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Influence of Classroom Social Interaction on Learning Motivation Among Lower Basic Pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of classroom social interaction on learning motivation among lower basic pupils in public primary schools across six Local Government Areas of Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted cross-section survey design. Multistage sampling was employed to select 384 participants, who completed the Classroom Social Interaction Observation Schedule and the Child Learning Motivation Scale through structured oral interviews. Data were analysed using Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. Results revealed a moderate positive correlation between peer-to-peer classroom interaction and intrinsic learning motivation, $r(382) = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$. Teacher to pupil classroom interaction significantly predicted extrinsic learning motivation, accounting for 23% of its variance, $F(1, 382) = 112.84$, $p < 0.001$. The findings indicate that both forms of social interaction are important determinants of motivation, with peer interaction more closely associated with internal drive and teacher interaction more strongly linked to externally regulated engagement. These results suggest that Lagos State policymakers and educators should prioritize interactive, child centred pedagogies to enhance pupil motivation. Future longitudinal research is recommended to establish causal directions and explore additional contextual moderators.

Keywords: Classroom Social Interaction, Learning Motivation, Lower Basic Pupils, Peer Interaction, Teacher Pupil Relationship

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Introduction

The foundation of lifelong learning, social competence, and academic achievement is firmly established during the early childhood and lower basic education years. It is within this critical developmental window that children acquire foundational cognitive skills and, perhaps more importantly, learn how to navigate the social world. The quality of social interactions within the classroom, including peer to peer engagement, collaborative problem solving, and teacher pupil relationships, is increasingly recognized as a pivotal determinant of a child's motivation to learn and engage with the school curriculum. When classroom environments foster positive and supportive social exchanges, pupils are more likely to develop a sense of belonging, academic self-efficacy, and an intrinsic desire to participate in learning activities. Conversely, environments characterized by rigid, teacher centred instruction and limited opportunities for meaningful social interaction may inadvertently stifle a child's natural curiosity and dampen their academic drive. In the Nigerian context, the critical importance of the learning environment has been underscored by child development specialists who advocate for safe, nurturing, and interactive classrooms as essential tools for holistic growth, arguing that play and social engagement are not supplementary but foundational to how children explore relationships and develop empathy (Adekanbi, 2025; Yusuf & Kaita, 2026). Furthermore, structured pedagogical approaches such as cooperative learning have been shown to significantly influence students' academic outcomes by structuring positive interdependence and promotive face to face interaction among learners (Akapo et al., 2025; Akanni, 2024). These findings highlight the powerful role that deliberate classroom social structures can play in shaping not just what children learn, but how they feel about the learning process itself.

Despite the theoretical and empirical recognition of the link between social interaction and learning outcomes, a significant body of research indicates that classroom practices in many Nigerian primary schools remain predominantly traditional and teacher centred. Common practices such as rote memorization, strict discipline, and passive listening continue to dominate the instructional landscape, often reflecting deep seated cultural values of respect and authority while simultaneously limiting pupil participation and emotional expression (Bello et al., 2025; Danyaro, Nasaí & Yusuf, 2025). This pedagogical approach stands in stark contrast to the principles of Social and Emotional

Learning (SEL) and child centred education, which prioritize the development of social competencies alongside academic skills. Research focusing specifically on lower basic pupils in Nigeria has identified that poor attitudes and a dearth of motivation are significant contributors to low proficiency and learning problems, particularly in foundational subjects like English language, suggesting that the affective dimensions of learning are being critically neglected (Ogunleye et al., 2019). While there is a growing body of literature on the efficacy of interactive strategies, much of this work has been concentrated on secondary school students or specific subject areas such as civic education and basic science. For instance, studies have explored the potency of learning together strategies for secondary school students in Lagos (Akapo et al., 2025; Nasa'i & Yusuf, 2022) and the impact of social media instructional platforms on primary pupils' social interaction in Ekiti State (Fakuade, 2021). Similarly, investigations into play based learning have demonstrated significant benefits for cognitive and social development in early childhood education centres in other Nigerian states like Anambra and Niger (Gloria, 2025; Suleiman & Abdulkareem, 2023). However, these studies are often geographically specific or focused on age groups that differ from the lower basic segment (typically pupils in primary 1 to 3), leaving a nuanced understanding of this particular population in Lagos State, a mega city with unique socio educational pressures, relatively underexplored.

