence teaching, learning, and instructional outcomes (Al-Tunisi et al., 2018; Al Omari & Al Sharifain, 2015). In language classrooms, a positive environment is essential as it promotes interaction, increases participation, and allows learners to continue moving forward despite the challenges of speaking a foreign language.

From a positive-psychologicalperspective, learning flourishes when students experience supportive emotions and strengths-based experiences that promote engagement and growth (Seligman, 2011; Peterson et al., 2009). This study addresses those ideas to define the positive EFL learning environment in Saudi intermediate schools, focusing on the motivational support as well as conditions to help the learners interact with English both inside and outside the classroom.

Research on L2 motivation has moved from the early social psychological theories to approaches that focus on processes in the classroom and on learner experiences. Subsequently, two influential frameworks have been used as a guide for this study: Self-Stewardship (SDT) and Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gardner, 1985, 2010). SDT describes motivation in terms of autonomy, competence and relatedness, which encourage more self-determination in learning. Gardner's model complements this view by emphasizing the role of attitudes and broader social influences (including integrative and instrumental orientations) in shaping learners' willingness to invest effort in language learning (Gardner, 1985, 2010).

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the socio-educational perspective proposed by Gardner are used in this study to explain the reasons why students in Saudi intermediate schools study English (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000; Gardner, 1985, 2010). SDT indicates the role of the classroom in enhancing the autonomy, competence, and relatedness of students, whereas the opinions of Gardner refer to the attitudes and broader social aspects as the driving forces. The study questionnaire was developed using Gardner's socio-educational

model and Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) as per Holbah (2015). The instrument assesses motivation in five dimensions: students attitudes, teacher motivation, family motivation, school environment, and societal motivation (Gardner, 1985, 2004; Holbah, 2015).

1.1 Rationale for the Study

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has emerged as a key focus in the educational landscape, with increasing emphasis on effective teaching practices and the creation of conducive learning environments (Graddol, 2008; Richards, 2006). However, learners often face various challenges that hinder their language development, including limited exposure to English, inadequate classroom conditions, and instructional deficiencies (Ellis, 2005; Housen & Kuiken, 2009). In Saudi Arabia, these challenges are compounded by contextual barriers such as limited professional development opportunities for teachers and shortages of resources, which have a direct impact on the motivation and engagement of learners (Elyas & Al-Grigri, 2014).

Motivation is widely recognized as a crucial determinant of sustained effort and success in language learning, influencing students' engagement, persistence, and overall achievement (Schunk et al., 2014; Cook & Artino, 2016). The role of motivation is shaped by various contextual factors, including classroom dynamics, teacher practices, family support, and societal influences (Jones, 2009; Gardner, 2010). In the Saudi context, motivational and attitudinal factors are closely tied to the performance of EFL learners, underscoring the need to enhance motivational support within these environments (Al-Mohanna & Dhawi, 2017).

Despite the growing recognition of motivation's importance, there remains a scarcity of empirical studies focusing on the motivational factors affecting intermediate school students, particularly in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the motivational factors that contribute to a positive EFL learning environment in this context, with particular attention to urban and rural school settings. By addressing the motivational climate in these schools, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how contextual and educational factors can be optimized to support EFL learners in Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, while the importance of English proficiency in education and employment is increasingly acknowledged, as emphasized by Saudi Vision 2030 (Banafi, 2025), the reality for many students suggests a lack of consistent motivational support both at home and within schools. This gap, highlighted by Holbah (2015), points to a discrepancy between national aspirations and the actual learning experiences of students, thereby necessitating an investigation into the factors that influence their motivation.

In response to these identified gaps in the literature, this study examines the specific motivational factors that contribute to a more positive EFL learning environment at the intermediate school level. It also explores how these factors vary according to academic achievement, grade level, and school location. The overarching goal of this research is to explore the key motivational factors that influence students' engagement with English learning. By examining these factors, this study aims to provide insights into how both classroom and contextual factors can be optimized to support and sustain students' motivation in learning English.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the levels of motivational factors for learning English as a foreign language among intermediate students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

2. To examine whether there are statistically significant differences in students' motivational factors across different academic achievement levels.

3. To determine whether students' motivational factors vary significantly across different grade levels (first intermediate, second intermediate, third intermediate).

