

Influence of Selected Administrative School Factors on Motivation and Learning Achievement among Tamil-Medium Senior Secondary Students

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Abstract

Motivation plays an important role in learning achievement. Although Sri Lanka is known for free education, Discrepancies in school contextual factors are noted among selected administrative school factors. This descriptive cross-sectional survey study aimed to study the influence of selected administrative factors on motivation and learning achievement. This study was conducted among grade 10 and 11 Tamil-medium school students in the Colombo educational zone. 360 students were selected using stratified random sampling, and 24 teachers, 72 parents, and 12 principals also participated in the study. The validated Adapted AMS was used to assess motivation, and average examination marks were used to assess learning achievement. 1AB school students showed the highest levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and learning achievement, followed by 1C, whereas type II school students showed comparatively lower levels ($p < .001$). A significant difference in learning achievement was observed between national and provincial schools ($p < .001$). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels are higher in national schools than in provincial schools ($p < .001$). The Borella educational division showed the highest learning achievement, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation, with a significant difference in learning achievement across educational divisions ($p < .001$). Extrinsic motivation was higher than intrinsic motivation in national schools and 1AB schools, while intrinsic motivation was higher than extrinsic motivation in provincial schools, 1C, and type II schools. This study showed the significant influence of school type, educational division, and governance on motivation and learning achievement. School-level inequalities should be addressed to ensure that all students have equal opportunities for quality education. Further action should be taken to improve motivation among students in disadvantaged schools.

Keywords: Intrinsic motivation, Extrinsic motivation, School context, Learning achievement

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Introduction

Motivation is inspiration or impetus to engage and be actively involved in an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2020). Motivation can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic, based on its origin. Intrinsic motivation makes a person act towards a goal for their own satisfaction or personal interest. Extrinsic motivation leads a person to act in response to external incentives, such as rewards, fear of punishment, or failure (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2020).

It is observed that students have different levels of motivation to study. Studies have shown that students with higher levels of motivation performed well academically (Athirathan, 2025; Deci & Ryan, 2020). Differences in motivation and learning achievement among students can be explained by self-determination theory (SDT). SDT proposes that students motivated by extrinsic rewards, punishment, or fear of failure generally exhibit lower-quality motivation and comparatively lower levels of learning achievement (Deci & Ryan, 2020).

Sri Lanka offers free education for all. It has the highest youth literacy rate in South Asia and lower-middle-income countries (World Bank, 2025). The Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, classified government schools as 1AB, 1C, and type II based on the availability of advanced-level education streams. 1AB schools offer all advanced-level streams, including the science stream. 1C schools offer advanced levels only in the arts and commerce streams. Type II schools have education up to grade 11 without an advanced level (Sarma et al., 2018; UNICEF, 2013).

Generally, 1AB schools have more resources and facilities, including human resources, well-equipped laboratories, and good infrastructure, compared to 1C and type II schools. Schools are also categorized into national and provincial schools based on governance by the central government (national schools) and the provincial government (provincial schools). National schools often include type 1AB schools and usually receive better funding and resources compared to provincial schools. National schools are usually considered among the best in the region and have more IT facilities, libraries, and science teachers than provincial Schools (Sarma et al., 2018).

Administration of schools within a district is divided into educational zones, and these are further subdivided into education divisions. Educational zones have educational divisions that are in both rural and urban areas. The location of schools also influences their facilities, as urban schools usually have adequate numbers of qualified teachers and facilities.

Learning achievement differs between schools. National schools had higher pass rates in grade five scholarships, Ordinary Level, and Advanced Level exams

compared to provincial schools. 1C and type II schools had lower pass rates in these examinations (Sarma et al., 2018). Abayasekara and Arunatilake (2018) also pointed out that less privileged schools perform lower than privileged schools in academic outcomes. This raises the possibility that school types, governance, and administrative factors influence learning achievement.

This study considers selected administrative school factors, such as school type, educational division, and governance, and examines their influence on students' motivation and learning achievement.

