

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Academic Motivation Trajectories of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States

Dr. Joash Mutua Wambua

Lecturer, Africa International University, Kenya

Dr. Catherine Wambui Wambua

Director, Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine Africa, Kenya

Abstract:

Most academic research on immigrants in the United States is done on Asians. There is a dearth of African immigrant research. To widen the scope of immigrant education research this study was carried out on African, specifically Kenyan, immigrants to the Southeast United States. This study helps fill gaps of understanding how the Kenyan Diaspora in the United States are academically motivated. This study addresses the knowledge gap about Kenyan immigrants in the South Eastern United States. The sample consisted of 169 Kenyans living in Alabama, Georgia and North Carolina. There were 84 females and 85 males. Results revealed that with a mean score of 3.75 there were similarly as many that had intrinsic motivation to know (3.75) as there were with extrinsic motivation – toward accomplishment (3.80). Results also revealed that there were no gender differences in all motivation measures. Kenyans living in North Carolina were found to have a better Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation and also extrinsic motivation – external regulation compared to those living in Georgia and Alabama. Kenyans in the US between the ages of 18-25 were found to have a better perception of Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation.

Keyword: Academic motivation, Kenyan diaspora, immigrants, Southeast United States, education, Africans

1. Introduction

Research of educational pursuits of immigrants in the United States has predominantly revolved around Asians. To widen the scope of immigrant education research this study was carried out on African, specifically Kenyan, immigrants to the Southeast United States. Three factors have been posited by Ogbu (1983) to explain first- and second- generation Africans' academic motivation and success ahead of African Americans. First, first- and second- generation African immigrants rarely internalize the "oppositional culture" that rejects characteristics seen as "white". Second, first- and second- generation immigrant Africans have high academic standards because of a belief in the relationship between education and the American Dream but from recognition of sacrifices by family in their home country. Last, Africans have a strong belief in their ability to succeed because they had first hand examples of African professionals in their native lands.

Though the African population of immigrants to the United States is among the fastest growing it is the least studied. Some of the reasons include their collation with African Americans (Wambua & Robinson, 2010) and "invisibility" (Ghong, et al. 2007). Ghong and his colleagues indicated that these immigrants are forced to deal with political, psychological, social, and cultural issues in the schools their children attend and that if educators did not have prior knowledge about differences in cultural values, it could lead to misjudgment of students' abilities that could result in academic failure or inappropriate grade or special education placement.

This group of immigrants often faces cultural shocks in schools. According to Nwoye (2009), when a host culture is a huge departure from an immigrant's known customs, the internal conflict is bound to cause some mental discord. The American culture is individualistic, meaning that individuals see themselves separate from others, define themselves. The Kenyan culture is collective, meaning they view themselves in connectedness and interdependent with others. A report by the Rockefeller Foundation (2015) indicated that the Kenya Diaspora population in the United States is well educated, economically successful, and has a labor force participation rate that far exceeded the national average. The report further posited that a larger share of these Kenyans held bachelors and advanced degrees than the US population overall, and over one quarter of the population was in the nursing profession. The median income for this group was \$11,000 above the US national median and two in every five were home owners.

In a survey of African PhD students in US and Canada by International Organization of Migration (IOM) in (1986-96), they found that 63% returned to Africa to work and that the propensity to return was strongly correlated with conditions that prevailed in the country of origin; between 37-44% of Africans who obtained their PhDs from North American institutions

decided to stay in the host country, making a large part of U.S. R&D staff, including institutions of higher learning. The phenomenon of no-return appears to have been on the increase in the last 10 years. More than one third of highly qualified human resources in Africa are presently in the Diaspora (IOM, 2004)

Studies, however, indicate that the celebrated performance of first generation African immigrants, as stated by Halter and Johnson (2014) and Lee (2005) does not always translate into the same success for second-generation African immigrants. Other authors like Halter and Johnson (2014) believe that there is a "stratified second generation decline, whereby the children of recent immigrants who are largely racialized as nonwhite often face downward mobility and limited opportunities for advancement". Lee (2005) also had similar findings although concluding that academic achievement among immigrant students is dependent on the student's socio-cultural experience at home and within his or her school setting. This study investigates the academic motivation of Kenyan immigrants to the United States. The study seeks to answer the following:

- What are the academic motivation profiles of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States?
- Are there differences in academic motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States by gender?
- Are there differences in academic motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States by States?
- Are there differences in academic motivation of the Kenyan Diaspora in the United States by age?

