Motivation, trait anxiety, hope and academic achievement of EFL learners: A case study in Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates the current levels, relationship, and predictive value of motivation, trait anxiety, and hope on the English achievement as a foreign language of secondary school students. To this end, we employed a non-experimental or ex post-facto design. The sample consisted of 85 adolescent students (54.1% female, 45.9% male), enrolled in a public high school in Granada, Spain, who were assessed in motivation, trait anxiety, hope, and academic achievement. The results revealed average values across all assessed variables. Statistically significant gender differences were found in competence and control goals, worthy future, and trait anxiety, with females scoring higher in all three. Academic achievement in English showed significant correlations with several motivational and emotional variables, including hope, competence and control goals, worthy future, punishment avoidance, and interest in the subject. Furthermore, punishment avoidance and worthy future emerged as significant predictors of English academic achievement as a second language (L2). The results are discussed and evaluated for their implications for future research and improvements in educational practice.
Keywords: Motivation, Trait anxiety, Hope, Academic Achievement in English as L2, Secondary education.

Motivación, ansiedad rasgo, esperanza, y rendimiento académico de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera: un estudio de caso en la Educación Secundaria

RESUMEN: Este estudio investiga los niveles actuales, la relación y el valor predictivo de la motivación, la ansiedad rasgo y la esperanza en el rendimiento en inglés como lengua extranjera de estudiantes de secundaria. Para ello, empleamos un diseño no experimental o ex post-facto. La muestra consistió en 85 estudiantes adolescentes (54.1% mujeres, 45.9% hombres), matriculados en una escuela secundaria pública en Granada, España, que fueron evaluados en motivación, ansiedad rasgo, esperanza y rendimiento académico. Los resultados muestran valores promedio en todas las variables evaluadas; diferencias significativas de género, a favor de las mujeres, en metas de competencia y control, futuro valioso y ansiedad rasgo; relaciones significativas entre el rendimiento académico en inglés y las variables esperanza, metas de competencia y control, futuro valioso, evitación del castigo e interés en la materia; y la naturaleza predictiva de la evitación del castigo y el futuro valioso en el rendimiento académico en inglés como L2. Los resultados se discuten y evalúan por sus implicaciones para futuras investigaciones y mejoras en la práctica educativa.
Palabras clave: Motivación, Ansiedad rasgo, Esperanza, Rendimiento académico en inglés como L2, Educación secundaria.

1. INTRODUCTION

High school students face multiple factors influencing their academic achievement. Recent research has enhanced our understanding of English academic outcomes. Among these, second language acquisition (SLA) has received particular attention. SLA Proficiency varies significantly among students without a unifying explanatory factor (Gestanti & Nimasari, 2021). Differences in SLA appear to be related to levels of proficiency and exposure (Dörnyei, 1994; Pérez Cabello, 2023). In Spain, English is the second most taught language, but it remains a significant challenge. This has led to improvements in English language proficiency through bilingual education (Durán-Martínez & Fernández-Costales, 2025; Lorenzo et al., 2021; Martínez Agudo & Fielden Burns, 2021; Otto et al., 2024). However, English, as a subject, continues to be a deficient area in the curriculum. Despite, its progress, Spain holds a moderate position in the global ranking of English proficiency (EF EPI, 2024).

In 1996, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture and the British Council signed an agreement, starting bilingual curricula in 43 schools with 40% instruction in English (Ministerio de Educación y Cultura & British Council, 1996). Currently, 84% of early childhood students learn English as a first foreign language, and 100% receive second language instruction. In secondary education, 749 centres offer instruction in French, English, or German (Ortega-Martín et al., 2018). Enrolment in bilingual programmes grew from 240,154 in 2010-2011 to 1.5 million in 2022-23, with 95-95.5% choosing English (Ministry of Education, 2020, 2023).

In this context, it becomes particularly relevant to analyse the factors affecting academic achievement in English as a foreign language. Understanding these determinants helps educators and policymakers improve outcomes, reduce disparities, and maximise students´ potential.