4. To explore whether there are statistically significant differences in students' motivational responses based on school location (urban vs. rural).

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the levels of motivational factors for learning English as a foreign language among intermediate students in the Eastern Province?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in students' motivational factors across academic achievement level groups?

3. Are there statistically significant differences in students' mean responses on the motivational factors questionnaire attributable to grade level (first intermediate, second intermediate, third intermediate)?

4. Are there statistically significant differences in students' mean responses on the motivational factors questionnaire attributable to school location (urban vs. rural)

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design to examine motivational factors supporting an EFL learning environment among intermediate school students in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. A structured questionnaire was administered to 245 male students of two public intermediate schools in the urban and rural areas.

2.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 245 male intermediate students from Al-Farabi Intermediate School, Al Khobar (urban) and Salasil Intermediate School, Buqayq (rural). All qualified students from Grades 7-9 at the two schools were invited to participate. Only those who gave informed consent and completed the questionnaire were included. The participants represented students across all three grade levels and a range of academic achievement levels from Pass to Excellent, making it possible to make comparisons across achievement groups and urban and rural settings.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from Holbah (2015). Holbah's

instrument was informed by Gardner's socio-educational model and the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985, 2004). The questionnaire comprises 25 closed-ended items grouped into five subscales: students' attitudes, teacher motivation, family motivation, the school environment, and societal motivation. Items are rated on a six-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree (6) to Strongly Disagree (1) to avoid a neutral midpoint and capture students' perceptions more precisely. Data were analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, Mann–Whitney U, one-way ANOVA, and Kruskal–Wallis H tests; when Kruskal–Wallis was significant, Dunn's post hoc test was used for pairwise comparisons.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Presentation of the First Question

The first question stated: "What are the levels of motivational factors for learning English as a foreign language among intermediate students in the Eastern Province?"

To answer this question, the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the main dimensions and the overall score were extracted. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1. The Overall Level of Motivational Factors for Learning English as a Foreign Language (N = 245)

No.	Axes	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
1	Attitude Toward Motivation	4.65	0.634	4	**High**
2	Teacher motivation	4.93	0.750	2	**High**
3	Family motivation	4.76	0.746	3	**High**
4	Motivating the school environment	4.45	0.828	5	**High**
5	Motivation of society	5.02	0.617	1	**Very High**
Total Level		4.65	0.660		**High**

It is clear from Table 1 that the overall level of motivational factors for learning English as a foreign language among intermediate school students was High, with an overall mean of 4.65 and a standard deviation of 0.660. Four dimensions were rated High: attitude toward motivation to learn English, teacher motivation, family motivation, and the motivating school environment, with means ranging from 4.45 to 4.93. In contrast, societal motivation was rated Very High, with a mean of 5.02.

The following section presents the detailed results for each dimension separately:

3.1.1 Dimension One: Students' Attitude Toward Motivation for Learning English

Table 2. Students' Response Levels on the Dimension of Attitude Toward Motivation for Learning English (N = 245)

No.	Phrases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
1	I believe that English language classes should be increased in Saudi Arabian schools.	4.30	0.588	9	**High**
2	I should spend more time and effort in learning English.	4.87	0.795	6	**High**
3	I am happy with the teaching method of the course.	5.00	0.890	5	**Very High**
4	During English classes, I would like to have more Arabic spoken than English.	3.82	0.620	10	**Medium**
5	Studying English is important because it will be useful in getting a good job.	5.49	0.511	1	**Very High**
6	Activities in this class should be designed to help the students improve their abilities to communicate in English.	5.05	0.637	4	**Very High**
7	I prefer that there were better assessment methods (e.g. portfolio, collaborative projects, assignments, self-learning tasks, etc.) other than the current traditional paper-based tests.	4.84	0.678	7	**High**
8	English is very helpful for communicating with foreign labourers working now in Saudi Arabia.	5.14	0.877	2	**Very High**
9	I am satisfied with the text books I used.	4.83	0.845	8	**High**
10	Students in English class should let the teacher know why they are studying English so that the lessons can be made relevant to their goals.	5.11	0.754	3	**Very High**
11	I am afraid other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	2.71	0.820	11	**Low**
	Total Level of the Axis	4.65	0.634		**High**