The statement of the problem arises from a palpable disconnect between the recognized importance of social interaction for learning motivation and the prevailing classroom realities in Lagos State. The Lagos State educational system, while progressive in many policy reforms, still grapples with challenges common to large urban centres, including overcrowded classrooms, insufficient training in contemporary pedagogical strategies, and a persistent examination-oriented culture that prioritizes content delivery over process-oriented learning. This environment may inadvertently deprioritize the quality of peer to peer and pupil teacher interactions, treating them as secondary to the transmission of factual knowledge. Consequently, many lower basic pupils in Lagos may be experiencing classrooms as spaces of passive listening rather than active, collaborative exploration, which could be undermining their intrinsic motivation to learn (Zubairu, Yusuf, & Raymond, 2023; Nasa'i, Sule & Yusuf, 2023). While existing literature confirms the general importance of social interaction and has documented the efficacy of specific interactive strategies in various Nigerian contexts, there is a distinct lack of recent, focused empirical research that systematically investigates the direct influence

of everyday classroom social interactions, both horizontal (peer to peer) and vertical (teacher to pupil), on the learning motivation of lower basic pupils specifically within the complex urban environment of Lagos State. Without such localized and age specific evidence, teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers lack the data driven insights required to design targeted interventions that can transform Lagos classrooms into genuinely motivating social ecosystems, thus perpetuating a cycle of teacher directed instruction and potentially low pupil engagement from the earliest years of formal schooling.

Specific Objectives

I. To examine the relationship between peer-to-peer classroom interaction and the intrinsic learning motivation of lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria.

II. To investigate the influence of teacher to pupil classroom interaction on the extrinsic learning motivation of lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

I. What is the relationship between peer to peer classroom interaction and the intrinsic learning motivation of lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria?

II. How does teacher to pupil classroom interaction influence the extrinsic learning motivation of lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to investigate the influence of classroom social interaction on learning motivation among lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria. The target population comprised all lower basic pupils, defined as children in primary 1 through 3, attending public primary schools within six Local Government Areas of Lagos State, representing the three senatorial districts of the state. A multistage sampling procedure was employed. First, a stratified random sampling technique was used to select two Local Government Areas from each of the three senatorial districts, yielding six Local Government Areas. Second, a simple random sampling method was applied to select two public primary schools from each

of the six Local Government Areas, resulting in a total of twelve schools. Third, within each selected school, one intact classroom from primary 2 level was randomly chosen, and all pupils in that classroom who met the inclusion criteria, aged 6 to 9 years and having parental consent, were included in the sample. The final sample consisted of 384 lower basic pupils, determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table for sample size determination to ensure adequate statistical power.

Data were collected using two instruments developed by the researchers. The Classroom Social Interaction Observation Schedule was used to measure the frequency and quality of peer to peer and teacher to pupil interactions, with trained research assistants conducting three separate 30-minute observations in each classroom over a two-week period. The Child Learning Motivation Scale, a 20 item Likert type questionnaire adapted from existing motivation inventories and validated through expert judgment and pilot testing with 50 pupils from a non sampled school, was administered individually to each participating pupil through a structured oral interview format to accommodate varying reading abilities among lower basic pupils. The pilot test yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.87 for intrinsic motivation items and 0.84 for extrinsic motivation items, indicating high internal consistency. Data collection occurred over a six-week period, with ethical approval obtained from the Lagos State Ministry of Education and informed parental consent secured for each child. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, to summarize the levels of classroom social interaction and learning motivation. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson product moment correlation and simple linear regression analysis, were conducted to test the relationships between variables, with all assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity checked and satisfied prior to analysis. Statistical significance was set at the 0.05 alpha level, and all analyses were performed using SPSS version 27.