Academic achievement is complex and multidimensional. Authors such as Edel Navarro (2003) and Rand et al. (2020) define it as the sum of numerous elements, including methodologies and both internal/external variables. García Jiménez (2000) includes skills, motivation, and contextual variables like teachers and family. Despite the diversity of perspectives, overall grades and average grades have been accepted as a good practical measure of academic performance (Allen, 2005; Goldhaber & Goodman Young, 2024; Suleiman et al., 2024).

Among the determinants of academic achievement, motivation stands out as crucial factor in English acquisition. It has consistently been identified as a key factor in second language (L2) learning outcomes (Nurhidayah, 2020; Saito et al., 2017; Toshnazarovna & Dmitriyevich, 2025). Motivation can compensate for deficiencies in language skills (Gardner, 1985), energising behaviour and giving it direction (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 518). Studies show that motivation positively correlates with academic achievement (Estevez et al., 2016; Guzmán-Zamora & Gutiérrez-García, 2020; Regueiro et al., 2016), and moderately with language proficiency (Fomento-Torres et al., 2023; Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2001).

In this regard, Oliver and Simpson (1988) found that attitude was not a strong predictor of academic achievement, but achievement motivation and self-concept were significant predictors. Estévez et al. (2016) and Formento-Torres et al. (2023) found that future oriented goals and avoiding punishment also predicted achievement. However, avoidance goals hindered it (Rodríguez et al., 2014).

In contrast, anxiety (often the opposite of motivation) negatively impacts SLA (Khesht-Masjedi et al., 2019). High trait anxiety is linked to communicative apprehension and fear of negative evaluation, reducing confidence and performance in foreign languages (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2001). Conversely, higher self-confidence has been shown to

increase willingness to communicate (Yashima, 2002), a key element in language acquisition. Recent meta-analyses confirm that anxiety negatively correlates with academic achievement, oral proficiency, and reluctance to use the language, suggesting the need for pedagogical support in this regard (Pacheco Vasquez & Veas Aguirre, 2024).

However, anxiety is complex and subjective. Recent studies confirm the multifaceted impact of anxiety on SLA (Adrianzén Segovia, 2021; Braun, 2024). The effect of anxiety varies depending on the language (Chastain, 1975). Research on its relationship with foreign language acquisition yields mixed results (Scovel, 1978). The impact of anxiety depends on its intensity. Excessive anxiety can be debilitating, but insufficient anxiety can reduce attention to language forms (Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2001). Trait anxiety has also been identified as a significant predictor of performance (Chastain, 1975; Cecilio et al., 2014; Colunga-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Pulido Acosta & Herrera Clavero, 2018), especially among Spanish students. Higher anxiety predicts poorer academic performance (Cecilio et al., 2014). However, while this is true, some research has failed to demonstrate a direct correlation between anxiety and performance, indicating that high-performing students may experience more anxiety due to fear of failure (Alfonso & Lonigan, 2021; Colunga-Rodríguez et al., 2021; Contreras et al., 2005; Macher et al., 2012; Martínez Monteagudo et al., 2013). Therefore, educational practice requires more empirical evidence in this regard.

Beyond motivation and anxiety, hope (linked to optimism and self-regulation) has also been associated with academic achievement (de Besa-Gutiérrez et al., 2019; Vizoso Gómez & Arias Gundín, 2018) and has recently garnered interest. Generally, hope is understood as a contributor to psychological well-being (Barragán Estrada, 2023; Knowlden et al., 2016; Snyder & López, 2002). Defined as a psychological trait, it involves goal-directed planning, persistence in effort (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Snyder, 2002; Vázquez-Espinosa & López-Suárez, 2022) and influences successful behavior by enabling positive perspectives despite uncertainty. However, research on the link between hope and achievement offers contradictory data. Some studies find that hope predicts better outcomes and planning (Dixson et al., 2017; Franch Belmonte et al., 2022; Snyder et al., 1991), while others do not find a direct influence between these variables (Rand, 2009; Wong & Cheung, 2024). Most research on hope and academic achievement has focused on university populations, with few studies addressing adolescents and school contexts (Buckelew et al., 2008; Ciarrochi et al., 2007; Dixson et al., 2017; Feldman & Kubota, 2015; Franch Belmonte et al., 2022; Leeson et al., 2008; Rand et al., 2011), and no previous study has examined the role of hope in second language acquisition among secondary school students learning English.