Table 2 results indicate that the answers in this domain were rated as high with a total mean value of 4.65 with a standard deviation of 0.634. At the item level, 5 of the statements were rated as very high (items 3, 5, 6, 8, and 10). These are indications of high importance of the practical value of learning English, including its usefulness in the future and its utility in communication, and favorable perceptions of course-related factors such as teaching quality and its relevance to the objectives of learners. There are other four statements that got a High rating (item 1, 2, 7 and 9). These ratings reflect a positive attitude with the intensive English language teaching programs. They also suggest that students should spend more time in classes. Moreover, the scores point towards improving the assessment techniques as well as a general satisfaction with the textbooks. Conversely, statement 4 was rated as Medium indicating mixed feelings about the level of Arabic language used in English classes. For example, some students want more Arabic assistance in order to comprehend the material. Lastly, statement 11 was rated as Low, meaning that there is a relative lack of fear of being mocked when speaking English among students.

3.1.2 Dimension Two: Students' Attitude Toward the Teacher and His Motivational Role

Table 3. Students' Response Levels on the Dimension of Attitude Toward the Teacher and His Motivational Role (N = 245)

No.	Phrases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
1	The current methodology in teaching English has had no impact on my attitude toward English learning or on my performance in English.	3.71	0.733	5	Medium
2	Teachers should show a good example by being committed and motivated.	5.56	0.563	1	Very High
3	Beside the grades, teachers should give the learners other rewards.	5.47	0.675	2	Very High
4	Teachers teach students learning strategies.	4.99	0.847	3	High
5	My English teacher uses a dynamic and interesting teaching style.	4.90	0.919	4	High
	Total Level of the Axis	4.93	0.750		High

The results in Table 3 indicate that responses for this dimension were in the High range, with an overall mean of 4.93 and a standard deviation of 0.750. At the item level, statements (2) and (3) were rated Very High, reflecting students' strong expectations that teachers should be committed and motivated role models and that motivation can be supported through rewards beyond grades. Statements (4) and (5) were rated High, suggesting that students perceive their teachers as using supportive practices, such as learning strategies and a dynamic, engaging teaching style. Meanwhile, statement (1) was rated Medium, indicating that some students

perceived a limited impact of the current teaching methodology on their attitude or performance.

3.1.3 Dimension Three: Students' Attitude Toward Parental Encouragement

Table 4. Students' Response Levels on the Dimension of Attitude Toward Parental Encouragement for Learning English (N = 245)

No.	Phrases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
1	My parents help me in learning English.	4.87	0.864	2	High
2	My parents encourage me to study English.	5.14	0.712	1	Very High
3	My parents think that there are more important things to study in school than English.	2.72	0.659	3	Low
	Total Level of the Axis	4.76	0.746	High	

The results in Table 4 indicate that responses on this dimension were High, with an overall mean of 4.76 and a standard deviation of 0.746. At the item level, statement (2) was rated Very High, indicating that students perceived strong parental encouragement to study English. Statement (1) was rated High, suggesting that students generally perceived parental support in learning English. In contrast, statement (3) was rated Low, which can be interpreted positively in this context, as many students disagreed that their parents view other school subjects as more important than English.

3.1.4 Dimension Four: Students' Attitude Toward School Environment Encouragement

Table 5. Students' Response Levels on the Dimension of Attitude Toward School Environment Encouragement for Learning English (N = 245)

No.	Phrases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
1	My school atmosphere is an encouraging context to learn English.	4.35	0.847	3	High
2	I think that I would get better results if there were computers for learning English in my school.	4.60	0.810	1	High
3	My school systems helps low-level students to learn English (e.g. join English club at school).	4.41	0.681	2	High
	Total Level of the Axis	4.45	0.828		High

The results in Table 5 indicate that responses for this dimension were rated High, with an

overall mean of 4.45 and a standard deviation of 0.828. At the item level, all three statements were rated High, indicating generally positive perceptions of the school environment's role in encouraging English learning. Specifically, students reported that the school atmosphere is an encouraging environment for learning English, that they would achieve better results if computers were available for English learning, and that the school system supports low-level students (e.g., through an English club). Overall, these responses suggest that students perceive school-based support for English learning as strong, alongside a perceived added value of integrating technology and providing support for learners who need additional help.