No local or international studies are available on the influence of school types and administrative factors on motivation and learning achievement. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature and take the necessary steps to address any deficiencies.

Literature Review

Theoretical perspectives

This study is mainly based on SDT, complemented by insights from social cognitive theory (SCT). SDT helps to explain the differences in motivation and learning achievement among students. It suggests that intrinsic motivation and internalization give better academic results than extrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2020) cited several studies supporting these findings in their article. Students' basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, need to be supported to develop intrinsic motivation. The state of control over one's own actions is called autonomy. When a person feels he can succeed, that feeling is called competence. A sense of connection or belonging is relatedness. Students realize the importance and value of studying and derive inherent pleasure from it when these basic needs are satisfied. It contributes to developing intrinsic motivation. Motivation related to external factors, such as rewards, fear of punishment, or fear of failure, could lead students to study without recognizing the value of learning. It can affect continuous learning and long-term learning achievement. However, SDT also described autonomous components in extrinsic motivation. Internalization is a process that makes a person realize the importance of studying or engaging in a learning activity, even when the initial stimulus is an external factor. Internalization helps develop autonomy within the context of extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2020).

School contextual factors such as examination practices, teacher support, peer climate, resources, and facilities would shape the motivation students develop. Teachers' expectations and peer competition contribute to extrinsic motivation.

However, the school environment can also play a central role in the internalization and development of autonomous motivation. Administrative school factors such as school type and governance can indirectly influence resources, teacher availability, and teacher support, and serve as proxy indicators of school contextual factors. School types and administrative factors could shape motivational orientation and, in turn, learning achievement.

SCT is used to explain how administrative school factors influence motivation. SCT explains how human functioning is shaped through triadic reciprocal determinism. Personal factors such as beliefs, motivation, and behavior, as well as environmental influences, cross-react with one another in a reciprocal pattern. Environmental circumstances can shape personal factors such as motivation. School type can reflect variations in school contextual factors such as resource allocation, infrastructure, teacher availability, and the competitive learning environment. Administrative school factors, such as school type, are more likely to influence self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, observational learning, and social reinforcement. It can shape the type of motivation a student develops as well as how students perceive motivation and learning achievement (Bandura, 1989).

This study integrates SDT and SCT to explain how structural and administrative differences in schools could influence motivation and learning achievement.

Influence of selected Administrative School factors on motivation and learning achievement

No published studies in Sri Lanka have specifically examined the influence of school types, governance, and educational division on motivation and learning achievement. The literature review has revealed that several studies have highlighted inequalities in resources and facilities across different school types. Rural and less privileged schools had fewer resources and facilities than urban and privileged schools (Abayasekara & Arunatilake, 2018; Sarma et al., 2018).

Perera (2021) pointed out that inadequate classroom resources and low-quality teaching-learning resources negatively impact students' motivation and learning engagement. Supratno et al. (2021) also found that the school environment has a significant effect on learning achievement. Therefore, we suggest that differences in school types, governance, and educational divisions can affect students' motivation and learning achievement due to variations in resources, facilities, and school environments.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To examine the influence of selected administrative school factors (school type: 1AB, 1C, and Type II; governance: national and provincial schools; and educational division) on student motivation and learning achievement among Tamil-medium senior secondary students in the Colombo Educational Zone.

Objectives

1. To examine differences in learning achievement across selected administrative school factors.
2. To examine differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation across selected administrative school factors.
3. To compare intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within different administrative school factors.

Methodology

This is a descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted among Grade 10 and 11 students in Tamil-medium schools in the Colombo Education Zone. 360 students (180 boys and 180 girls) were selected from 12 schools using a stratified random sampling method, including students from both national and provincial schools, and participated in the study. Two-stage stratified random sampling was used. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select schools by school type and educational division. Then, disproportionate stratified random sampling was used to obtain equal numbers of male and female students from each selected school. 24 class teachers, 72 parents, and 12 principals also participated in this study to give supplementary information. A validated, adapted version of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS), developed by Vallerand et al. (1992), was used to measure motivation directly among the selected students. AMS assesses motivation, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. The wording of the AMS was adapted to the local Sri Lankan cultural context while preserving the original content. Scales, subscales, and response format were preserved. Satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = .832$) was observed in a pilot study using the adapted AMS scale.