1.1. Statement of Problem

There has been a steady flow of African immigrants into the United States especially since the Hart-Cellar immigration act (also known as the family unification and refugee law). This law saw the removal racial and national barriers in the US (Ludden, 1995). Among these there have been many Kenyans. This population has, however, not been adequately documented.

According to Takyi (2002) education is one of the main reasons for African immigration to the United States. He did not, however, describe the educational experiences of Africans during their studies in the United States. One potential reason for the omission is the categorical methods of the U.S. Census Bureau, African immigrants are not separated from African Americans. In this kind of categorization, the American society does not make a distinction between African ethnic identity and the African-American racial identity. There is need to differentiate the two since they are historically and socio-culturally different. This study examines the academic motivation of Africans, specifically Kenyans, in the South-East United States.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study uses the self – determination theory (SDT) when considering motivation and academics. The SDT is a formal theory that defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic sources of motivation and suggests that individuals are differentially related to outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Based on the SDT, the Academic Motivation Scale was utilized.

Deci & Ryan (1985) further posited that humans have three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness and autonomy. The need for competence is the desire to control and master the environment and outcome. The need for relatedness is the desire to interact with and experience caring people while the need for autonomy is the urge to be causal agents and to act in harmony with our integrated self. Ryan and Deci (2000) also indicated that the environment can influence self-determination.

According to Lens, Matos & Vansteenkiste (2008), SDT differentiates between two different motivational issues; intrinsic (why?) and extrinsic (what for?). Deci and Ryan (2000) defined intrinsic academic motivation as engaging in academic behaviors for their own sake; extrinsic academic motivation as engaging in academic behaviors because they are seen as instrumental to achieving some goal and amotivation as students engaging in academic behaviors with no explicit purpose in mind.

Motivation has been differentiated into two main categories. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), Intrinsic motivation can be divided into: 1) Intrinsic motivation towards knowledge (pleasure of learning), 2) Intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment (pleasure of accomplishing) and 3) Intrinsic motivation toward stimulation (activity is performed to obtain stimulating experiences. They further divided Extrinsic motivation into: 1) External regulation (behavior controlled by external incentives), 2) Introjected regulation (internalized external contingencies), 3) identified regulation (behavior is recognized and valued by individual).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Academic Motivation

Motivation is the driving force behind our actions and affects our needs, desires and life ambition (Rabideau, 2005). Academic motivation is a critical aspect of the education journey. It refers to the cause of behaviors that are in some way related to academic functioning and success. It is a student's desire (as reflected in approach, persistence, and level of interest) regarding academic subjects when the student's competence is judged against a standard of performance or excellence (DiPerna & Elliott, 1999; McClelland, 1961; Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

We used the academic motivation scale (Valler and, 1998) for this study. According to Deci & Ryan (2000), the scale measures involve intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. They further indicated that Intrinsic motivation has three

dimensions: (1) Intrinsic motivation toward knowledge- if activity is performed for the pleasure of learning, (2) intrinsic motivation towards accomplishment – engaging in an activity for the pleasure of accomplishing something (3) intrinsic motivation towards stimulation – activity is performed to obtain stimulating experiences. Accordingly, the extrinsic motivation involves three measures: 1) External regulation – controlled by external incentives (2) Interjected regulation – where external contingencies have been internalized and the individual acts to facilitate self-esteem (3) Identified regulation - behavior is explicitly recognized and valued by individual.

According to Hendricks (1997), motivation and attitude are the best predictors of student academic performance. Campbell (1973) posited that when student motivation is low, intervention might take the form of strategies aimed at: (a) increasing the strength of motivational dispositions; (b) raising the value ascribed to academic achievement; and (c) maximum arousal of intrinsic motivation. She further found that although teachers may be able to affect some improvement in the strength of motivational dispositions and values, the main motivational contribution by teachers lay in their ability to arouse the dispositional values.

