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## **Some Correlates of Academic Performance among Students of College of Commerce, Addis Ababa University**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study focused on undergraduate students who joined the College of Commerce - Addis Ababa University in 2003/04 AY. It mainly tried to explore if academic achievement motivation, entrance exam, English language skill and other college-related factors were associated with academic performance. This was done by collecting data from sample first year students by means of questionnaire. Another data was collected from 351 randomly selected students on their three-semester performances and cumulative grade point average (CGPA). Descriptive statistics tools, Pearson's correlation, chi-square and coefficient of determination were used for analysis. The qualitative data were thematically analyzed. The study found out that the students' academic achievement motivation was high though there was statistically not significant negative relationship between academic achievement motivation and academic performance observed along first year first semester grade point average (SGPA). On the other hand, the study revealed a statistically significant relationship between entrance exam total score and academic performance, and between English language result and academic performance. Lack of boarding facility, instructors' approaches and shortage of some facilities like the library and counseling services were qualitatively identified to have negatively affected the students' academic performance. In this respect, the female students in particular were found to be afraid of various forms of harassment as they were off-campus residents. The study recommended important measures to be taken like the need to improve the general academic background and the language skill of future college entrants, provide boarding facility and strengthen some essential services.

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## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The impetus behind this study was the startling below-average academic performance of the 1996 EC (2003/04 AY) entrants of College of Commerce, Addis Ababa University. This was observed on 1,082 students from the total of 1,622 who have stood below 2.00. Seventy-four students were incomplete; therefore, their results were not considered. Of these, 183 were dismissed from the campus as their status was below 1.00. So, this study tried to investigate some factors in relation to academic performance.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Studying in higher learning institutions needs to exert extra effort so as to perform academically better. The typically high demand by the courses and the competitive environment presuppose hard work. Thus, it is essential that students should be motivated enough to achieve good results. In addition, previous academic background, the language skill learners hold, and college life as a whole are believed to influence students' performance in higher learning institutions. This study, therefore, tried to:

1. explore the relationship between students' academic achievement motivation and academic performance.
2. explore the relationship between entrance exam total score and college success;
3. investigate whether the language entrance exam result was related with students' college performance; and
4. identify some college-related factors that influence academic performance.

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### **Statement of the Problem**

Mudron M. (2000) wrote motivation is a prerequisite to all learning. Hence, the level of students' motivation is believed to enhance or hinder their academic achievement. College entrance exam scores and language proficiency have been subjects of research as predictors of students' success in college (Kebede, 1991; Shenkute, 1991; ACT News, 2002; Mohammed, 2004; Legesse, 2006, Abiot, 2006; and Ataollah and Ibrahim, 2007). This study, therefore, tried to answer the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between the students' academic achievement motivation and their academic performance? How about the level of their academic achievement motivation?
2. Is there any correlation between the students' college entrance exam score and their results in the college?
3. Does the English language result of the entrance exam show any pattern in relation to the students' academic achievement?
4. What are college-related factors that affect the students' academic performance?

### **Significance of the Study**

In studying the predictive validity of college entrance exams, students' linguistic ability of the medium of instruction, and adjustment to general college life is important in influencing the level of academic achievement in colleges. So, this study is significant to:

- policy makers who design educational policies,
- those who work in areas related to placement of students in higher learning institutions,
- persons who work in areas related to keeping quality and standard of higher learning institutions,
- guidance and counseling offices in higher learning institutions,
- the college community, and
- investigate further research.

### **Operational Definitions of Terms**

1. Academic achievement motivation refers to the will/desire to get good grades in academic endeavor.
2. Academic performance refers to the Grade Point Average (GPA) earned by the students in the college.
3. Entrance exam refers to the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Exam (EHEECE).
4. Language proficiency refers to the students' language skill as measured by the EHEECE language result.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study targeted the 2003/04 entrants of College of Commerce, Addis Ababa University. However, it took two separate samples, and so cannot be taken as a strict follow-up study. The inability to make a strict follow-up arose from the difficulty faced in tracing the cluster sample sections that were taken to fill out questionnaire in 2004, when secondary data were collected in 2005. This was because the classes were squeezed and the students were distributed and redistributed into different sections due to high attrition rate. For example, there were 16 sections in the Department of Accounting at the beginning of 2003/04. But after three semesters, there were only nine sections where the students from sections 10 – 16 were spread over the different 1-9 sections.