Average marks obtained in the most recent school term examinations conducted by the Department of Education of Colombo Education Zone were used to assess the learning achievement. As all students sat the same examination papers, the

average marks could serve as a comparable standard measure of learning achievement. This method is also used to reduce variability in assessments conducted by individual teachers and schools. Quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS. As the motivation scores did not follow a normal distribution, nonparametric statistical tests were used in the analysis.

Results and Discussion

Differences in learning achievement across selected administrative school factors

Differences in Learning Achievement among School Types

Table 1

Differences in Learning Achievement among School Types

Variable	<i>H</i> (<i>df</i> = 2)	<i>p</i> value	Mean Rank 1 AB (<i>n</i> = 120)	Mean Rank 1C (<i>n</i> = 150)	Mean Rank Type II (<i>n</i> = 90)
Learning Achievement	103.98	< .001	253.80	163.79	110.62

(Source: Students' questionnaire, 2025)

As shown in Table 1, significant differences in learning achievement were observed among the different types of schools ($p < .001$). Mean ranks were highest in 1AB schools and lowest in the type II schools. This trend is comparable to previous studies (Abayasekara & Arunatilake, 2018; Sarma et al., 2018). This difference could be related to differences in resource allocation, quality of teaching, and education environment.

Comparison of Learning Achievement between National and Provincial Schools

As shown in Table 2, the median learning achievement appears similar for both provincial and national schools. However, a statistically significant difference was noted due to differences in the distribution of achievement (interquartile range). This indicates that school governance has a significant influence on learning achievement. Provincial schools also include type 1AB schools, which could have contributed to the identical central tendency for both national and provincial schools.

Table 2*Comparison of Learning Achievement between National and Provincial Schools*

Variable	National (n = 90) Median (IQR)	Provincial (n = 270) Median (IQR)	Mann– Whitney U	Z	p (2-tailed)
Learning Achievement	50.00 (31.11)	50.00 (30.42)	5665.50	7.584	< .001

(Source: Students' questionnaire, 2025)

***Differences in Learning Achievement across Educational Divisions
(Kruskal–Wallis H Test)***

Table 3*Differences in Learning Achievement across Educational Divisions*

Variable	Mean Rank (Col- South)	Mean Rank (Col- Central)	Mean Rank (Col- North)	Mean Rank (Borella)	H (df = 3)	p
Learning Achievement	174.76	171.14	167.69	275.67	27.63	< .001

(Source: Students' questionnaire, 2025)

Table 3 shows a statistically significant difference in learning achievement across educational divisions in the Colombo educational zone. These indications of learning achievement differ among educational divisions. These findings reveal that learning achievement across divisions is Borella > Colombo South > Colombo Central > Colombo North. This indicates that educational divisions have an influence on the learning achievement of students.

Differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation across selected administrative school factors

Table 4

Differences in Motivation Dimensions Among School Types

Variable	<i>H</i> (<i>df</i> = 2)	<i>p</i> value	Mean Rank 1AB (<i>n</i> = 120)	Mean Rank 1C (<i>n</i> = 150)	Mean Rank Type II (<i>n</i> = 90)
IM to Know	53.04	< .001	227.58	177.42	122.86
IM to Accomplish	46.75	< .001	227.32	173.36	129.98
IM to Stimulation	32.14	< .001	217.13	178.05	135.74
Intrinsic Motivation	46.47	< .001	222.23	181.35	123.44
EM Introjected	64.02	< .001	238.28	165.32	128.75
EM Identified	68.30	< .001	238.71	168.71	122.53
EM External Regulation	85.47	< .001	247.20	162.53	121.53
Extrinsic Motivation	85.81	< .001	246.18	167.02	115.41
Overall Motivation	63.80	< .001	232.98	176.31	117.51

Note. IM- Intrinsic motivation, EM- Extrinsic motivation

According to Table 4, statistically significant differences were observed among school types for intrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation subscales, extrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation subscales, and overall motivation. 1AB school students had the highest mean ranks, while type II schools had the lowest, compared with other school types. Motivation also remains higher among students in 1AB schools than in other schools. This could also be explained by teacher expectations, school resources, and quality education in 1AB schools.

