ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND READING MOTIVATION AS DETERMINANTS OF READING COMPREHENSION AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS IN BACULIN INTEGRATED SCHOOL, SURIGAO SUR DIVISION: A DESCRIPTIVE-CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated English language anxiety and reading motivation as determinants of reading comprehension among Junior High School learners in Baculin Integrated School, Surigao del Sur Division. Recognizing the challenge faced by many Filipino learners in developing strong English literacy skills, the study examined how affective factors—specifically anxiety related to English usage and the degree of motivation to engage in reading—predict reading comprehension performance. Grounded in the Affective Filter Hypothesis and Expectancy-Value Theory, the study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. A total of junior high school learners participated, responding to standardized and validated instruments measuring language anxiety, reading motivation, and reading comprehension.

Descriptive statistical treatments revealed that learners exhibited moderate English language anxiety, primarily in fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension. Reading motivation levels were moderately high, with stronger inclination toward intrinsic motivation compared to extrinsic motivators. Reading comprehension levels, however, were found to be approaching proficiency, indicating the need for improvement in inferential and critical comprehension skills. Correlational analysis showed a significant negative relationship between English language anxiety and reading comprehension, suggesting that higher anxiety adversely affects comprehension performance. A significant positive relationship was also found between reading motivation and reading comprehension, demonstrating that motivated learners tend to comprehend texts more effectively.

Regression analysis further revealed that reading motivation is a stronger predictor of reading comprehension than English language anxiety. The study concludes that addressing learners' affective needs—reducing anxiety and strengthening intrinsic motivation—can significantly enhance comprehension outcomes. Recommendations include integrating anxiety-reducing instructional strategies, strengthening reading intervention programs, and cultivating a supportive reading culture in school.

Keyword: *English Language Anxiety, Reading Motivation, Reading Comprehension, Junior High School, Affective Filter*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a foundational skill that determines learners' academic success, especially in language-rich disciplines. In the Philippines, national and international assessments continue to highlight declining reading performance among Filipino learners. Numerous studies have identified affective factors such as language anxiety and reading motivation as critical variables that influence comprehension performance. English language anxiety refers to fear, apprehension, or tension associated with using or learning English, while reading motivation encompasses learners' willingness, interest, and drive to engage in reading tasks.

Theoretical models such as Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis [1] suggest that anxiety can impede language acquisition and comprehension. In contrast, motivational theories affirm that when learners possess intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation, they demonstrate higher persistence, engagement, and comprehension [2]. Understanding these determinants is crucial for Junior High School students in public schools where English exposure and reading opportunities may be limited.

1.1 English Language Anxiety

English language anxiety manifests in communication reluctance, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. High anxiety elevates cognitive load, preventing effective processing of text, thus lowering comprehension levels [3]

1.2 Reading Motivation

Reading motivation plays a direct role in learning outcomes. Motivated readers engage more deeply with texts, utilize higher-order thinking skills, and perform better in comprehension assessments [4].

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational design to determine the relationship between English language anxiety, reading motivation, and reading comprehension.

2.2 Respondents of the Study

Participants were Junior High School learners from Baculin Integrated School. Stratified sampling ensured fair representation of grade levels.

2.3 Instruments

1. English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) – measured anxiety in communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.
2. Reading Motivation Questionnaire (RMQ) – assessed intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation.
3. Reading Comprehension Test – measured literal, inferential, and evaluative comprehension.

2.4 Data Analysis

Weighted mean, Pearson's r, and regression analysis were utilized.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings in accordance with the Statement of the Problem. Tables follow the IJARIIE manuscript structure and are discussed with support from relevant literature.

3.1 Level of English Language Anxiety (ELA)

Analysis of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) responses from 46 Junior High School learners revealed high English language anxiety, especially in spontaneous speaking situations, fear of negative evaluation, and test-related worry. Items showing the strongest anxiety endorsement were panic during unprepared speaking (91.3%), lack of self-confidence when speaking (87.0%), and belief that others speak better English (89.1%).

Physiological anxiety indicators—trembling and heart pounding when called to speak—were also salient, each endorsed by approximately half of the learners. Academic worry was also prominent: 80.4% worried about failing English and the same proportion frequently felt like not attending class due to anxiety.

This pattern closely aligns with the three FLCAS domains: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Table 1
Selected High-Salience English Language Anxiety Indicators (n = 46)

Indicator	n	%
Panic in unprepared speaking (Item 9)	42	91.3
Not sure of self when speaking (Item 1)	40	87.0
Tremble when called (Item 3)	23	50.0
Heart pounding when called (Item 20)	25	54.3
Others speak better (Item 7)	41	89.1
Keep thinking others are better (Item 23)	38	82.6
Teacher will correct every mistake (Item 19)	39	84.8
Afraid classmates will laugh (Item 31)	23	50.0
Worry about failing English (Item 10)	37	80.4
Often feel like not going to class (Item 17)	37	80.4
So nervous I forget things I know (Item 12)	39	84.8
More I study, the more confused I get (Item 21)	36	78.3

Note. Percentages represent Agree/Strongly Agree responses.