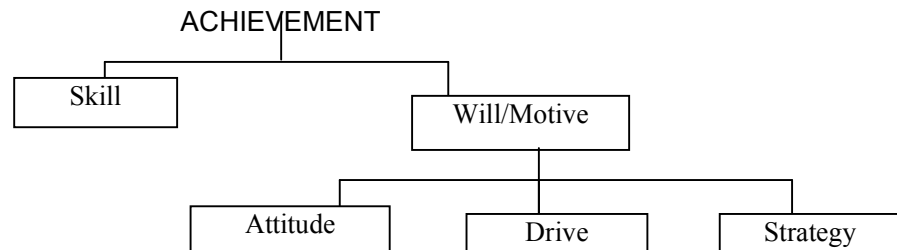
### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Achievement Motivation in Relation to Students' Academic Performance**

Academic performance is influenced by the skill and the intelligence of the learner. It is also influenced by non-cognitive variables.

According to Daniel (1992) such non-cognitive factors are "... study habits, self-concept, attitude, motivation, academic interest, personality style, personal and social adjustment, status on admission" (p.16).

McCombs and Marzano, cited in Tuckman (1999), asserted that any performance outcome results from both "skill" and "will." These two are equally important because having the "will" but lacking the "skill" cannot help an individual achieve an outcome. By giving emphasis only to "will", Tuckman (1999) says that there are three important variables that explain "will" (motivation to achieve); namely attitude, drive, and strategy. "... each [of these factors] makes a distinguishable but interrelated contribution to motivation for achievement. Without attitude, there is no reason to even attempt it. Without drive, there is no energy to propel that action. And without strategy, there is nothing to help select and guide the necessary action" (p.6). Therefore, the three variables taken together help explain achievement motivation as will (non-cognitive factor in performance).



**Fig. 1: The Skill-will Model of Earning an Outcome.**

Achievement motivation makes a person like to be involved in moderately difficult tasks that are achievable (Daniel, 1992; Assfa, 1998; and McClelland, 2004). Mulugeta (1998) discussed that individuals with high academic achievement motivation are "... also action oriented (use time efficiently, remain active, and energetic),

have better planning ability (plan ahead, take future considerations into account and prepare well in advance for eventualities), and have an inclination to embark on demanding and challenging tasks” (p. 43). Tuckman (2001) identified that there are four basic learning and motivation strategies for achievement. These are “(1) take moderate risk, (2) take responsibility for your outcomes, (3) search the environment, and (4) use feedback” (p. 4).

Behavioral approaches to students’ motivation, on the other hand, were discussed by Tola (1996), “The student who works harder and longer on a task is perceived as more motivated than the student who fails to expend similar energy and persistence” (p.14).

McClelland (2004) said, “College students with a high need for achievement will generally get better grades than equally bright students with weaker achievement needs”(p.3). Similarly, McClelland, cited in Daniel (1992), affirmed that subjects with high need for achievement “... gain more in learning how to do a task from a period of programmed instruction than low need for achievement subjects. .... achievement motivation leads to learning or performance improvement” (p.32). Pintrich and Garcia, quoted in Tola (1996), argued, “... motivational beliefs help students form an intention to learn” (p.15).

Among local researchers who have studied the relationship between academic achievement motivation and academic performance, Daniel (1992) found a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. He stated: “The strong relationship observed signifies the deterring or actuating effect of different level of motivation held by a person” (p.90). The same findings were reported by Mulugeta (1998), Girma (1997) and Zenawi cited in Assefa (1998). However, Assefa in his part (1998) found no statistically significant correlation between academic achievement motivation and academic performance.