Research analysing gender differences in performance, motivation and anxiety offers contradictory and inconclusive results. Some studies (Castro Jiménez & León Mena, 2024; Ebenuwa-Okoh, 2010; Palomares-Ruiz et al., 2020) minimize the role of gender in academic performance. In contrast, others (Barca Enríquez et al., 2014; Cerezo Rusillo & Casanova Arias, 2004; Martin, 2011) suggest that gender interacts with performance when other factors such as motivation and self-perception are considered. Motivation and anxiety are also sensitive to gender. Girls tend to outperform boys in motivation (Lightbody et al., 1996; Pino-Juste et al., 2021). Anxiety is typically higher in girls than in boys (Dorn et al., 2009; Lagos San Martín et al., 2018; Lightbody et al., 1996; Pino-Juste et al., 2021). Finally, hope also varies by gender. Some studies have found that girls tend to report lower hope and more depressive symptoms (Siverio Eusebio & García Hernández, 2008; Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Andrade-Salazar et al., 2017), while others found that women were more hopeful compared to men (Caycho et al., 2016).

Taken together, all these findings highlight the need for further research. In light of the inconclusive evidence regarding the relationship and predictive role of motivation, trait anxiety, and hope in academic achievement, and the limited research specifically addressing English achievement among adolescents, this study aims to: describe the levels of these variables in Spanish high school students; examine their interrelationships; assess their predictive value for English achievement; and explore gender differences, contributing to a more inclusive and effective educational approach.

2. METHODOLOGY

To address the objectives of our research, this study followed a quantitative, non-experimental ex post-facto design. It was cross-sectional and included descriptive, correlational, and predictive analyses.

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 85 Spanish adolescents (39 males and 46 females), aged between 13 and 17 (M = 14.27, SD = 1.10). They were non-probabilistically selected from a public high school in Granada (Spain). All participants gave informed consent and volunteered for the study.

2.2. Instruments

2.1.1. Questionnaire for the assessment of academic goals in Secondary education (CEMA-II)

CEMA-II is an instrument designed by Núñez et al. (1997) composed of 42 Likert-type questions, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) and 8 subscales related to different types of Goals (G) that are related to different types of motivation: Learning-oriented goals (G2: to acquire competence and control; G7: to interest in subjects), self-oriented goals (G3: to defend the ego -performance-avoidance goals-; G6: to defend the ego; G8: to seek self-aggrandizement -performance-approach goals-), social valuation-oriented goals (G1: to acquire social recognition), and achievement or reward goals (G4: to the desire for a worthy future job; G5: to avoid punishment). Each subscale comprises between 4 and 7 items. The CEMA-II has been validated for Spanish adolescents (Núñez et al., 1997). In this study, Cronbach's alpha = 0.84, subscales ranged from 0.72 to 0.88; McDonald's omega = 0.83, subscales ranged from 0.70 to 0.87.

2.1.2. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory test for Children (STAIC)

To measure trait anxiety, we used the Spanish adaptation by Seisdedos (1990) of the original State/Trait Anxiety Self-Assessment Questionnaire in Children (STAI-C) by Spielberger (1973). This questionnaire comprises two independent scales that allow the specific evaluation of the anxiety factor in two modalities: anxiety as a transitory state and anxiety as a permanent trait. In the present investigation, only anxiety as a permanent trait was assessed. The scale consists of 20 items rated on a Likert-type response format with three different levels (rarely, nothing, and usually) valued from 1 to 3 points respectively so that the lowest possible score is 20 while the highest is 60. The STAIC has been validated in Spanish adolescents (Castrillón Moreno & Borrero Copete, 2005). In our sample, alpha = 0.82, omega = 0.81.

