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# Intrinsic Motivation and Academic Performance of Alternative Learning System (ALS) Learners

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*Abstract* — This study examined the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic performance of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners in Liloy District I and II during the School Year 2025–2026. It aimed to determine the level of intrinsic motivation among learners, assess their academic performance across the ALS learning strands, and examine whether intrinsic motivation significantly predicts academic performance.

A quantitative, descriptive–correlational research design was used. Data were collected from 100 ALS learners using a structured questionnaire measuring intrinsic motivation in terms of personal growth aspiration, relationship aspiration, and community contribution aspiration, as well as official Functional Literacy Test (FLT) records to assess academic performance across six ALS learning strands. Descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and multiple regression analysis were employed to analyze the data at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results revealed that ALS learners demonstrated very high levels of intrinsic motivation, with personal growth aspiration having the highest mean score. Academic performance attained competencies comparable to the Junior High School level based on Functional Literacy Test benchmarks, with the highest scores recorded in Understanding the Self and Society and Life and Career Skills. Significant differences in intrinsic motivation were observed when learners were grouped according to age, civil status, and length of engagement in the ALS program. Academic performance also varied based on length of engagement across the learning strands. However, regression analysis showed that intrinsic motivation did not significantly predict academic performance in most ALS learning strands.

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The findings indicate that although ALS learners possess strong intrinsic motivation, their academic performance may be influenced by other factors beyond motivation, particularly sustained participation in the program and the presence of supportive learning mechanisms. These results highlight the importance of strengthening instructional support and learner engagement strategies to further enhance the academic outcomes of ALS learners.

***Keywords: Alternative Learning System, intrinsic motivation, academic performance, adult learners, Self-Determination Theory***

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines provides flexible educational opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults who cannot participate in formal schooling. While the program expands access to education, access alone does not always guarantee meaningful learning outcomes. Many ALS learners balance education with work, family responsibilities, and other social obligations, which may influence their motivation to learn and their academic performance. Understanding the factors that affect learning outcomes in alternative education settings has therefore become an important concern in recent educational research.

One factor frequently associated with successful learning is intrinsic motivation. According to Self-Determination Theory, learners are more likely to engage deeply in learning activities when their motivation is internally driven and when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are supported. Studies in various educational contexts show that intrinsically motivated learners tend to demonstrate stronger engagement, persistence, and self-regulated learning behaviors. These characteristics can help sustain participation in educational programs, particularly in non-traditional learning environments.

However, recent research suggests that the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic performance is not always direct. Motivation may influence achievement indirectly through learners' effort, engagement, and participation in learning activities. In alternative education programs where attendance may be irregular and instructional exposure varies, motivation alone may not fully explain differences in academic outcomes. Other contextual

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factors—such as learners’ continued participation and access to learning support—may play a significant role in shaping performance.

Existing studies on alternative and flexible learning environments highlight that sustained engagement and participation are strong predictors of academic success. Learners who remain consistently involved in learning activities tend to achieve higher performance levels, while irregular participation can limit learning gains regardless of motivation levels. Despite these insights, limited research has examined how intrinsic motivation relates to academic performance among ALS learners, particularly when performance is analyzed across different learning strands.

Given this gap, the present study investigates the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic performance among ALS learners in Liloy Districts I and II, Zamboanga del Norte. Specifically, it examines intrinsic motivation in terms of personal growth aspiration, relationship aspiration, and community contribution aspiration, and explores how these dimensions relate to learners’ academic performance across the six ALS learning strands. By providing empirical evidence within the ALS context, the study contributes to a better understanding of how motivation and learner engagement influence outcomes in alternative education programs.

## Literature Review

There are scholarly works related to intrinsic motivation, academic performance, and alternative learning systems, as well as adult education contexts. The literature highlights that while motivation is essential for learning engagement and persistence, its relationship with academic performance is often influenced by contextual and learner-related factors.

Motivation has long been recognized as a fundamental factor in education because it influences learners’ willingness to initiate and sustain learning activities. Studies on adult and non-formal education show that motivation is more strongly associated with engagement, persistence, and effort than with academic achievement alone. For example, Salikhova et al. (2021) examined motivation among adult learners in flexible learning environments and found that opportunities to satisfy psychological needs such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness foster deeper

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engagement and sustained participation. However, the study also noted that motivational factors do not always directly translate into improved academic outcomes. Similarly, Sogunro (2014) emphasized that motivational orientation can predict persistence among adult learners, highlighting its role as a driver of continued participation rather than a guaranteed predictor of performance.