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### **Entrance Exam and Academic Performance**

It is an international practice that students take entrance exams before they join colleges or universities. In the US, for example, SAT and ACT are the most commonly used tests, and "... are designed to act as predictive measures of high school students future success in college" (University of Michigan, 2006, p.1). As cited in Slack and Porter and Crouse (University of Michigan, 2006) the predictive validity of these tests, however, were found to be low. Similarly, Legesse (2006), cited Baron and Norman, found SAT to be the weakest predictor.

In contrast, News (2002) reported ACT scores were better predictor of first year college performance than high school grade point average. The news states that "In contrast to high school GPA, the ACT assessment measures actual student learning without regard to non-cognitive factors. ACT scores are as effective at predicting college GPAs of 3.50 or higher as they are at predicting GPAs of 2.00 or higher" (ACT News, 2002, p.1).

Studies have been conducted locally on the predictive validity of entrance exams such as the previous ESLCE, the current EHEECE, specific entrance exams for nursing or aviation schools. Among those who studied on ESLCE, Kebede (1991) and Kassim (1999) identified low relationship between ESLCE and college performance.

On the other hand, Mohammed (2004) who took Awassa College of Teacher Education (ACTE) kiremt students , and Shenkute (1991) whose samples were Ethiopian Airlines aviation maintenance technicians found ESLCE to be the best predictor of students' success in colleges. For example, Shenkute (1991) stated that "... ESLCE GPA for the subjects considered [is] the best selection instrument for all departments..." (p. 79).

Kebede (1991) employed Differential Aptitude Test of Verbal Reasoning and Numerical Ability (DATVR+NA) and observed its relationship with CGPA. He stated that "... the combination of DATVR+NA is strongly correlated with the criterion variable [CGPA] ..." (Kebede, 1991, p.75). Similarly, a study conducted by Shenkute (1991) observed Mechanical Comprehension Test (MCT) as one selection criterion over academic success of students in the Ethiopian Airlines Aviation Maintenance Technicians School (EAL-AMTS). Along with the then ESLCE, he found out that "... MCT scores are selected as significant predictors of graduation scores for all departments..." (Shenkute, 1991, p.85). Kassim (1999) used the locally prepared entrance exam for selection of nurses as a predictor variable over college GPA, and reported that "The results ... clearly indicate that the locally prepared entrance examination unfortunately ... is not a valid indicator of academic performance in all cases"(p.48).

More recently, Legesse (2006) assessed the predictive validity of the current Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE) over the academic performance of AAU students. He identified a very weak relationship between the entrance exam and college performance. Legesse reported, "The entrance examination as a whole (EHEECE) was not much effective ... in forecasting the future academic success of students in college" (Legesse 2006, p.42).

### **Language Proficiency and Academic Performance**

Language is central in communication and imparting and retention of knowledge in educational institutions. In Ethiopia, higher learning institutions use English language as medium of instruction. As cited in Tadesse, Abiot (2006) stated that: "... English plays a great role in teaching-learning process at secondary and tertiary level of education. It is a subject as well as [a] medium of instruction in secondary schools and colleges/universities in Ethiopia" (p. 69).



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In the Ethiopian context, however, English is a second or even a third language. This influences the academic achievement of students. Habtamu (1996) says, "... the difference between the languages that children learn in the home (their mother tongue) and the language valued by society and established therefore as the medium of instruction at the various levels of schools is an almost universal problem in educational systems"(p.12).

Local studies on the relationship between language and academic performance showed how strongly the two are correlated. Abiot (2006) found out that low proficiency in English had negatively affected the academic performance of trainees. Another study by Tamire (1995) revealed that Addis Ababa University students attributed their success to internal factors like ability and interest, among which language command was one.