3.1.5 Dimension Five: Students' Attitude Toward Societal Encouragement

Table 6. Students' Response Levels on the Dimension of Attitude Toward Societal Encouragement for Learning English (N = 245)

No.	Phrases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank	Level
1	English language course materials for students must deal with topics related to the Saudi Arabian culture and context.	4.90	0.844	2	High
2	I believe that the Saudi Arabian context encourages English language learning.	4.64	0.691	3	High
3	English is an international language which I can use when I travel abroad or on the internet.	5.51	0.715	1	Very High
Total Level of the Axis		5.02	0.617		Very High

The results in Table 6 indicate that responses for this dimension were rated Very High, with an overall mean of 5.02 and a standard deviation of 0.617. At the item level, statement (3) was rated Very High, indicating strong endorsement of English as an international language for communication and its potential for overseas travel or for internet use . Statements (1) and (2) were rated High, suggesting that students support the inclusion of the Saudi culture and context in English course materials and generally perceive the Saudi context encourages the learning of English.   Overall, these results reflect strong societal encouragement for learning English, combining perceived global utility with a preference for culturally relevant content.

3.2 Presentation of the Results for Research Question Two

The second research question states: **Are there statistically significant differences in students' motivational factors across academic achievement level groups?**

To answer this question, the Kruskal–Wallis test (Nonparametric) was employed after confirming that the assumption of normality was violated for the achievement level variable.

The results are as follows:

Table 7. Results of the Kruskal–Wallis Test for Differences in Responses According to Achievement Level (N = 245)

Axes	Academic Achievement Categories	N	Mean Rank	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig
Attitude Toward Motivation	Excellent	119	126.64	5.685	3	0.128
	Very Good	64	133.34			
	Good	36	108.13			
	Pass	26	101.48			
Teacher motivation	Excellent	119	124.85	10.486	3	0.015*
	Very Good	64	140.41			
	Good	36	95.03			
	Pass	26	110.40			
Family motivation	Excellent	119	137.81	17.869	3	0.000*
	Very Good	64	125.54			
	Good	36	87.63			
	Pass	26	97.94			
Motivating the school environment	Excellent	119	123.09	10.806	3	0.013*
	Very Good	64	141.55			
	Good	36	113.65			
	Pass	26	89.85			
Motivation of society	Excellent	119	120.79	2.897	3	0.408
	Very Good	64	134.02			
	Good	36	110.25			
	Pass	26	123.65			
Total	Excellent	119	128.12	12.567	3	0.006*
	Very Good	64	139.09			
	Good	36	95.29			
	Pass	26	98.35			

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

The results of Table 7 indicate statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level in the responses of the study sample among academic achievement level groups (Excellent, Very Good, Good, and Pass) on three dimensions—teacher motivation, family motivation, and motivating the school environment—as well as the overall score. These differences are associated with achievement level, as the Kruskal–Wallis H test was significant (p < 0.05) for these dimensions.

In contrast, no statistically significant differences were found in attitude toward motivation or in motivation of society. To determine the direction of the differences in the significant

dimensions, pairwise comparisons were conducted using Dunn's test. The results are as follows:

Table 8. Results of Dunn's Test for Pairwise Comparisons among Achievement Level Groups

Axes	Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Adj. Sig
Teacher motivation	Good – Pass	-15.376-	18.140	1.000
	Good – Excellent	29.825	13.406	0.157
	Good –Very Good	45.378	14.684	**0.012**[*]
	Pass – Excellent	14.449	15.258	1.000
	Pass –Very Good	30.002	16.391	0.403
	Excellent – Very Good	-15.553-	10.925	0.927
Family motivation	Pass – Good	23.807	18.153	1.000
	Pass – Excellent	33.246	15.269	0.177
	Pass – Very Good	51.709	16.404	0.010*
	Good – Excellent	9.440	13.416	1.000
	Good –Very Good	27.902	14.694	0.346
	Excellent – Very Good	-18.462-	10.933	0.548
Motivating the school environment	Good – Pass	-10.317-	18.050	1.000
	Good –Very Good	50.186	13.340	0.001*
	Good – Excellent	37.914	14.611	0.057
	Pass – Very Good	27.597	16.311	0.544
	Pass – Excellent	39.869	15.183	0.052
	Very Good – Excellent	12.272	10.871	1.000
Total	Good – Pass	-3.054-	18.240	1.000
	Good – Excellent	32.826	13.480	0.089
	Good –Very Good	43.794	14.764	0.018*
	Pass – Excellent	29.771	15.342	0.314
	Pass – Very Good	40.740	16.482	0.081
	Excellent – Very Good	-10.968-	10.985	1.000