Intrinsic motivation, defined as engaging in learning for personal interest and satisfaction, has been widely studied in both formal and informal learning contexts. Waard (2017) observed that adult learners are often primarily intrinsically motivated because their learning goals are personally meaningful rather than externally imposed. Supporting this view, Kop (2011) argued that intrinsic motives become particularly important in non-formal education settings where grades and formal credentials are less central. Research by Mellard et al. (2012) further showed that personal and situational interest can enhance learner engagement and persistence, although achievement outcomes remain influenced by external constraints such as time availability and competing responsibilities.

Many studies interpret motivation through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, which explains how the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness supports intrinsic motivation. Research applying this framework suggests that when learners perceive learning activities as relevant and self-directed, they are more likely to remain engaged. Nevertheless, Guiffrida et al. (2013) and Rothes et al. (2022) caution that the relationship between these psychological needs and academic achievement is not always consistent across diverse learner populations, particularly in non-traditional education settings.

Empirical findings on the link between intrinsic motivation and academic performance remain mixed. Some longitudinal studies, such as Taylor et al. (2014), report positive relationships between intrinsic motivation and long-term academic achievement. However, more recent research indicates that among adult and working learners, achievement is often more strongly influenced by engagement, self-efficacy, and learning continuity than by motivation alone. Studies in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) context in the Philippines suggest that while motivation supports participation and commitment, academic performance is also shaped by factors such as attendance consistency and exposure to instruction.

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Research on adult learning engagement further emphasizes the role of participation and sustained involvement in educational activities. Scholars note that adult learners frequently balance education with work and family responsibilities, which may disrupt learning continuity. Consequently, even highly motivated learners may experience limited academic gains when participation is inconsistent.

Overall, the literature shows that intrinsic motivation plays a crucial role in sustaining engagement and persistence in alternative education programs. However, evidence also indicates that academic performance is influenced by a combination of motivational, contextual, and participation-related factors. Despite the growing body of research on adult education and ALS, limited studies have examined how specific dimensions of intrinsic motivation relate to strand-based academic performance within the Philippine ALS context. This gap highlights the need for empirical studies that examine both motivation and learner characteristics in relation to academic outcomes.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, descriptive–correlational research design to examine the intrinsic motivation and academic performance of Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners and to determine differences and relationships among the study variables.

According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019), quantitative research is appropriate when the purpose of the study is to measure variables numerically and analyze data using statistical procedures. In this study, intrinsic motivation and academic performance were operationalized as measurable variables, justifying the use of a quantitative approach.

The descriptive component of the design was used to determine the level of intrinsic motivation and academic performance of ALS learners and to identify differences when respondents were grouped according to sex, age, civil status, and length of engagement in the ALS program. As explained by Fraenkel et al. (2019), descriptive research is suitable when the objective is to describe characteristics and conditions of a population without manipulating variables.

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The correlational component of the design was employed to examine the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic performance across the six ALS learning strands. Fraenkel et al. (2019) emphasize that correlational research determines the degree of relationship between variables without implying cause-and-effect relationships. This aligns with the intent of the present study, which sought to examine associations rather than establish causality.

Given the real-world context of the Alternative Learning System, where learner characteristics and learning conditions naturally vary and cannot be manipulated, the descriptive–correlational design was considered the most appropriate and ethically sound approach.

### **Research Locale**

The study was conducted in selected Alternative Learning System (ALS) Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte during the School Year 2025–2026. These learning centers provide non-formal education to out-of-school youth and adult learners who were unable to complete basic education through the formal school system.

The choice of Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte as the research locale is significant due to the heterogeneous profile of ALS learners in the area. Learners enrolled in the ALS program in this municipality vary widely in terms of age, civil status, educational background, and length of engagement, making the setting particularly suitable for examining intrinsic motivation across diverse learner profiles. Many learners balance schooling with employment, family responsibilities, and community obligations, which distinguishes ALS learning contexts from traditional classroom environments.

Furthermore, ALS Community Learning Centers in Liloy operate under flexible learning schedules and modular delivery, allowing learners to progress at varying paces depending on their availability and readiness. This flexibility makes learner motivation a critical factor in sustaining participation and academic performance, thereby strengthening the relevance of the present study. Unlike formal schools where attendance and progression are institutionally structured, ALS learners rely heavily on self-regulation and internal motivation to persist in learning activities.

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The selected CLCs also implement the six ALS learning strands, which provided a comprehensive and standardized basis for measuring academic performance across functional literacy domains. The availability of strand-based assessment records ensured consistency in evaluating learners' academic outcomes.