Kebede (1991) took the then Junior College of Commerce students as his subjects and found out that ESLCE English result and the Differential Aptitude Test of Verbal Reasoning (DATVR) was significantly positively related with college grade point average. A recent study by Legesse (2006) on Addis Ababa University (AAU) students observed the predictive validity of Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE) by taking its total and separate scores on English, Math and Aptitude. He reported that "... English scores obtained by the 2003/04 EHEECE examinees were found to be relatively better predictors of future college performances ..." (Legesse, 2006, p.39).

Other studies also revealed similar findings on the strong relationship between the language skill of learners and their academic performance (Steinberg, et. al, cited in Habtamu, 1996; Ataollah and Ibrahim, 2007; and Vinke and Jochems, 1993). Ataollah and Ibrahim (2007), who studied Iranian University students, reported that "The

results of the correlation revealed a significant relation between English language proficiency and academic achievement (GPA)" (p.91). Similarly, Vinke and Jochems (1993) observed the same relationship among Indonesian Engineers who studied a one year post-graduate education in the Netherlands. They stated that, "Students who were most likely to complete the program successfully ... had as thorough a command of English as possible ..." (p, 281).

### **College Life in Relation to Academic Performance**

One important factor that is believed to facilitate academic performance in colleges is boarding service. Boarding resource not only gives places to stay for students (especially those from regions out of Addis Ababa) but it also creates conducive environment for academic work. Tsige (2001) and Abiot (2006) found out that students who live off campus face various difficulties: such as time limit in use of electric light in rented houses, lack of water and toilet facilities, poor health services, inadequate meals, poor housing condition, etc. With particular reference to female students who live out of campus, Abiot (2006) also reported that they were found to be afraid of rape and sexual harassment. Asmerom et al.; Habte; and Mohammed as cited in Tsige (2001) strongly confirmed the importance of boarding facility for conducive academic work and better academic performance.

Student-teacher interaction is another factor that facilitates or deters academic work. This is especially in relation to how teachers perceive their students, and how they motivate them. In this report, Abiot (2006) stated that "... teachers' expectations affect student learning and students who are expected to learn are more likely to achieve [better] in school"(p.35).

Abiot (2006) also wrote that trainees' academic performance was negatively affected by poor interpersonal relationship between trainees and teachers. Teachers were also observed not to motivate or encourage the trainees to do well.

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A very crucial psychological service that helps students to adjust to college life and recognize their own skills and deficiencies, and influences academic performance is guidance and counseling. For example, Tsige (2001), after having taken the then Addis Ababa Commercial College students, found out that because of lack of accommodation facility, the students faced different hassles in the rented houses. They also felt homesick. They were constrained financially, and they lacked self-confidence. All these problems must be attended to by a professional.

Physical facilities like library, cafeteria, toilet, shower and similar services are other things that are important in educational institutions in easing the academic endeavor of learners. Abiot (2006) found out that lack of adequate modules in the library negatively affected the trainees' academic performance in KCTE.

### **Methodology**

The target group of this study was the first batch of degree students (2003/04 Academic Year (AY) entrants), College of Commerce - AAU. They joined the college after completing preparatory courses and passing the current Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination. In the college, these students were placed in 32 sections in the four degree granting departments; namely Accounting (ACCT), Business Administration and Information Systems (BAIS), Marketing Management (MM), and Procurement and Supplies Management (PSM). Table 1 shows the target population by gender and department.

**Table 1: The Target Population by Gender and Department**

Department	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
ACCT	642	164	806
PSM	197	27	224
MM	283	49	332
BAIS	206	74	334
TOTAL	1382	314	1696

Source: AAU – CC, Registrar's Office

In 1996 (2003/04 AY), the pass mark for placement in universities was 101, marked out of 400. This was based on the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination Grade Point Average (EHEECE GPA). The profile of the students who were placed in the college is shown in table 2 below. The table shows that majority of the students (96%) who were placed in the college had below-average entrance exam GPA ( $\leq 200$ ).