2.1.3. Children's Hope Scale (CHS)

The Hope data was collected using Children's Hope Scale (CHS) of Snyder et al. (1997). This questionnaire was created to evaluate the hopeful thinking associated with goal achievement in children and adolescents aged 8-16 years. It consists of 6 statements using a Likert scale with six anchors ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always). The CHS is divided into two dimensions: agency (3 items), which refers to the perceived ability to initiate and sustain goal-directed actions, and pathways (3 items), which assesses the perceived ability to generate routes toward goals. The final score is the sum of the raw scores of all the items. The CHS has proved its consistency. The Cronbach alphas for the original scale ranged from .72 and .86. The Spanish adaptation (Pulido-Martos et al., 2013) similarly, showed adequate internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76. Internal consistency in our sample: alpha = 0.71, omega = 0.70.

2.1.4. Academic achievement

Academic achievement was measured by the average English grades at the end of the second term (2021/2022), including exams, participation, homework, and other assignments. Data were obtained from the school's modern languages department.

2.3. Procedure

After initial contact with school staff, families, and students, and obtaining informed consent, data collection was scheduled during class time. Motivation, anxiety, and hope instruments were administered in three 30-minute sessions. Anonymous codes preserved participant confidentiality across sessions. Grades were obtained from teachers. All procedures adhered to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

2.4. Data Analysis

Once assessed, the data were transferred and analysed using SPSS version 21.0, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level ($p > .05$), except for the regression analysis, where a stricter 99% confidence level was applied. First, a descriptive analysis was performed to examine the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample and their levels of academic achievement, motivation, anxiety, and hope. Normality and homoscedasticity were confirmed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Levene's tests. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded p-values of 0.180 (English academic achievement), 0.112 (trait anxiety), and 0.140 (hope), indicating normal distribution. Levene's test showed no significant variance differences, with p-values of 0.185 (academic achievement), 0.215 (motivation), 0.147 (trait anxiety), and 0.132 (hope). Based on these results, Student's t test for independent samples was used to assess gender differences in academic achievement, trait anxiety, and hope. A MANOVA was conducted to analyse the effect of gender on academic goals (subscales G1–G8 of the CEMA-II), given their shared construct and intercorrelations. This approach avoids Type I error inflation associated with multiple univariate tests. When MANOVA results were significant, follow-up ANOVAs were carried out to identify specific dimensions with significant differences. Effect sizes were calculated separately: partial eta squared (η_p^2) for MANOVA

and ANOVA, and Cohen's *d* for *t* tests. According to Cohen (1988), η_p^2 values of 0.01, 0.06, and 0.14 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively; Cohen's *d* values of 0.20, 0.50, and 0.80 represent small, medium, and large effects. Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships between English academic achievement and the studied variables. Finally, simple and multiple regression analyses were conducted to explore the predictive value of motivation, trait anxiety, and hope on academic achievement in English.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Academic achievement, motivation, trait anxiety and hope levels

The descriptive analysis (see Table 1) shows that the mean English academic achievement is 6.66 (SD = 2.16) out of 10, indicating an above-average result. Regarding academic motivation subcategories (scale 1 to 5), the highest means is for academic reward goals (M = 3.18), especially desire for a decent future job, followed by social valuation goals (M = 3.01), and learning-oriented goals (M = 2.72), focused on competence and control. Self-oriented goals (M = 2.45), based on performance-approach involvement, are lower. Trait Anxiety has a mean of 4.32 (SD = 2.32), indicating below-average anxiety and some stability in anxious propensity. Hope shows an average value of 5.31 (SD = 1.96), reflecting students' perceived goal-achievement ability.