Overall, the ALS Community Learning Centers in Liloy offer a contextually rich and authentic setting for examining the relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic performance among adult and non-traditional learners. The unique characteristics of the locale—particularly learner diversity, flexible learning arrangements, and reliance on self-directed engagement—underscore the appropriateness of the research setting and enhance the relevance of the study's findings to ALS and similar non-formal education programs.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of the study were 100 Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners officially enrolled in selected Community Learning Centers in Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte during the School Year 2025–2026. Total enumeration was applied, meaning all qualified and available learners were included in the study.

In terms of sex, 58% were male and 42% were female, showing a slightly higher number of male learners in the ALS program in this area.

The learners ranged in age from 15 to 72 years, with an average age of 24.91 years ( $SD = 12.59$ ). Most of the respondents were 25 years old and below (69%), while 31% were 26 years old and above. This shows that the program serves both younger learners and adults who have returned to education later in life.

When grouped according to civil status, more than half were single (55%). The rest were married (22%), live-in (18%), solo parents (3%), separated (1%), and widow (1%). This distribution reflects the different family responsibilities and life situations that ALS learners manage while studying.

Participation rates ranged from 61% to 84%, with an average of 76.26% ( $SD = 3.81$ ). Specifically, 41% had participation between 61–75%, while 59% had higher engagement between

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76–84%. This indicates that many of the learners consistently attended sessions and remained involved in the program.

Taken together, the profile shows that ALS learners in this locale are mostly young and single, but the program also includes adults with varied social roles and responsibilities. These characteristics help explain the diverse learning experiences and motivations observed in the study.

### **Research Instruments**

Two primary instruments were utilized in this study to gather the data needed to address the research objectives: an intrinsic motivation questionnaire and an academic performance measure.

Intrinsic motivation was assessed using a structured questionnaire adapted from established motivation scales grounded in Self-Determination Theory and the Aspiration Index framework. The instrument was designed to capture learners' internal motivations for engaging in learning activities, focusing on three core dimensions: personal growth aspiration, relationship aspiration, and community contribution aspiration. These dimensions reflect learners' desire for self-improvement, meaningful social connections, and positive involvement in their communities, which are particularly relevant in adult and alternative learning contexts.

Responses to the intrinsic motivation questionnaire were rated using a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger levels of intrinsic motivation. Prior to its administration, the instrument underwent content validation by subject-matter experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Reliability testing was also conducted to establish the internal consistency of the instrument.

Academic performance was measured using the learners' Functional Literacy Test (FLT) scores, which serve as the official assessment tool in the Alternative Learning System. The FLT scores reflect learners' achievement across the six ALS learning strands: communication skills; scientific and critical thinking skills; mathematical and problem-solving skills; life and career skills; understanding the self and society; and digital citizenship. These strand-based scores provided a comprehensive and standardized measure of academic performance.

The academic performance data were obtained from official ALS records with proper authorization from the concerned authorities. Using FLT scores ensured objectivity in the measurement of academic performance and minimized reliance on self-reported achievement data.

### *Scoring Procedure for intrinsic Motivation*

The intrinsic motivation questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale to measure the extent to which each statement reflected the learners' internal motivations. Responses were assigned numerical values ranging from 1 to 5. To interpret the computed mean scores, the following scale was used:

<b>Mean Range</b>	<b>Descriptive Interpretation</b>
4.21 – 5.00	Very Important / Very High
3.41 – 4.20	Important / High
2.61 – 3.40	Somewhat Important / Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Not Important / Low
1.00 – 1.80	Not Important at All / Very Low

The descriptive labels were used to determine the level of intrinsic motivation of ALS learners across the three dimensions: personal growth aspiration, relationship aspiration, and community contribution aspiration. The interpretation of academic performance followed the standard Functional Literacy Test (FLT) rating scale prescribed in the ALS program.

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**Scoring procedure for Functional Literacy Test (FLT) Placement Benchmarks**

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Total Score Range	Placement Level	Benchmark Category
0–9	Basic	Elementary Level
10–13	Lower Elementary	Elementary Level
14–27	Advanced Elementary	Elementary Level
28–54	Junior High School	Elementary Level Benchmark
28–64	Junior High School	Junior High School Readiness
65–98	Senior High School	Junior High School Readiness

**Data Gathering Procedure**

The data gathering process was carried out systematically to ensure accuracy, consistency, and ethical compliance. The following steps were undertaken:

1. **Securing approval and permissions.** Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate Alternative Learning System (ALS) authorities and Community Learning Center (CLC) coordinators in Liloy, Zamboanga del Norte. This approval allowed access to the learners and relevant academic records.
2. **Coordination with ALS teachers.** The researcher coordinated with ALS teachers and facilitators to identify suitable schedules for data collection and to ensure that the administration of the research instruments would not disrupt regular learning activities.
3. **Orientation of respondents.** Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the respondents. Clear instructions were provided on how to answer the questionnaire, and respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary.
4. **Administration of the intrinsic motivation questionnaire.** The intrinsic motivation questionnaire was administered to the respondents during scheduled ALS learning sessions. Adequate time was allotted for the learners to complete the instrument to ensure thoughtful and honest responses.