**Table 2: Distribution of the Target Population by EHEECE GPA**

Range	No. of Students	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
$\leq 150$	1,205	71.1%	71.1%
151-200	428	25.2%	96.3%
$> 200$	63	3.7%	100%
Total	1696	100%	

Source: AAU – CC, Planning Office

## Sampling

Two types of sampling techniques were used to select two different samples from the target population. First, by means of random cluster sampling, ten sections were considered from each department proportionally; five sections from the Department of Accounting (there were 16 sections), two sections each from Business Administration and Information Systems and Marketing Management Departments (there were six sections), and one section from the Department of Procurement and Supplies Management (there were four sections). A total of 351 students from the ten classes filled the questionnaire. Out of these, six questionnaires were discarded as they were not properly filled by the students. Responses obtained from 345 were analyzed and used as data for this study.

**Table 3: Respondents' Profile by Department and Region (Primary Data)**

Region	Department				Total
	ACCT	BAIS	MM	PSM	
Addis Ababa	33	44	15	2	94 (28)
Other regions	107	36	61	34	238 (72)
Total	140 (42)*	80 (24)	76 (23)	36 (11)	332 (100)**

\* Numbers in brackets are percentages

\*\* Thirteen respondents did not state either their department or the region they came from.

Table 3 above indicates that 72% of the respondents came from regions outside Addis Ababa while 28% were from Addis Ababa. Taking their departments, 42% were in the department of Accounting, 24% in Business Administration and Information Systems, 23% in Marketing Management, and 11% in Procurement and Supplies Management. Second, 352 files were selected using *systematic random sampling* from the college's registrar office. This was done by stretching the total list of 1056 students registered at the beginning of 2004/05 AY, as second year students, and then by taking every third

student. From these files, data were gathered on:

1. three semester results (first year first and second semesters, and second year first semester) and cumulative grade point average CGPA,
2. total score of the Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE), and
3. English language result in EHEECE.

**Table 4: Profile of the Students by Gender and Department from Secondary Source.**

GENDER	DEPARTMENT				TOTAL
	BAIS	MM	PSM	ACCT	
MALE	65	60	43	125	293 (83.5%)
FEMALE	25	10	2	21	58 (16.5%)
TOTAL	90(25.6%)	70(19.9%)	4(12.8%)	146(41.6%)	351* (100%)

\*One case is missing as there was no data provided on the student

### Data Collection Techniques

Two sets of data were gathered from the target population. The first set of data was collected in May, 2004, while the second was collected in March, 2005.

The instrument used to collect the primary data from the students on their Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM) and Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was mainly adopted from the Learning Assistance Center, Southern Maine Community College. A few items were added by the writer from related literature. It had a total of 22 quantitative items with three categories and one open-ended item that asked how the students assessed their stay in the college. The three categories of the 22 quantitative items are distributed in such a manner that six items

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measure *attitude*, nine items measure *drive*, and seven items measure *strategy*. The questionnaire's reliability for the quantitative part was calculated and found to be 0.73 though the original one did not state its reliability coefficient. The questionnaire was written in Amharic. It was translated by the writer and then checked by a language professional. (See Appendix I) [The students filled out this questionnaire in May, 2004]

To see the correlation between EHEECE total score and English language result with college achievement, secondary data on the sampled students' three-semester college GPA (including the last Cumulative GPA), and their entrance exam total score, including their English language result were taken from the office of the registrar in March, 2005.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

To analyze quantitative data from the questionnaire, each respondent's total achievement score was summed up out of 22. The sum of each category of achievement motive (*attitude*, *drive* and *strategy*) was also calculated and scored according to the number of items that belonged to each. On the other hand, to be able to employ Pearson's correlation, the students' SGPA, that was set in the questionnaire in terms of intervals was calculated through mid-points. In the case of using the chi-square test, however, the data on EHEECE and SGPA were taken in their original form; i.e. in intervals. The data analysis techniques employed were descriptive statistics, correlation coefficient, chi-square test, and coefficient of determination. SPSS was the software package used to do the processing. The qualitative data that were gathered by the open-ended item of the questionnaire were thematically analyzed.