Post hoc pairwise comparisons using the Dunn-Bonferroni test further confirmed the significant differences among school types, indicating that each school type differs from the others in both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Tables 5 and 6).

Post-hoc Pairwise Comparisons of Intrinsic Motivation among School Types

Table 5

Post-hoc Pairwise Comparisons of Intrinsic Motivation among School Types

Comparison	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Adj. <i>p</i> -value	Interpretation
1AB vs 1C	40.879	12.731	.004	Significant
1AB vs Type II	98.785	14.495	.000	Significant
1C vs Type II	57.906	13.859	.000	Significant

(Source: Students' questionnaire, 2025)

Post-hoc Pairwise Comparisons of Extrinsic Motivation among School Types

Table 6

Post-hoc Pairwise Comparisons of Extrinsic Motivation among School Types (Dunn–Bonferroni Test)

Comparison	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Adjusted <i>p</i> -Value	Interpretation
1AB vs 1C	79.158	12.724	< .001	Significant
1AB vs Type II	130.769	14.487	< .001	Significant
1C vs Type II	51.611	13.853	.001	Significant

(Source: Students' questionnaire, 2025)

Comparison of Motivation Dimensions between National and Provincial Schools

Table 7 shows statistically significant differences in intrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation subscales, extrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation subscales, and overall motivation. This indicates that school governance has a significant influence on motivation. However, most intrinsic motivation measures and subscales showed similar median values across national and provincial schools, with differences in the distribution of motivation levels. Extrinsic motivation and external regulation showed larger differences in median values between national and provincial schools, with higher values for national schools. Higher values in national schools might be due to the competitive school environment.

Table 7

Comparison of Motivation Dimensions between National and Provincial Schools

Variable	National (<i>n</i> = 270) Median (IQR)	Provincial (<i>n</i> = 90) Median (IQR)	Mann– Whitney <i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)
IM To Know	6.00 (4.13)	6.00 (5.00)	8584.00	4.200	< .001
IM To Accomplish	6.00 (4.00)	6.00 (5.00)	8018.50	4.861	< .001
IM To Stimulation	6.00 (4.44)	6.00 (5.38)	8450.00	4.364	< .001
Intrinsic Motivation	6.08 (4.21)	6.00 (5.00)	8423.50	4.364	< .001
EM Introjected	6.25 (4.81)	6.25 (5.50)	7132.00	5.943	< .001
EM Identified	6.00 (3.50)	6.00 (5.00)	6708.50	6.407	< .001
EM External Regulation	6.50 (4.25)	6.25 (5.25)	6388.50	6.852	< .001
Extrinsic Motivation	6.25 (3.85)	6.17 (5.09)	6184.00	6.989	< .001
Overall Motivation	6.15 (4.03)	6.06 (4.96)	7419.50	5.535	< .001

Note. IM- Intrinsic motivation, EM- Extrinsic motivation

Differences in Motivation Dimensions across Educational Divisions

Table 8 shows statistically significant differences in overall motivation, intrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation subscales, extrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation subscales across educational divisions in the Colombo educational zone. These findings reveal a gradient in motivation across divisions: Borella > Colombo South > Colombo Central > Colombo North. Therefore, motivation and learning achievement differ among educational divisions (Tables 3 and 8).