African culture, like Asian culture is collective. Just as American cultural perceptions on academics, contrast with those of Asian cultures (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) they are also different from those of Africans. The American culture stresses individualism and views schooling as a way to explore personal interests, while the African culture stresses dependence on others and considers the main purpose of education as that of helping family members in the future (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, African academic motivation is different from that of Americans. This includes African-Americans.

Ogbu (1983) pointed out that African-Americans are explicitly different from African immigrants. Ogbu also termed African-Americans as involuntary immigrants in that their minority position was a result of historical subjection or forced migration (i.e. descendants of slaves) and that they tended to have oppositional approach to their society and its institutions (Ogbu 1991). He further, indicated that African immigrants are voluntary immigrants in that they emigrated from their host countries more or less by choice. Accordingly, he posited that voluntary immigrants had an “instrumental” approach to their host society and their institutions, which include schools.

2.2. Gender Differences in Academic Motivation

According to Markus & Kitayama (1991), men are more likely than women to acquire the psychological tendency of self enhancement. A study by Kiang et al (2012) found gender differences in motivation among Asian American immigrants. Girls were found to have higher educational goals, intrinsic academic motivation and utility value compared to boys. While interviewing boys and girls on content, priority, optimism, internality and specificity of students’ hoped-for selves, Yowell (2000) found that of the five domains examined, the occupational domain was a greater priority for boys than girls while the future was a greater priority for girls. In Nurmi’s (1991) study of the genders’ future time orientation, he found that women reported were more future time oriented than men reporting greater detailed future plans about relationships and families.

3. Methodology

The growth of the African immigrant population in the United States, the conflation of African Americans and African immigrants and the limited educational research on African immigrants was the impetus for this study. The research was conducted using quantitative data, collected through the dissemination of a questionnaire with members of the Kenyan Diaspora.

3.1. Participants

Participants were contacted from existing meetings with the Diaspora and participation in Kenyan events. The data collection took place from the December 2017 and January 2018 and a total of 168 questionnaires were collected.

3.2 Instrument

The data was collected anonymously and voluntarily using the Academic Motivation scale. Fairchild et al.(2005) reported its reliability and validity on college students ranging from .70-.90 while Valler and et al. (1992) reported reliability and validity alpha values ranging from .70 -. 86 for university students. The definition used of the Kenyan Diaspora for the purpose of this research was deliberately kept vague.

A number of Kenyan Diaspora members have acquired American citizenship and have, as a result of this, had to give up their Kenyan citizenship. In light of this, the research was also open to American citizens born in Kenya and second - generation Kenyans. No distinction was made between legal American and Kenyans with irregular status. The use of self-report to assess Kenyan immigrants’ academic motivation of self -report was a limitation for this study. Fulmer & Frijters (2009) pointed out that critics of self- report measures question their validity and reliability. However, it is fair to state that self- report measures have continued to be utilized since they had not been shown to be inferior than others (Haefel & Howard, 2010).

4. Findings

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

4.1.1. Gender of the Respondents

Results in figure 1 below show that 50.3% of the participants were male while 49.7% were female. This implies that the number of men and women who participated in the study were almost equal.

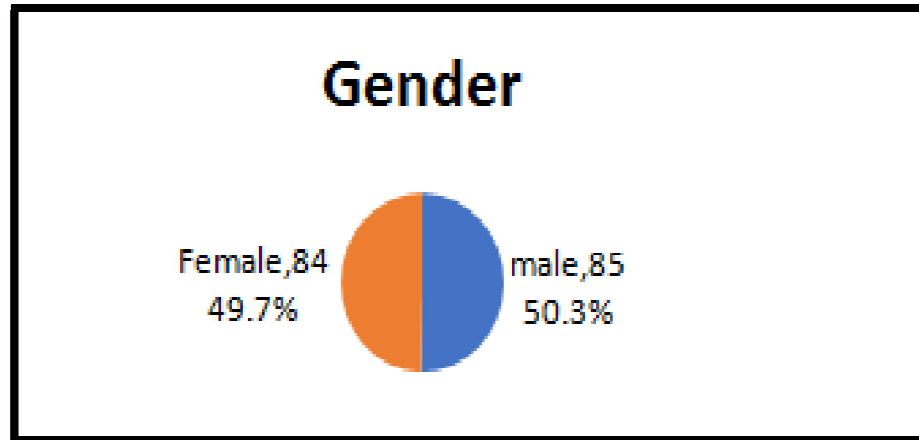


Figure 1: Gender of the Respondents

4.1.2. Respondents' Education Level

Results presented in Table 1 reveal that 33.9% of the participants were not in college, 18.5% were graduate students, 17.9% were in 4th year, and 11.9% were in 2nd year, 9.5% were in 1st year while 8.3% were in 3rd year.