[*] The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The results of Table 8 show that the differences were not identical across all dimensions. Specifically, the differences were between students with a "Good" achievement level and those with a "Very Good" achievement level in teacher motivation and motivating the school environment. In addition, family motivation differed between the "Pass" and "Very Good" groups. Regarding the overall score, the difference was between the "Good" and "Very Good" groups. Reviewing the mean ranks in Table 7 indicates that the differences favored the higher-achievement group in each significant comparison, meaning that these students demonstrated greater appreciation for the motivational factors in learning English across the significant dimensions.

3.3 Presentation of the Results for Research Question Three

The third research question is: **Are there statistically significant differences in students' mean responses on the motivational factors questionnaire attributable to grade level (first intermediate, second intermediate, third intermediate)?**

To answer this question, a one-way ANOVA was employed after confirming that the normality assumption for the grade-level variable was met. The results are as follows:

Table 9. Results of One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Responses According to Grade Level (N = 245)

Axes	Source of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Attitude Toward Motivation	Between Groups	0.430	2	0.215	0.533	0.587
	Within Groups	97.516	242	0.403		
	Total	97.946	244			
Teacher motivation	Between Groups	2.612	2	1.306	2.348	0.098
	Within Groups	134.625	242	0.556		
	Total	137.238	244			
Family motivation	Between Groups	1.437	2	0.718	0.800	0.451
	Within Groups	217.372	242	0.898		
	Total	218.809	244			
Motivating the school environment	Between Groups	0.107	2	0.053	0.042	0.959
	Within Groups	310.381	242	1.283		
	Total	310.488	244			
Motivation of society	Between Groups	2.222	2	1.111	1.367	0.257
	Within Groups	196.676	242	0.813		
	Total	198.898	244			
Total	Between Groups	1.064	2	0.532	1.223	0.296
	Within Groups	105.224	242	0.435		
	Total	106.287	244			

The results of Table 9 indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in students' mean responses to the questionnaire on motivational factors for learning English and its sub-dimensions attributable to grade level. The significance levels for the F values were greater than 0.05 across all dimensions and the overall score.

3.4 Presentation and Discussion of the Results for Research Question Four

The fourth research question states**: Are there statistically significant differences in students' mean responses on the motivational factors questionnaire attributable to school location (urban vs. rural)?**

To answer this question, the Mann–Whitney test (Nonparametric) was employed after confirming that the normality assumption was not met for the school location variable. The results are as follows:

Table 10. Results of the Mann–Whitney Test for Differences in Responses According to School Location (N = 245)

Axes	School location	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	(Z)	Sig
Attitude Toward Motivation	urban	204	128.99	26314.5	2959.5	-2.959-	0.003*
	rural	41	93.18	3820.5			
Teacher motivation	urban	204	128.66	26247.5	3026.5	-2.806-	0.005*
	rural	41	94.82	3887.5			
Family motivation	urban	204	130.22	26565.5	2708.5	-3.596-	0.000*
	rural	41	87.06	3569.5			
Motivating the school environment	urban	204	132.51	27031.5	2242.5	-4.706-	0.000*
	rural	41	75.70	3103.5			
Motivation of society	urban	204	129.47	26411.0	2863	-3.222-	0.001*
	rural	41	90.83	3724.0			
Total	urban	204	132.21	26970.0	2304	-4.535-	0.000*
	rural	41	77.20	3165.0			

[*] The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The results presented in Table 10 show statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level in students' responses on the motivational factors scale and all five sub-dimensions associated with school location (urban vs. rural). The Mann–Whitney test yielded statistically significant Z values ($p < 0.05$) across all dimensions and the total score. Based on the mean ranks, the differences consistently favored urban school students across all five dimensions and the overall score.