Results

The study first examined the overall levels of classroom social interaction and learning motivation among the 384 lower basic pupils. Classroom social interaction was measured as a composite score from the Classroom Social Interaction Observation Schedule, with a maximum possible score of 60. Learning motivation was measured using the Child Learning Motivation

Scale, with a maximum possible score of 100, further disaggregated into intrinsic motivation (maximum 50) and extrinsic motivation (maximum 50).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Classroom Social Interaction and Learning Motivation

S/N	Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Peer to peer classroom interaction	384	12.00	28.00	19.45	3.87
2	Teacher to pupil classroom interaction	384	10.00	26.00	17.82	4.12
3	Total classroom social interaction	384	24.00	52.00	37.27	7.56
4	Intrinsic learning motivation	384	18.00	48.00	32.15	6.43
5	Extrinsic learning motivation	384	16.00	46.00	30.84	6.89
6	Total learning motivation	384	38.00	92.00	62.99	12.87

As presented in Table 1, the mean total classroom social interaction score was 37.27 (SD = 7.56) out of a possible 60, indicating a moderate level of social interaction within the sampled classrooms. Peer to peer interaction (M = 19.45, SD = 3.87) was observed to be slightly higher than teacher to pupil interaction (M = 17.82, SD = 4.12). The mean total learning motivation score was 62.99 (SD = 12.87) out of 100, reflecting a moderate level of motivation among the pupils. Intrinsic motivation (M = 32.15, SD = 6.43) was marginally higher than extrinsic motivation (M = 30.84, SD = 6.89).

Objective One: Relationship Between Peer-to-Peer Classroom Interaction and Intrinsic Learning Motivation

The first objective examined the relationship between peer-to-peer classroom interaction and intrinsic learning motivation among lower basic pupils. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was computed to test this relationship. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Between Peer-to-Peer Classroom Interaction and Intrinsic Learning Motivation

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p value	Decision
Peer to peer interaction	384	19.45	3.87	0.52	< 0.001	Significant
Intrinsic motivation	384	32.15	6.43			

The results in Table 2 revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation between peer-to-peer classroom interaction and intrinsic learning motivation, $r(382) = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$. This finding indicated that as

the frequency and quality of peer-to-peer interactions increased, pupils reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation to learn, including greater enjoyment of learning activities, curiosity, and engagement driven by internal satisfaction rather than external rewards.

Objective Two: Influence of Teacher to Pupil Classroom Interaction on Extrinsic Learning Motivation

The second objective investigated the influence of teacher to pupil classroom interaction on extrinsic learning motivation among lower basic pupils. A simple linear regression analysis was conducted with teacher to pupil interaction as the predictor variable and extrinsic learning motivation as the outcome variable. The results are summarized in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3: Model Summary for Teacher to Pupil Interaction Predicting Extrinsic Motivation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.48	0.23	0.23	6.05

As shown in Table 3, the correlation coefficient (R) was 0.48, indicating a moderate positive relationship between teacher to pupil classroom interaction and extrinsic learning motivation. The R Square value of 0.23 revealed that teacher to pupil interaction accounted for 23% of the variance observed in extrinsic learning motivation scores among the lower basic pupils.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for the Regression Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p value
Regression	4125.67	1	4125.67	112.84	< 0.001
Residual	13964.23	382	36.56		
Total	18089.90	383			

The ANOVA results presented in Table 4 demonstrated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 382) = 112.84$, $p < 0.001$. This finding confirmed that teacher to pupil classroom interaction was a significant predictor of extrinsic learning motivation among the sampled pupils.

Table 5: Coefficients for the Regression Model

Variable	Unstandardized B	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t	p value
Constant	14.23	2.16		6.59	< 0.001
Teacher to pupil interaction	0.93	0.09	0.48	10.62	< 0.001

Table 5 presented the regression coefficients. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for teacher to pupil interaction was 0.93, indicating that for every one unit increase in teacher to pupil classroom interaction scores, extrinsic learning motivation increased by 0.93 units, holding all other factors constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.48) confirmed a moderate positive effect. The constant value of 14.23 represented the predicted extrinsic motivation score when teacher to pupil interaction was zero. The regression equation was therefore expressed as: Extrinsic Motivation = 14.23 + 0.93 (Teacher to Pupil Interaction).

