

Reading Motivation and Reading Ability

What was the goal of the study?

The researchers wanted to determine if reading motivation influences reading ability in adult learners.

Why was the study conducted?

Prior research suggests that if two individuals have similar academic abilities, the individual with greater motivation for learning is likely to outperform the other. Therefore, reading motivation may be uniquely important for reading performance in adult literacy classrooms.

What did the study find?

The researchers found that out of the ten aspects of reading motivation measured, only perceived difficulty was related to reading ability. Specifically, participants who considered reading to be more difficult had weaker decoding and fluency skills. It is possible that adults' beliefs about the difficulty of a reading task can increase their anxiety, which, in turn, affects their interest and performance in the task.

Who participated in the study?

The participants in this study were 544 adult learners.

How was the study conducted?

Participants completed various reading tests, which involved tasks such as reading words out loud, filling in missing words in sentences, quickly reading sentences and deciding if they are true or false, and identifying individual words in a string of words without any spaces. In addition, participants also completed motivation measures in which they were asked to rate different items. These motivation measures tapped into ten aspects of motivation:

- **Intrinsic motivation** for reading refers to a person's drive to read for the purposes of enjoyment, gaining knowledge, and satisfying curiosity, as opposed to praise or rewards. For example: "Do you enjoy reading in your free time?"
- **Avoidance** of reading refers to a person's tendency to evade or ignore reading activities. For example: "Do you read easier things so you don't have to work as much?"
- **Self-efficacy** for reading refers to a person's beliefs about their own reading abilities. For example: "Can you recognize words easily when you read?"
- **Perceived difficulty** in reading refers to a person's perceptions about how difficult reading is for them. For example: "Is it hard for you to understand things that you read?"
- **Interest/enjoyment** in reading refers to the sense of pleasure that a person derives from reading activities. For example: "I like reading."
- **Perceived competence** in reading refers to a person's feeling of effectiveness in the context of reading. For example, one item was: "Reading is an activity that I do well."
- **Effort/importance** toward reading refers to a person's views about how important reading is in their life and how much effort should be devoted to reading. For example, one item was: "I put a lot of effort into reading."
- **Pressure/tension** in the context of reading refers to a person's feelings of pressure to be successful in reading activities. For example, one item was: "I feel nervous when I read."

- **Self-concept** for reading refers to a person's expectations for their own reading performance. For example, one item was: "How much do you expect to improve in your reading this year?"
- **Reading value** refers to a person's judgment about the merits of reading. For example, one item was: "Compared to other activities, how important is it to be good at reading?"

How can people use the results?

The results of this study demonstrate a need for practitioners to support both decoding and fluency skills for adult learners who consider reading to be more difficult.