4. Discussion

This study investigated motivational factors associated with a supportive EFL learning environment among intermediate school students in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Using survey data from 245 male students (Grades 7–9) in two public schools representing urban and rural settings, the study examined five dimensions of motivational support: students' attitudes, teacher motivation, family encouragement, the school environment, and societal encouragement. It also assessed whether students' perceptions varied by academic achievement, grade level, and school location. This section discusses the findings in relation to Self-Determination Theory and Gardner's socio-educational perspective. It situates them within previous Saudi EFL research to highlight practical implications for improving motivation and addressing urban–rural differences.

4.1 Overall Motivational Environment

The study found that intermediate students in the Eastern Province reported consistently high

levels of perceived motivational support for learning English in all five dimensions measured. Societal motivation was the strongest, followed by teacher, school, and family motivation. This implies that students perceive English as more than a school subject and recognize its value for education and career opportunities in the future.

Societal motivation is compatible with previous Saudi EFL research emphasizing on instrumental motives for learning English including academic enhancement and career opportunities (Almansour, 2022). Evidence has also been found that higher motivation and positive attitudes are associated with improved English performance and academic achievement (Al-Mohanna & Dhawi, 2017).

High teacher, family and school ratings suggest strong support from students immediate learning environments. Teacher-related responses are consistent with research that establishes the link between teacher-student interpersonal behavior and learning outcomes and achievement (AlDhafiri, 2015) and research that demonstrates the relationship between teacher motivation, classroom strategies, and student motivation and achievement (Bernaus et al., 2009). From a Self-Determination Theory perspective, these findings are supportive of the role of autonomy, competence and relatedness in motivating learners (Alamer & Lee, 2019). Family motivation and the school environment are also an important part of the overall picture, demonstrating that there is also encouragement beyond the classroom. Compared with Holbah's (2015) results where many learners felt their school atmosphere was unhelpful, the current results suggest stronger perceived school-level support in the two participating schools.

In summary, the findings depict a generally supportive motivational atmosphere for intermediate students in the Eastern Province, with societal influences being of the highest dimension.

4.2 Motivation and Academic Achievement

Analyses showed significant differences in teacher motivation, family motivation, school motivation and overall motivation among achievement groups. Students who rated "Very Good" or "Excellent" perceived more motivational support than students who rated "Pass" or "Good". This pattern is consistent with evidence linking motivational behaviours and attitudes to academic performance (Al-Mohanna & Dhawi, 2017). It is also in line with studies linking teacher motivation and motivating strategies which affect student motivation and achievement (Bernaus et al., 2009).

Because the study is cross-sectional, the findings indicate associations and not cause and effect. Motivation may support increased effort and persistence while achievement may support motivation through increased competence and positive experiences. Self-Determination Theory proposes that autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs are linked to persistence and better grades in favour of a motivational pathway to achievement as can be seen in Saudi EFL contexts (Alamer and Lee, 2019).

4.3 Stability Across Grade Levels

Unlike the differences between achievement groups, we did not find statistically significant

differences on motivational factors between the grade levels (first intermediate, second intermediate, and third intermediate). Students in all three grades generally expressed high perceptions of motivation from teachers, families, schools and society, indicating a stable motivational climate throughout the intermediate stage in both schools.

A probable reason is that the three grades have similar curricula and institutional conditions suggesting that the students have similar beliefs about the vaule of English. This consistency may provide a uniform motivational environment. This is because in accordance with the Self-Determination Theory and Gardner's socio-educational perspective, learners attitudes and the overall social and instructional context, particularly the support for autonomy, competence and relatedness, sustain stable motivation.

In practice, the absence of grade-level differences suggests that school-wide motivational initiatives can be helpful to all intermediate students. Nevertheless, the data indicate that lower-achieving students still struggle with motivational issues that may require specific support

4.4 Urban–Rural Differences in Motivational Environment

A significant finding is the statistically significant difference between the perceived motivational support between urban and rural students. Urban learners scored higher in all five dimensions (as well as overall) than their rural counterparts (see Table 10). Despite this variation, overall motivational support was high throughout the sample -suggesting that rural students generally feel adequate support; this gap simply reflects a relative difference rather than uniform low support in rural environments.

This pattern is consistent with past research by Saudi scholars indicating that individual attitudes as well as contextual factors, such as available opportunities and support, affect motivation. A research study by Almansour (2022) found motivation profiles to be stronger for urban learners and attributed this strength to increased availability of motivational resources and opportunities for learning. Holbah (2015) stated that a lack of school resources and deficiencies in the learning environment affects. Teacher-focused studies suggest that systemic constraints including centralization and reduced teacher autonomy limit the motivational practices and resources of teachers thus undermining the motivational experiences of students (Albishi, 2017).