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
Not in School	58	33.9
1st year	16	9.5
2nd year	20	11.9
3rd year	14	8.3
4th year	30	17.9
Graduate School	31	18.5
Total	169	100

Table 1: Respondents' Education Level

4.2. Age of the Respondents

Results presented in Table 2 reveal that 30.5% of the participants were between 36-45 years old, 22.8% were between 26-35 years old, 21% were between 46-55 years old, 17.4% were between 18-25 years old whereas 8.4% were above 56 years old.

Response	Frequency	Valid Percent
18-25 years	29	17.4
26-35 years	38	22.8
36-45 years	51	30.5
46-55 years	35	21
56+	15	8.4
Total	169	100

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

4.2.1. State of Residence

Results in figure 2 show that 47% of the participants reside in AL, 31% reside in NC while 22% reside in GA.

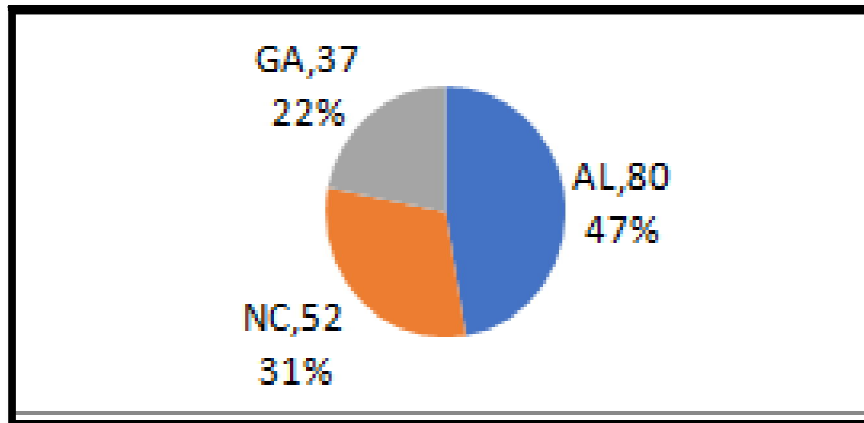


Figure 2: State of Residence

4.3. Academic Motivation Profiles of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States

Using the Academic Motivation scale, the participants were required to indicate the extent to which each of the different academic motivations corresponded to reasons why they go to college. Results are presented in Table 3. The majority of the participants indicated that Intrinsic Motivation-to know corresponded a lot to the reasons they went to college as supported by a mean score of (3.75). Intrinsic Motivation-toward accomplishment corresponded moderately to the reasons Kenyans in Diaspora went to college as supported by a mean score of (3.35). Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation also corresponded moderately as supported by a mean score of (3.06).

Further, Extrinsic Motivation-Identified corresponded highly to the reasons Kenyans in Diaspora went to college as supported by a mean score of (3.80). Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected corresponds moderately to the reasons they went to college as supported by a mean score of (3.19). In addition, Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation corresponded highly to the reasons why Kenyans in Diaspora went to college as supported by a mean score of (3.83). Lastly, Amotivation corresponded a little as the reasons Kenyans in Diaspora went to college as supported by a mean score of (2.36). On average, results revealed that all the academic motivation scales correspond moderately to the reasons why Kenyans in Diaspora went to college as supported by a mean score of (3.33).

Academic Motivation Scales	N	Mean
Intrinsic Motivation-to know	169	3.75
Intrinsic Motivation-toward Accomplishment	169	3.35
Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation	169	3.06
Extrinsic Motivation-Identified	169	3.80
Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected	169	3.19
Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation	169	3.83
Amotivation	169	2.36
Average		3.33

Table 3: Academic Motivation Profiles of Kenya Diaspora in the United States

4.4. Differences in Academic Motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States by Gender

Table 4 presents Independent T-test results for gender differences in academic motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States. They revealed that there was no significant gender difference in Intrinsic Motivation-to know for as shown by a p value 0.390; no significant gender difference in Intrinsic Motivation-toward Accomplishment of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value 0.638, and no significant gender difference in Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value 0.845, which were all more than the conventional p value of 0.05.