## Findings

### Academic Achievement Motivation and Academic Performance

As was said, one of the objectives of this study was to see if there was any relationship between the students' academic achievement motivation and their academic performance as measured by Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA). A related objective was to determine the students' level of Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM).

It was observed that after taking the mid-values SGPA has a mean of 2.18 with minimum value of 1.25 and maximum value of 2.75.

Table 5 below also shows the characteristics of the other variable, i.e. Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM).

**Table 5: Characteristics of Academic Achievement Motivation.**

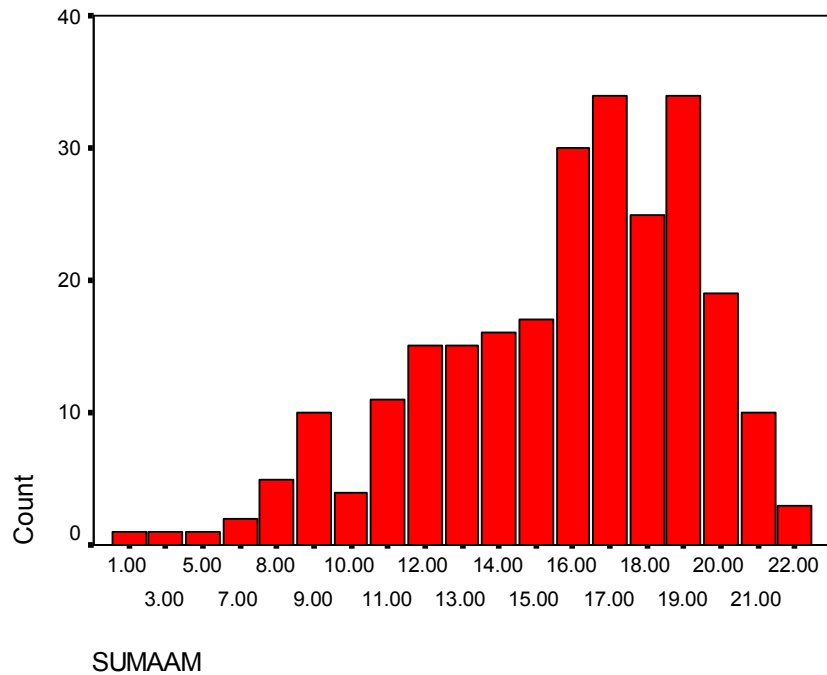
Factor	n*	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Total AAM	253	15.72	1.00	22.00
Attitude	307	3.59	0.00	6.00
Drive	311	7.19	0.00	9.00
Strategy	296	4.87	1.00	7.00

\* The system excluded respondents who did not respond to any one item

As can be observed from table 5 above, the mean of total achievement motivation score is 15.72 from a total of 22 items. The mean values for attitude, drive, and strategy were 3.59, 7.19, and 4.87 respectively.

The distribution of the respondents' total scores in Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM) is shown in Figure 2 below.





**Fig. 2: Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM) Scores.**

As shown in Figure 2 above, the distribution is skewed to the left where most of the respondents have high scores in academic achievement motivation. Considering only the total score, the above-the-mean values (16 - 22) account for 61.3%. This depicts us that the level of academic achievement motivation the students' reported was relatively high.

Pearson's correlation was used to show the relationship between the two variables. The coefficients and the significance level are shown in the table below.