3.2 Level of Reading Motivation (RM)

Results from the 20-item Reading Motivation Questionnaire (RMQ) indicated a very high motivation level for the group, with a total mean score of 77.16/80.

Learners showed strongest motivation in value and persistence indicators—believing that reading helps them succeed in school and that reading is important for their future. The lowest-rated item (still moderately high) was preference of reading over watching videos.

Table 2
Reading Motivation Summary (n = 46)

Metric	Value	Interpretation
Group total mean (max = 80)	77.16	Very High
Score range	68–79	Tight clustering near ceiling
Highest item cluster	3.92–4.00	Value & persistence (utility; future importance; finishing tasks)
Lowest item	3.08	Prefers reading over videos

Note. Reverse-coded items were adjusted before computing means.

3.3 Level of Reading Comprehension (Phil-IRI)

Based on Revised Phil-IRI standards, learners were categorized as:

- Independent: 19.6%
- Instructional: 39.1%
- Frustration: 41.3%

The majority fell in Instructional and Frustration levels, indicating substantial support needs in comprehension, vocabulary, and inferencing.

Table 3
Phil-IRI Reading Comprehension Classification (n = 46)

Level	n	%	Descriptor
Independent	9	19.6	≥80% accuracy
Instructional	18	39.1	60–79%; needs scaffolds
Frustration	19	41.3	<60%; intensive support
Total	**46**	**100**	

3.4 Relationship Between English Language Anxiety and Reading Comprehension

Pearson r revealed a moderate, negative correlation between total ELA and reading comprehension ($r = -.39$, $p = .009$), indicating that higher anxiety corresponds to lower comprehension scores.

Among ELA components, test anxiety showed the strongest relationship with comprehension (r = –.41), followed by fear of negative evaluation (r = –.34).

Table 4
Correlation Between English Language Anxiety and Reading Comprehension (n = 46)

Predictor	r	p
Total ELA (FLCAS total)	–.39	.009
Communication Apprehension	–.28	.060
Test Anxiety	–.41	.006
Fear of Negative Evaluation	–.34	.020

3.5 Relationship Between Reading Motivation and Reading Comprehension & Joint Model

Bivariate Correlations

- RMQ total → RC: **r = .31, p = .037**
- Value/enjoyment cluster → RC: **r = .33, p = .025**
- Effort/persistence → RC: **r = .27, p = .073**

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression using RMQ and FLCAS total predicted reading comprehension significantly:

- **F(2, 43) = 6.02, p = .005**
- **R^2 = .22** (22% of variance explained)

Unique effects:

- ELA (FLCAS total): **β = –.35, p = .012**
- RMQ total: **β = .29, p = .034**

A second model including all anxiety domains increased R^2 to **.29**.

Table 5
Multiple Regression Predicting Reading Comprehension (n = 46)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	0.00	—	—	—	—
FLCAS Total	–0.41	0.16	–.35	–2.64	.012
RMQ Total	0.34	0.16	.29	2.17	.034

Model Fit:
R^2 = 0.22, Adj. R^2 = 0.19
F(2, 43) = 6.02, p = .005
Note. Outcome variable = standardized Phil-IRI comprehension scores.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the levels of English Language Anxiety (ELA), Reading Motivation (RM), and Reading Comprehension (RC) among 46 Junior High School learners at Baculin Integrated School and explored how ELA and RM predict RC. Findings revealed that learners exhibited very high reading motivation but simultaneously high levels of English language anxiety, especially in spontaneous speaking and evaluative situations. Phil-IRI results further showed that 80% of students belonged to the Instructional or Frustration levels, indicating substantial comprehension support needs.

A moderate negative relationship emerged between ELA and RC, with test anxiety showing the strongest detrimental effect. Conversely, reading motivation demonstrated a positive association with RC. Multiple regression confirmed that both constructs independently predicted comprehension—anxiety lowering, and motivation elevating performance—explaining 22% of the variance in RC. A more nuanced model including the three anxiety domains increased predictive power to 29%, highlighting the dominant role of test anxiety.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that reading comprehension is shaped not only by cognitive skills but also by learners' affective and motivational states. Reducing anxiety through supportive, low-threat learning environments

while strengthening motivation through autonomy-supportive and value-enhancing reading activities can contribute significantly to improving comprehension performance. Instructional practices must therefore integrate both affective and cognitive supports to elevate learners from frustration and instructional levels toward independent reading proficiency.

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