Results also revealed that there was no significant gender difference in Extrinsic Motivation-Identified of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value 0.874; no significant gender difference in Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected

for Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value 0.965; no significant gender difference in Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value 0.501, which were more than the conventional p value of 0.05.

Lastly, results revealed that there was no significant gender difference in Amotivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value 0.234. This was more than the conventional p value of 0.05.

Academic Motivation Scales	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	F Statistics	P Value
Intrinsic Motivation-to know	Male	85	3.8118	.80909	13.189	.390
	Female	84	3.6807	1.13650		
Intrinsic Motivation-toward Accomplishment	Male	85	3.3118	.95658	2.804	.638
	Female	84	3.3869	1.10680		
Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation	Male	85	3.0471	.93102	2.602	.849
	Female	84	3.0774	1.12339		
Extrinsic Motivation-Identified	Male	85	3.8118	.85644	2.680	.874
	Female	84	3.7887	1.01976		
Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected	Male	85	3.1853	1.12741	1.712	.965
	Female	84	3.1935	1.25592		
Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation	Male	85	3.8853	.89605	1.187	.501
	Female	84	3.7827	1.07251		
Amotivation	Male	85	2.4559	1.09801	1.135	.234
	Female	84	2.2679	.94406		

Table 4: Independent T-Test Results for Gender and Academic Motivation

4.5. Differences in Academic Motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States by States

Table 5 presents ANOVA results for state differences in academic motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States. Results revealed that there was no significant state difference in Intrinsic Motivation-to know; as shown by a p value of 0.382; no significant state difference in Intrinsic Motivation-toward accomplishment as shown by a p value of 0.096, which is greater than the critical p value of 0.05. This implies that Kenyans living in NC, GA and AL perceived Intrinsic Motivation to know and Intrinsic Motivation-toward accomplishment the same way.

Results also indicated that there was a significant state difference in Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation among Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as supported by a p value of 0.008, which is less than the critical p value of 0.05. In particular, Kenyans living in North Carolina were found to have a greater Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation compared to those living in Georgia and Alabama.

Further, results indicate that there was no significant state difference in Extrinsic Motivation-Identified of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value of 0.069; no significant state difference in Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States. This is shown by a p value of 0.615. These are greater than the critical p value of 0.05. In addition, results indicated that there was a significant state difference in Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation among Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as supported by a p value of 0.035, which is less than the critical p value of 0.05. In particular, Kenyans living in NC were found to have greater Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation compared to those living in GA and AL.

Lastly, results indicate that there is no significant state difference in Amotivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value of 0.195, which is greater than the critical p value of 0.05. This implies that Kenyans living in NC, GA and AL perceive Amotivation the same way.

Academic Motivation Scales		Sum Of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intrinsic Motivation-to know	Between Groups	1.872	2	.936	.967	.382
	Within Groups	159.751	165	.968		
	Total	161.624	167			
Intrinsic Motivation-toward Accomplishment	Between Groups	4.980	2	2.490	2.379	.096
	Within Groups	173.797	166	1.047		
	Total	178.777	168			
Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation	Between Groups	10.157	2	5.079	5.035	.008
	Within Groups	167.440	166	1.009		
	Total	177.598	168			
Extrinsic Motivation-Identified	Between Groups	4.687	2	2.343	2.715	.069
	Within Groups	143.261	166	.863		
	Total	147.947	168			
Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected	Between Groups	1.390	2	.695	.488	.615
	Within Groups	236.301	166	1.423		
	Total	237.691	168			
Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation	Between Groups	6.490	2	3.245	3.434	.035
	Within Groups	156.871	166	.945		
	Total	163.361	168			
Amotivation	Between Groups	3.443	2	1.722	1.649	.195
	Within Groups	173.296	166	1.044		
	Total	176.739	168			

Table 5: ANOVA Results for State and Academic Motivation Scales

4.6. Differences in Academic Motivation of the Kenyan Diaspora in the United States by Age

Table 6 presents ANOVA results for age differences in academic motivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States. Results revealed that there was no significant age difference in Intrinsic Motivation-to know; as shown by a p value of 0.087, no significant age difference in Intrinsic Motivation-toward Accomplishment of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value of 0.782, which is greater than the critical p value of 0.05.