5. **Collection and checking of questionnaires.** Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after administration. The researcher checked the responses for completeness to minimize missing data.
6. **Retrieval of academic performance data.** After the questionnaire administration, academic performance data were obtained from official ALS records with proper authorization. The learners' Functional Literacy Test (FLT) scores across the six ALS learning strands were recorded for analysis.

**Organization of data for analysis.** All collected data were encoded, organized, and prepared for statistical analysis. Codes were used in place of names to maintain confidentiality and ensure anonymity of the respondents.

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

The data collected in the study were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to address the research questions. Frequency counts and percentages were utilized to describe the profile characteristics of the respondents, including sex, age, civil status, and length of engagement in the ALS program.

To determine the level of intrinsic motivation and academic performance of ALS learners, means and standard deviations were computed. These descriptive statistics provided an overall summary of the respondents' motivation levels and performance across the six ALS learning strands.

To examine whether significant differences existed in intrinsic motivation and academic performance when respondents were grouped according to selected profile variables, independent samples t-tests and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed. When the ANOVA results indicated statistically significant differences, post-hoc analysis using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test was conducted to identify which specific groups differed from one another.

Finally, multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the dimensions of intrinsic motivation significantly predicted academic performance across the six ALS learning

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strands. This analysis allowed the researcher to examine the combined and individual contributions of the intrinsic motivation dimensions to academic performance.

All statistical analyses were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance, ensuring that the results met the accepted standards for statistical reliability in educational research.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participation was **voluntary**, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to decline participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

**Informed consent** was obtained prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by excluding identifying information from the questionnaires and research reports. All data were used solely for academic purposes and were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.

## **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The present study examined whether intrinsic motivation significantly differs across learner profile variables and whether it predicts academic performance across the six ALS learning strands. The findings reveal that intrinsic motivation varies according to age, civil status, and length of engagement, but not according to sex. However, intrinsic motivation does not significantly predict academic performance across most learning strands. Instead, sustained engagement—operationalized as length of participation—emerges as the most consistent factor associated with strand-based performance. These results partially reject the assumption that intrinsic motivation directly predicts academic achievement in ALS, while confirming that engagement-related variables play a central explanatory role.

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## Interpretation of the Findings

The results indicate that intrinsic motivation among ALS learners is not uniformly distributed but is shaped by life stage and participation experience. Younger learners and single learners demonstrate stronger personal growth and relationship aspirations, suggesting that motivational orientation is closely tied to perceived future opportunities and available cognitive-emotional bandwidth. In adult and alternative education settings, motivation is often internally defined and goal-oriented, but its intensity and expression are mediated by role demands and competing responsibilities. Thus, differences across age and civil status reflect contextualized motivation rather than inherent disparities in psychological drive.

Length of engagement significantly differentiates levels of intrinsic motivation, particularly personal growth aspiration. This pattern suggests a reciprocal dynamic: sustained participation may reinforce learners' sense of competence and progress, thereby strengthening internalized motives. From a Self-Determination Theory (SDT) perspective, repeated experiences of competence satisfaction and relatedness within the ALS environment likely consolidate intrinsic motivational orientations. In this sense, engagement does not merely reflect motivation—it may actively cultivate and stabilize it.

In contrast, intrinsic motivation does not significantly predict academic performance across most strands. This finding complicates dominant assumptions in formal educational psychology that intrinsic motivation directly enhances achievement. In the ALS context, motivation appears necessary but insufficient for strand-based academic outcomes. Achievement, as measured by FLT performance, requires sustained exposure to instruction, structured practice, feedback, and cognitive rehearsal—conditions that are more directly indexed by length of engagement than by motivational orientation alone.