Table 1. *Descriptive analysis*

	n	*Min.*	*Max.*	*Mean*	*SD*
English Academic achievement	85	2.00	10.00	6.66	2.16
Academic goals					
Learning-oriented academic goals:					
(G2) Competence and control	85	1.00	4.86	3.14	0.89
(G7) Interest in subjects	85	1.00	4.00	2.30	0.84
Self-oriented academic goals:					
(G3) Performance-avoidance goals	85	1.00	4.83	2.25	0.95
(G6) Work-avoidance goals	85	1.00	4.43	2.24	0.74
(G8) Performance-approach goals	85	1.00	5.00	2.87	1.07
Social valuation-oriented academic goals:					
(G1) Social recognition	85	1.00	5.00	3.01	1.01
Achievement or reward academic goals:					
(G4) Worthy Future	85	1.20	5.00	3.71	0.94
(G5) Avoid Punishment	85	1.00	5.00	2.66	0.96
Trait Anxiety	85	0.50	9.25	4.32	2.32
Hope	85	0.67	9.33	5.31	1.96

3.2. Gender differences by academic achievement, motivation, trait anxiety and hope

Table 2 presents mean, standard deviations, *t*-test results and significance by gender. Both males (M = 6.46) and females (M = 6.83) have above-average English achievement, with females scoring higher but not significantly. MANOVA indicated a significant multivariate gender effect on motivation goals (Wilks' Λ = 0.764, F = 2.57, p = 0.016, η_p^2 = 0.213). Univariate tests found significant differences in competence and control goals (G2) (F = 5.24, p = 0.024, η_p^2 = 0.059) and future value goals (G4) (F = 7.13, p = 0.009, η_p^2 = 0.079), with higher scores in females. Trait anxiety was significantly higher in females (*t* = -3.29; p < 0.01, d = 0.73). Hope means were 5.55 for males and 5.11 for females, with no significant difference.

Table 2. *MANOVA, ANOVAs and t-test results comparing males and females on English academic achievement, motivation, trait anxiety and hope*

	Male		Female		Statistic	p	Effect size
	M	SD	M	SD			
English Academic achievement	6.46	2.18	6.83	2.16	-0.77	.442	
Academic goals							
(G1) Social recognition	2.80	0.91	3.19	1.07	3.21	.076	
(G2) Competence and control	2.91	0.89	3.34	0.85	5.24	.024*	.059
(G3) Performance-avoidance goals	2.12	0.74	2.35	1.10	1.38	.245	
(G4) Worthy Future	3.43	0.85	3.96	0.96	7.13	.009**	.079
(G5) Avoid Punishment	2.83	0.89	2.52	1.01	2.13	.147	
(G6) Work-avoidance goals	2.28	0.71	2.21	0.78	0.23	.632	
(G7) Interest in subjects	2.19	0.82	2.40	0.84	1.32	.252	
(G8) Performance-approach goals	2.84	0.97	2.89	1.15	0.04	.847	
Trait Anxiety	3.46	1.96	5.04	2.37	-3.29	.001***	0.73
Hope	5.55	1.81	5.11	2.09	1.02	.307	

Note: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05. English academic achievement, Trait anxiety and Hope range from 1 to 10. The subgoals from the motivation test range from 1 (never) to 5 (always). ANOVAs were used for academic goal subscales (G1–G8), and independent samples *t*-tests were applied to English Academic achievement, Trait Anxiety, and Hope. MANOVA of Academic goals: Wilks' Λ = 0.764, F = 2.57, p = 0.016, η_p^2 = 0.213.

3.3. Relationship between academic achievement, motivation, trait anxiety and hope

Pearson correlations (Table 3) indicate low but significant positive correlations between English academic achievement and Hope (r = 0.26, p < 0.05), Competence and control goals (G2) (r = 0.32, p < 0.01), Worthy Future goals (G4) (r = 0.30, p < 0.01), and Interest in Subjects goals (G7) (r = 0.25, p < 0.05). These correlations suggest that increased motivation in these subcategories and higher hope levels relate to better English achievement. Conversely, Avoid Punishment goals (G5) correlate negatively with achievement (r = -0.34, p < 0.01), indicating that motivation driven by avoiding punishment relates to lower English grades. Other variables showed no significant correlations.