Results also revealed that there were no significant age differences in Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as shown by a p value of 0.993, which is greater than the critical p value of 0.05. Further, results indicate that there were a significant age differences in Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation among Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as supported by a p value of 0.041, which is less than the critical p value of 0.05. In particular, Kenyans between the ages of 18-25 were found to have a better perception of Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation.

Results indicated that there was a significant age difference in Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected among Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as supported by a p value of 0.040, which is less than the critical p value of 0.05. In particular, Kenyans between the ages of 18-25 were found to have a better perception of Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected. In addition, results indicate that there was a significant age difference in Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation among Kenyan Diaspora in the United States as supported by a p value of 0.032, which is less than the critical p value of 0.05. In particular, Kenyans between the ages of 18-25 were found to have a better perception of Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation.

Lastly, results reveal that there was no significant age difference in Amotivation of Kenyan Diaspora in the United States. This is shown by a p value of 0.437, which is greater than the critical p value of 0.05.

Academic Motivation Scales		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Intrinsic Motivation-to know	Between Groups	7.917	4	1.979	2.074	.087
	Within Groups	153.642	161	.954		
	Total	161.559	165			
Intrinsic Motivation-toward Accomplishment	Between Groups	1.896	4	.474	.437	.782
	Within Groups	175.654	162	1.084		
	Total	177.551	166			
Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation	Between Groups	.268	4	.067	.062	.993
	Within Groups	176.007	162	1.086		
	Total	176.275	166			
Extrinsic Motivation-Identified	Between Groups	8.674	4	2.168	2.550	.041
	Within Groups	137.783	162	.851		
	Total	146.457	166			
Extrinsic Motivation-Introjected	Between Groups	13.687	4	3.422	2.562	.040
	Within Groups	216.392	162	1.336		
	Total	230.079	166			
Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation	Between Groups	10.207	4	2.552	2.716	.032
	Within Groups	152.202	162	.940		
	Total	162.409	166			
Amotivation	Between Groups	3.979	4	.995	.950	.437
	Within Groups	169.629	162	1.047		
	Total	173.609	166			

Table 6: ANOVA Results for Age and Academic Motivation Scales

4.7. Implications to Research

Several authors have stressed the need to study Africans in Diaspora. Vickerman (1999) indicated that there was need for educators to understand Black Africans while Rong and Brown (2002) observed that there was need for research that focused on the development and the reasons some were successful when others were not. Wambua and Robinson (2010) stressed the need to study Africans in the United States and especially their motivational characteristics. This study sought to investigate the academic motivations of Kenyans in the United States. More research is needed to look at more variables for this group.

Academic motivation between first and second generations of Africans in Diaspora needs to be studied for educators and policy makers to be informed. It is acknowledged that this study focuses only on Black Africans. The results of this study, therefore, cannot be generalized to other races, especially because of its specific focus. Although data was collected from people from other countries, it was eliminated because there were too few to make reliable and valid conclusions. The sample also combined the first generation and second generation Kenyan groups. It is conceivable that there would be differences in academic motivation between these two groups considering their different cultural and generational environments.

4.8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that more Kenyans had intrinsic motivation (to know, toward accomplishments and to experience stimulation) and also externally motivated. Kenyans living in North Carolina were found to have Intrinsic Motivation-to experience stimulation and also extrinsic motivation – external regulation compared to those living in Georgia and Alabama. It is possible that living near or at the Research Triangle would have a positive influence towards academic motivation. There were no gender differences in academic motivation. Kenyans in the Southeast US between the ages of 18-25 were found to have a better perception of Extrinsic Motivation-External Regulation. It is recommended that a replication of this study be carried out that will include outcome variables like school retention, GPA and graduation rates. Other future research

suggestions for this population should include observational and other qualitative techniques to enhance interpretation and utility of findings.

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