**Table 6: Correlation between SGPA and Academic Achievement Motivation.**

No	Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM) factors	n	r	p
1	Total AAM score	231	- 0.0890	0.178
2	Attitude	279	- 0.0315	0.600
3	Drive	278	- 0.0524	0.384
4	Strategy	269	- 0.0933	0.127

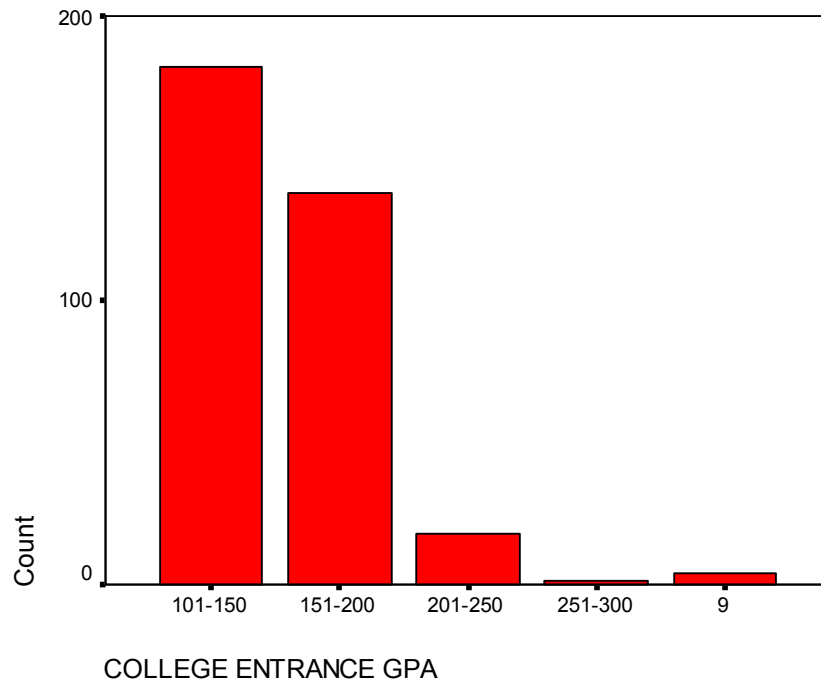
As can be observed from Table 6, in this study, there was no statistically significant relationship between Academic Achievement Motivation and Academic Performance. Observed along the total Academic Achievement Motivation score and the three variables in it, the result shows that the direction of relationship was negative but not statistically significant.

### **The Relationship between Entrance Exam and Academic Performance**

The relationship between these two variables was observed from both primary and secondary data.

#### **Entrance exam and SGPA**

Using the primary data, relationship was observed between entrance exam grade point average and first year first semester grade point average (both items as reported by the students). Figure 3 below shows that the entrance exam grade point average was positively skewed and hence the majority of the respondents' status was below 200.



**Fig. 3: EHEECE GPA.**

The statistics used to show the relationship between SGPA and EHEECE was a chi-square test. Both of these variables were stated in intervals on the questionnaire. They were used only after combining some cells to satisfy the requirement of a chi-square test.

**Table 7: Cross Tabulation of SGPA with EHEECE.**

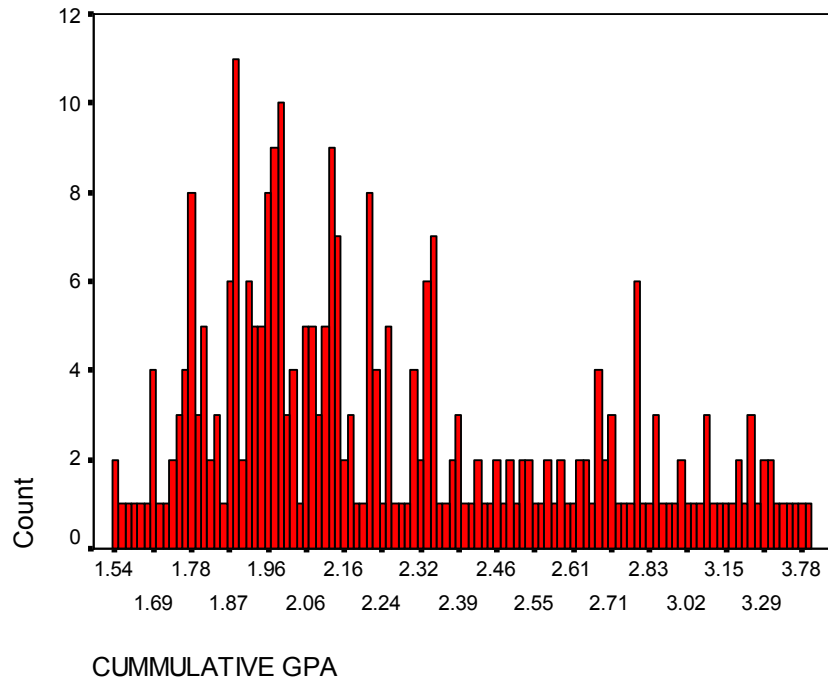
EHEECE	SGPA			Total
	1.00 – 1.49	1.50 – 1.99	>=2.00	
101 – 150	63 (34.6%)	81 (44.5%)	38 (20.9%)	182 (100%)
151 – 200	12 (8.8%)	37 (27.2%)	87 (64%)	136 (100%)
>200	2 (10.5%)	3 (15.8%)	14 (73.7%)	19 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 72.935$ ,  $df = 4$ , and  $\alpha = 0.000$ . (The cells were combined to increase expected value. But in two cases, this cross tabulation still shows expected value below 5.)