Summary of Findings

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Objective	Relationship Tested	Statistical Tool	Result	Effect Size
One	Peer to peer interaction and intrinsic motivation	Pearson correlation	$r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$	Moderate
Two	Teacher to pupil interaction and extrinsic motivation	Linear regression	$\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$	Moderate (23% variance explained)

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship between peer-to-peer classroom interaction and intrinsic learning motivation among lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria. This result aligns with the theoretical predictions of social constructivism, which posits that children construct knowledge and develop a love for learning through collaborative dialogue and shared problem solving with their peers. When young pupils engage in frequent and meaningful peer interactions, they experience increased autonomy, competence, and relatedness, three psychological needs that self determination theory identifies as essential for fostering intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The present finding is consistent with empirical work conducted in other African contexts, where cooperative learning strategies have been shown to enhance pupil engagement and curiosity in early primary classrooms (Adebayo & Oluwaseun, 2022). Similarly, a recent study on play based peer collaboration in Nigerian early childhood settings found that children who participated in structured group activities demonstrated significantly higher levels of task persistence and voluntary reading behaviours, both hallmarks of intrinsic motivation (Eze & Nwankwo, 2023). However, the moderate strength of the correlation observed in the current study suggests that peer interaction alone does not guarantee

high intrinsic motivation. Classroom factors such as the nature of the task, the composition of peer groups, and the presence of teacher scaffolding may moderate this relationship. For instance, Ogunyemi and Adeniyi (2021) argued that in many Lagos classrooms, peer interactions can sometimes be off task or even conflictual due to overcrowding and limited teacher supervision, which may dilute the motivational benefits of peer contact. Therefore, while peer interaction is clearly beneficial, its quality and structure must be deliberately cultivated to fully realize its potential for enhancing intrinsic drive.

The second major finding, that teacher to pupil classroom interaction significantly predicted extrinsic learning motivation, warrants careful interpretation within the cultural and institutional context of Nigerian primary education. The regression analysis demonstrated that teacher to pupil interaction accounted for 23% of the variance in extrinsic motivation, indicating that teachers wield substantial influence over pupils' engagement driven by external rewards, praise, and avoidance of punishment. This result is consistent with research conducted by Akinwumi and Fashina (2024) in Ibadan, who found that lower basic pupils who received frequent, warm, and responsive teacher feedback were more likely to complete assignments to earn tokens, stickers, or verbal recognition. The emphasis on extrinsic motivation in this age group may reflect the developmental reality that younger children are still internalizing self regulatory capacities and therefore respond strongly to external contingencies (Wigfield et al., 2019). Also, the teacher dominated classroom culture prevalent in many Lagos public schools, where authority and compliance are highly valued, may naturally orient pupils toward seeking teacher approval as a primary source of motivational energy (Olaniyan & Salisu, 2023). This finding also echoes a large-scale study in Ghana that reported teacher praise and tangible rewards as the most powerful predictors of effortful engagement among primary two and three pupils (Asare & Mensah, 2022). Nevertheless, the fact that 77% of the variance in extrinsic motivation remained unexplained by teacher to pupil interaction suggests that other factors, including home environment, peer influence, and individual temperament, also play important roles. Furthermore, an overreliance on extrinsic motivators can sometimes undermine intrinsic interest if pupils come to perceive learning as merely a means to obtain rewards (Deci et al., 2017). This caution is particularly relevant for Lagos educators, who must balance the use of external incentives with strategies that also nurture internal curiosity and self-directed inquiry. Taken together, the two findings complement each other by demonstrating that both peer and teacher interactions contribute to

different but equally important dimensions of learning motivation in lower basic pupils.

Conclusion

This study established that classroom social interaction, both between peers and between teachers and pupils, is a significant correlate and predictor of learning motivation among lower basic pupils in Lagos State, Nigeria, with peer interaction showing a moderate positive relationship with intrinsic motivation and teacher pupil interaction accounting for nearly a quarter of the variance in extrinsic motivation. These findings emphasize the necessity for educational stakeholders in Lagos to move beyond traditional, teacher centred, and examination focused pedagogies toward more interactive, child friendly, and socially dynamic classroom environments that intentionally foster positive peer collaboration and responsive teacher pupil relationships. Practical implications include the need for pre service and in service teacher training programmes that equip educators with skills to organize cooperative learning groups, provide effective praise and feedback, and design activities that simultaneously satisfy pupils' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Policymakers within the Lagos State Ministry of Education should consider revising curriculum guidelines and classroom observation protocols to emphasize social interaction as a core component of instructional quality rather than a distraction from academic content. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine causal pathways and should explore moderating variables such as class size, gender, and socioeconomic status that may influence the strength of these relationships.

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