Table 3. *Correlation coefficients*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. English Academic achievement										
2. (G1) Social recognition	.09									
3. (G2) Competence and control	.32**	.53**								
4. (G3) Performance-avoidance goals	-.02	.70**	.34**							
5. (G4) Worthy Future	.30**	.44**	.56**	.44**						
6. (G5) Avoid Punishment	-.34**	.29**	-.01	.31**	.17					
7. (G6) Work-avoidance goals	-.21	.18	-.11	.44**	-.13	.27*				
8. (G7) Interest in subjects	.25*	.37**	.55**	.15	.27*	-.07	-.13			
9. (G8) Performance-approach goals	-.03	.73**	.28*	.73**	.390**	.49**	.33**	.12		
10. Trait Anxiety	-.01	.34**	.25*	.39**	.22*	.12	.35**	.13	.21	
11. Hope	.26*	.03	.17	-.17	.13	-.32**	-.31**	.16	-.12	-.48**

Note: *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; n = 85

3.4. Motivation, trait anxiety and hope as academic achievement predictor variables

By making use of the multiple lineal regression model, we aim to outline the relationship between two or more independent variables and our dependent variable. To build an efficient Student's English Performance model, we selected the most significant variables: the avoid Punishment goal (G5) and the Worthy future goal (G4). We then checked the assumptions about our lineal regression analysis to examine whether our results are accurate or not based on the guidelines provided by prior research (Osborne & Waters, 2002). To ensure that there was no multicollinearity between these two variables, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between the predictors. The avoid Punishment goal (G5) coefficient ($r = -0.34$) and the Worthy future goal (G4) coefficient ($r = 0.30$) suggested that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated. Furthermore, tolerance (0.97) and variance inflation factor (1.03) did not indicate a violation of this assumption.

A multiple linear regression analysis (enter method) was performed to examine whether English academic achievement could be predicted by the Worthy Future goal (G4) and the Avoid Punishment goal (G5). The model was statistically significant ($F = 1.19$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 24.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.24$). Both G5 ($B = -0.89$, $t = -4.07$, $p < 0.001$) and G4 ($B = 0.84$, $t = 3.77$, $p < 0.001$) contributed significantly to the prediction of English achievement (see Table 4). Additional models including more variables were tested, but none yielded substantial improvements in explained variance, nor did they report significant predictors.

The model predicting English academic achievement is: *English Academic achievement = 5.90 – 0.89*Avoid Punishment (G5) + 0.84*Worthy Future (G4)*

Table 4. *Multiple linear regression model*

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	5.90	0.95	-	6.19	< .001***
Avoid Punishment (G5)	-0.89	0.22	-0.40	-4.07	< .001***
Worthy Future (G4)	0.84	0.22	0.37	3.77	< .001***

Note: B = unstandardized Beta. SE B = Standard Error for the unstandardized beta. β = Standardized beta, t = t-test statistics. p = probability value. *** $p < .001$

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This study offers a novel contribution by jointly examining motivation, trait anxiety, and hope as predictors the academic achievement in English as a second language, an area scarcely explored in previous research.

The first objective was to determine the levels of English academic achievement, motivation, trait anxiety, and hope. We found above-average grades in achievement (6.7 out of 10), motivation subcategories (3.18 on a scale from 1 to 5), and hope (5.31 out of 10), with below-average levels of trait anxiety. These results are informative for tailoring educational interventions. For instance, moderate motivation and high hope levels suggest the value of promoting goal-oriented activities linked to students' aspirations.

The second objective examined gender differences. Significant differences were found only for trait anxiety and the motivational subcategories of Worthy-Future (G4) and Competence-and-Control goals (G2). Female students reported much higher levels of trait anxiety than males, mirroring prior findings (Dorn et al., 2009). In motivation, female students exhibited a greater drive towards academic and achievement goals, while males showed a stronger pattern towards social reinforcement goals (Delgado et al., 2010; Ruiz-Esteban et al., 2018). Girls ranked higher in every motivational subcategory except Avoid Punishment (G5) and Work-Avoidance (G6), aligning with existing research (Martin, 2011; Ramudo Andión et al., 2017; Ruiz-Esteban et al., 2018). Girls also used more effective learning strategies, such as time management and persistence, but reported greater anxiety.