Table 8

Differences in Motivation Dimensions across Educational Divisions

Variable	Mean Rank (Col- South)	Mean Rank (Col- Central)	Mean Rank (Col- North)	Mean Rank (Borella)	<i>H</i> (<i>df</i> = 3)	<i>p</i>
IM to Know	188.40	178.28	150.97	236.25	16.997	.001
IM to Accomplish	187.39	176.06	150.08	250.60	22.388	< .001
IM to Stimulation	188.31	175.26	152.79	240.27	17.641	.001
Intrinsic Motivation	187.80	178.07	147.56	250.12	23.286	< .001
EM Introjected	188.71	179.69	150.01	233.33	16.814	.001
EM Identified	184.45	174.72	154.56	255.93	22.141	< .001
EM External Regulation	191.72	165.76	159.07	232.93	15.488	.001
Extrinsic Motivation	189.29	171.56	151.41	250.67	22.480	< .001
Overall Motivation	189.13	175.06	147.15	253.73	25.400	< .001

Note. Division coding: 1 = Colombo South, 2 = Colombo Central, 3 = Colombo North, 4 = Borella, IM- Intrinsic motivation, EM- Extrinsic motivation

The Borella Education Division has some well-known, resourceful schools, while Colombo North has fewer. Although all the educational divisions are in urban areas, Borella is surrounded by more well-developed urban settings than the others. This indicates that not only school type and governance, but also the location of schools could influence motivation and learning achievement.

The difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within the administrative school factors

Extrinsic motivation was the dominant motivation type in 1AB and national schools, whereas intrinsic motivation was dominant in 1C and type II schools (Tables 9 and 10, and Figures 1 and 2).

Table 9*Comparison between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation within School Types*

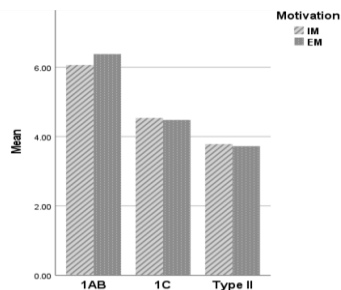
School Type	Negative Ranks (IM > EM)	Positive Ranks (EM > IM)	Ties	Z	p-Value	Interpretation
1AB	29	82	9	-5.365	< .001	EM is significantly higher than IM
1C	76	50	24	-2.379	.017	IM is significantly higher than EM
TYPE II	52	21	17	-2.060	.039	IM is significantly higher than EM

Note. IM- Intrinsic motivation, EM- Extrinsic motivation

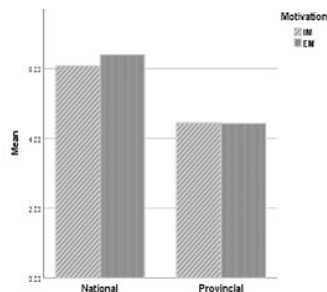
National schools and 1AB schools usually attract high-achieving students due to the availability of science streams and facilities. A relatively highly competitive academic environment is evident in national and 1AB schools. It can contribute to dominant extrinsic motivation in students. Other factors, such as teachers' expectations and emphasis on examinations, could also contribute to extrinsic motivation.

Figure 1

Mean of Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation by School Type (1AB, 1C, Type II)

**Figure 2**

Mean of Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation by School Type (National, Provincial)



On the other hand, 1C and type II schools predominantly have intrinsic motivation, which needs to be appreciated. A similar pattern was noted in provincial schools as well. Lower levels of extrinsic motivation compared to intrinsic motivation could be due to a less competitive academic environment.

Table 10

Comparison between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation by Governance

Group	Negative Ranks (IM > EM)	Positive Ranks (EM > IM)	Ties	Z	p-value	Motivation Higher
National	20	64	6	-4.809	< .001	EM is significantly higher
Provincial	137	89	44	-2.037	.042	IM is significantly higher

Note. IM- Intrinsic motivation, EM- Extrinsic motivation

Comparison between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation across Educational Divisions

Table 11

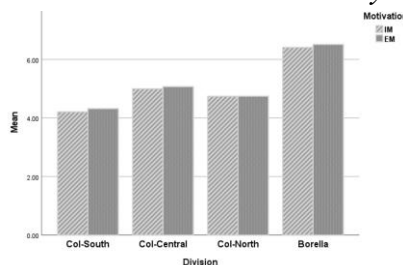
Comparison between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation across Educational Divisions