4.5 Integrating Findings with the Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

The results are in line with Self-Determination Theory and Gardner's socio-educational model. High perceived motivational support, particularly in the societal dimension, indicates that English is valued in relation to opportunities in the future, which reflects an instrumental orientation towards language learning (Alrabai, 2020; Al-Mohanna, & Dhawi, 2017). The high profile of the teacher, family, and school dimensions highlights the importance of supportive learning environments for the development of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Achievement-level differences confirm that perceived motivation correlated with English performance, is in line with studies conducted in Saudi Arabia that link motivation and attitude to achievement (Al-Mohanna & Dhawi, 2017), as well as research indicating that teacher

motivation and classroom strategies affect student motivation and success in second languages (Bernaus et al., 2009). The stable motivational perceptions throughout the intermediate stage and the marked urban-rural differences underscore the role of contextual factors in the experiences of students.

Focusing on intermediate students, this study presents evidence from an earlier educational stage in the context of Saudi EFL. The results highlight the importance of continued motivational support, especially for lower-achieving learners and those in rural areas, for fostering equitable learning opportunities.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

The study sample consisted of 245 male students in the first, second, and third intermediate grades from two public intermediate schools in the Eastern Province (a city school in Al Khobar and a rural school in Buqayq). Consequently, the findings may not be generalizable to female students, private schools, or other regions. Unequal subgroup sizes - particularly the smaller rural group - may have reduced comparison precision.

The cross-sectional design and single time point data collection limit the ability to infer causality or observe longitudinal motivational changes.

Data were solely based on students' self-report questionnaires. Although the instrument demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, self-report measures are vulnerable to response biases (e.g., social desirability) and individual differences in item interpretation. The lack of complementary data sources such as teacher or parent reports, interviews, or classroom observations limited a comprehensive assessment of the motivational environment.

The motivational environment was defined along five dimensions; students attitudes, teacher motivation, family motivation, school environment and societal motivation. Other relevant factors, such as peer dynamics, school leadership, extracurricular opportunities and broader contextual resources, were not directly measured. Hence, the findings should be interpreted as context specific patterns in the participating schools.

4.7 Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Studies

Findings indicate that intermediate students in the Eastern Province find considerable motivational support for learning English, showing consistently high ratings across all five dimensions with society motivation being ranked the highest. These results highlight the importance of maintaining supportive classroom environments through positive teacher-student relationships, repeated encouragement, and effort and progress-focused feedback.

Motivation may be further enhanced by relating tasks to real-life applications, such as academic and career prospects in the future, by providing relevant authentic materials, and by encouraging active participation by means of cooperative learning and structured interaction. Lower achieving students reported less effective support in a number of areas - so targeted scaffolding, guided practice and constructive feedback can help to mitigate discouragement and disengagement.

At the institutional level, the urban-rural differences highlight the need for improved motivational support in the rural environment. School leaders can implement school-wide practices that reward effort and improvement-showing student work, celebrating progress-and providing engagement opportunities, such as English clubs and organized extracurricular activities. Professional development that focuses on motivationally supportive, student-centred instruction, can also have positive outcomes. Though the study design does not allow for the causal interpretation of the results, the patterns that were identified indicate that enhancing the consistency and visibility of motivational support is particularly important in less advantaged contexts. Family engagement is still important; parents can promote motivation by showing positive attitudes to English, encouraging home practice and valuing progress and achievement.

Future studies should replicate the study using more diverse samples (female students, private schools, different regions of the country) to discuss the differences in motivational patterns due to factors such as gender, school type, and locality. Longitudinal studies are needed to track motivational changes over time and to determine whether support in the early stages predicts later outcomes. Mixed-methods approaches, including surveys and interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations, would help uncover a deeper understanding of implementation and experience of motivational support for students, teachers, and parents. Intervention studies, especially in rural schools and with lower-achieving learners, could assess the effectiveness of focused programs aimed at improving teacher support, family involvement, or the school environment, and to measure the impact on motivation and achievement. Such research would also be useful for validating the questionnaire in different populations and exploring other motivational factors than the ones studied here

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