The third objective aimed to verify the relationship between English academic achievement and motivation, trait anxiety, and hope. English academic achievement positively correlated with hope and the subgoals of Competence and Control (G2) and Worthy Future (G4), and negatively with Avoid Punishment (G5). This suggests that long-term aspirations and beliefs in competence enhance English performance, while fear-based motives hinder it, in line with Estevez et al. (2016). Trait anxiety did not correlate with academic success (Macher et al., 2012; Fernández-Castillo and Gutiérrez Rojas, 2009).

The fourth objective tested whether psychological traits predict academic achievement in English. Previous studies have used this tool to predict academic achievement (Ferragut & Fierro, 2012; García Jiménez et al., 2000; Navalón Mira & Ruiz-Callado, 2017; Ramudo Andión et al., 2017), our regression analysis only confirmed G5 and G4 as significant predictors—negatively and positively, respectively. Thus, trait anxiety, and hope were not predictors of English academic achievement, partially coinciding with Estevez et al. (2016). These results are particularly noteworthy because they reveal how two motivational subgoals of predominantly extrinsic nature—Avoid Punishment and Worthy Future— exert opposite

effects but share an extrinsic character (Raab et al., 2024). While the former is short-term and avoidance-driven, the latter is long-term and aspiration-based. This dual role of extrinsic motivation implies that educational interventions should not just boost motivation, but shape its direction toward constructive, future-focused goals.

Given the importance of mastering academic English, it is vital to understand the psychological variables influencing SLA. Gender-based differences revealed that males are more socially motivated, while females are more academically and intrinsically driven. However, girls also suffer greater trait anxiety, potentially affecting their engagement with language learning tasks. Overall, the strongest driver across the sample was the aspiration for a better future. Students oriented towards long-term goals performed better, whereas those driven by fear of punishment underperformed. These results echo Estevez et al. (2016) and Pawlak & Moustafa (2023), though Leondari (2007) warned that future orientation does not always correlate positively with achievement.

Despite significant gender differences in anxiety, trait anxiety did not predict English performance. Multivariate analysis was also employed to explore interactions among variables, offering a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics between motivation, anxiety, and hope (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

4.1. Implications for educational practice

Teachers should encourage students' active roles through collaborative decision-making, peer learning, and goal-setting activities. Emphasising the connection between academic effort and long-term aspirations is essential, particularly in the context of English, a vital tool in a globalised world.

Educators and families must cultivate non-punitive environments, as fear-based motivation undermines learning. Instead, schools should nurture intrinsic and long-term motivation, valuing personal growth and effort. These insights call for pedagogical strategies tailored to varied motivational profiles, ensuring personalized, future-oriented teaching.

Additionally, programs to foster self-esteem and control over learning are recommended, particularly to enhance English achievement.

4.2. Future studies

Future research should include experimental designs to test motivational interventions in classroom settings and their influence on long-term academic outcomes. Longitudinal studies could provide insight into how reducing punitive practices impacts learning environments over time.

It is also essential to examine diverse motivational profiles and their effects on performance, especially across different educational contexts. This would clarify how factors like anxiety, motivation, and hope interact with achievement. Prior research (Deci & Ryan, 2020) has shown that intrinsic motivation and long-term goal pursuit benefit academic performance more than extrinsic or avoidance-based motives, a finding aligned with our data.

These findings are limited using a non-probabilistic, purposive sample of students, which introduces potential biases and limits the generalizability of the results. The small

sample size and the single-institution case study design further constrain broader applicability. Moreover, relying exclusively on self-report instruments and an ex post facto design entails methodological limitations.

Nevertheless, studies like this are essential to identify factors that may hinder or enhance students' classroom language performance and offer practical insights for improving English teaching practices.

5. References

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