Division	Negative Ranks (IM > EM)	Positive Ranks (EM > IM)	Ties	Z	P-Value	Interpretation
Col-South	46	34	10	-0.505	0.613	No significant difference
Col-Central	66	60	24	-0.997	0.319	No significant difference
Col-North	38	39	13	0.000	1.000	No difference (equal sums)
Borella	7	20	3	-1.628	0.104	EM is slightly higher, but no significant difference

Note. IM- Intrinsic motivation, EM- Extrinsic motivation

Figure 3

Mean of Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation by Division



No dominant motivation type was identified among the educational divisions. It could be due to the balanced distribution of 1AB, 1C, and type II schools in each educational division (Table 11 and Figure 3).

Limitations and Future Research

This study had several limitations. Social desirability bias might affect self-administered questionnaires used to collect data. This descriptive cross-sectional survey design would limit the ability to establish a cause-and-effect relationship. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how motivation and learning achievement change over time. This study was conducted in Tamil-medium schools in the Colombo Educational Zone. Most of the students live in urban areas. This affects the generalizability of the results to the entire population of Sri Lanka. This study needs to be expanded to include rural areas, Sinhala- and English-medium students, and students from other districts to generalize the findings to the Sri Lankan population. This study examined only the selected administrative school factors, such as school type, governance, and educational division. Future research is recommended to incorporate additional structural, organizational, and environmental school-contextual factors. This article is based on a larger study that collected and analyzed data on family income, gender, school resources, school types, location of school, and parental education. A detailed explanation of other factors is beyond the scope of this article. Those findings would be reported in separate articles.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the influence of selected administrative school factors on motivation and learning achievement among Tamil medium senior secondary students in the Colombo educational zone. We studied the influence of school types, governance, and educational divisions.

The results showed significant differences in learning achievement across school types and governance structures, with students in 1AB and national schools demonstrating the highest achievement. The results also revealed that motivation levels, including both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, differed across school types and governance structures, with the highest levels noted in 1AB and national schools. Both 1AB and national schools showed higher levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation than other schools in their respective categories. However, both 1AB schools and national schools had extrinsic motivation as their dominant motivation type.

1AB schools and national schools usually have comparatively high resources, facilities, and availability of the science stream at advanced levels. These schools are well known regionally and attract highly achieving students. They also offer a highly competitive academic environment for students. These can contribute to higher levels of learning achievement and motivation in students. A competitive academic environment could contribute to dominant extrinsic motivation.

Statistically significant differences were noted in both motivation and learning achievement across the educational divisions of the Colombo education zone. The Borella education zone, located in a well-developed urban setting, had the highest levels of motivation and learning achievement. This suggests that location and the school environment may also influence motivation and learning achievement.

This study provides evidence that selected administrative school factors, such as school type, governance, and educational divisions, significantly influence motivation and achievement. Motivation and learning achievement differed across selected administrative school factors. As described earlier in the literature review, SDT and SCT can explain differences in the influence of school factors, such as school type, governance, and educational division, on motivation and learning achievement. Both theories explain that support for autonomy is influenced by external pressures, environmental factors, self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, observational learning, and social reinforcement.

Policymakers and educators should focus on addressing inequalities across schools stemming from school type and governance. Necessary steps should be taken to ensure that all students in the country have equal access to quality education. When all schools have access to resources such as teachers, infrastructure, well-equipped laboratories, and libraries, it would create an academic environment that is not only competitive but also conducive to the development of intrinsic motivation through internalization.

Schools should focus on improving intrinsic motivation as well as the autonomous components of extrinsic motivation. 1AB and national schools showed extrinsic motivation as the dominant motivation. As proposed by the SDT, special emphasis should be placed on internalization and development of the autonomous component of extrinsic motivation in the 1AB and national schools.

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