The single significant negative association—between community contribution aspiration and scientific and critical thinking performance—represents a theoretically provocative result. Rather than interpreting this as evidence that prosocial motivation undermines achievement, it is more plausibly understood as a contextual trade-off. In the ALS setting, learners who exhibit strong community-oriented aspirations may simultaneously shoulder heavier familial or community obligations. These responsibilities may reduce available time and cognitive resources

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for analytically demanding tasks. Thus, the negative coefficient likely reflects structural constraints rather than motivational deficiency. This finding is unexpected relative to traditional achievement models but consistent with contextualized adult-learning realities.

Academic performance differences across profile variables further reinforce the structural nature of achievement in ALS. Length of engagement consistently predicts strand performance, underscoring the cumulative effect of participation. Theoretical interpretation through SDT suggests that while intrinsic motivation supports persistence and willingness to engage, competence development is contingent upon sufficient opportunities for practice and feedback. Therefore, academic achievement in ALS appears to be engagement-mediated rather than motivation-driven.

When interpreted through the official FLT placement benchmarks, learners collectively achieve Junior High School-level competency across strands. This indicates that ALS is effective in supporting baseline functional literacy development. However, performance variation within this competency level is better explained by engagement patterns than by motivational differences, reinforcing the central role of learning continuity.

### **Comparison and Contrast With Existing Literature**

The findings align closely with contemporary research on adult and non-formal learning contexts, which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation reliably predicts persistence and engagement rather than achievement alone. Salikhova et al. (2021) demonstrate that satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness fosters internalized motivation and sustained engagement, yet achievement effects vary depending on instructional conditions. Similarly, Sogunro (2014) reports that motivational orientation predicts persistence among adult learners, supporting the present finding that intrinsic motivation varies across life-stage variables and engagement duration.

The strong predictive role of length of engagement is highly consistent with adult-learning literature emphasizing learning continuity as a primary determinant of competence acquisition. Goulão (2014) highlights that adult learners' work and family demands frequently disrupt participation, making sustained engagement critical for performance. Karim (2024) further argues that institutional support structures and consistent exposure to learning opportunities significantly

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shape adult learners' outcomes. The present study corroborates this structural model of achievement within the Philippine ALS context.

The limited predictive power of intrinsic motivation on strand-based academic performance contrasts with traditional educational studies where intrinsic motivation often demonstrates direct positive associations with achievement (e.g., Taylor et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2019). However, it aligns with more recent evidence suggesting that motivational–achievement relationships are conditional and context-dependent in non-traditional settings (Rothes et al., 2022). Guiffrida et al. (2013) caution that SDT-based assumptions about direct academic benefits of autonomy and relatedness require contextual qualification across diverse learner populations. The present findings provide empirical support for this caution within ALS.

Moreover, Philippine ALS evidence (Idulsa & Luzano, 2024) indicates that motivation closely relates to engagement behaviors—such as participation and commitment—while performance is more strongly associated with attendance consistency and exposure. The current study extends this evidence by demonstrating that strand-level performance outcomes follow a similar engagement-dominant pattern.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study highlight several important insights about learning in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the Philippines.

First, the findings show that intrinsic motivation differs among ALS learners depending on their age, civil status, and length of engagement in the program, but not according to sex. This suggests that personal life circumstances and learners' level of involvement in the program may influence how strongly they feel motivated to learn. Understanding these differences is important for educators because it helps them recognize that learners may require different forms of encouragement and support based on their backgrounds and experiences.

Second, the study found that intrinsic motivation does not significantly predict academic performance across most learning strands. Instead, the length of engagement or sustained

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participation in the ALS program emerged as the most consistent factor associated with better academic outcomes. This means that learners who remain longer and participate consistently in the program tend to achieve higher levels of performance. The result emphasizes that continuous exposure to instruction and learning activities is a crucial condition for improving academic achievement.

Third, the results show that most learners attained competencies comparable to the Junior High School level based on Functional Literacy Test benchmarks. This demonstrates that ALS is effective in helping learners develop functional literacy and essential life skills despite the flexible and non-traditional nature of the program. Thus, the program continues to play a vital role in expanding educational opportunities for individuals who were unable to complete formal schooling.

Finally, the findings contribute to the interpretation of Self-Determination Theory in alternative education settings. While intrinsic motivation encourages learners to participate and remain engaged in learning, it does not automatically lead to higher academic performance without consistent participation and adequate learning support. In this context, motivation acts as a starting point that encourages engagement, but sustained involvement in the program ultimately determines academic success.

Overall, the significance of this research lies in showing that strengthening learner engagement and ensuring continuous participation may be more critical for improving ALS learners' academic performance than focusing on motivation alone. These insights provide useful guidance for educators and program implementers in designing strategies that support learner retention, engagement, and effective learning outcomes in ALS.

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