The chi-square result in the table above shows the strong relationship between entrance exam grade point average and SGPA, at highest alpha level.

### **Entrance Exam with Three Semester Results and CGPA**

The secondary data from the office of the registrar was used to observe the relationship between the total score of EHEECE with the students' three-semester college performance and cumulative average. Taking only CGPA, it has a mean of 2.27 and 60.3% of the students stand below the mean. The distribution is also displayed in terms of a bar chart in Figure 4 below, and it dominantly shows a positively skewed distribution.



**Fig. 4: CGPA**

Pearson's correlation coefficient was the statistics employed to observe the relationship between the two variables. The results are shown in the table below.

**Table 8: Relationship between EHEECE and Three-semester College Performance.**

College Performance	n	r
First year first semester grade point average	348	0.61
First year second semester grade point average	342	0.54
Second year first semester grade point average	286	0.60
Cumulative grade point average	286	0.64

P= 0.000

In all four cases, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between college performance and entrance exam total scores. Even though correlation does not show cause-and-effect relationship between two variables, it indicates the direction and strength of relationship. Hence, when EHEECE results increase, there is an increase in college performance, and vice-versa. This finding is similar with the results of the chi-square test, Table 7, where relationship between SGPA and EHEECE GPA was observed from what the students reported in the questionnaire.

### **The Relationship between Language and Academic Performance**

Another aspect of exploration in this study was to see if there was a relationship between language proficiency and academic achievement. Language skill was measured by the scores the students got in English language test in the entrance exam (EHEECE).

**Table 9: Relationship between English Language Result and College GPA.**

College performance	n	r
First year first semester	348	0.60
First year second semester	342	0.51
Second year first semester	286	0.55
Cumulative grade point average	286	0.60

P= 0.000

As presented in the above table, the relationship between the two variables is positive and statistically significant.

To observe the contribution of language result on three-semester cumulative grade point average, coefficient of determination was used. (CGPA was solely chosen because it clearly shows a student's status after three semesters.) The relationship between English language and CGPA is 0.60, which means English language skill explains 36% of the variation in college academic performance.

### **Assessment of Students' Stay in the College in Relation to Academic Performance**

In this section, the qualitative data obtained through the last item of the questionnaire were analyzed. This was an open-ended item that asked how the students evaluated their stay in the college. The writer took up only three issues that were dominantly discussed by many respondents that affected their academic achievement.

#### **Living Conditions**

The students complained that their first year first semester academic performance was suffered because:

- there was no dormitory facility
- there was no food facility
- traveling from home to college and then back to their rented house was time consuming. Preparing their own food also required time.
- living in rented houses involved problems like exposure to theft, cost of electricity, lack of sanitation facilities like toilet, shower, and water.

One student, for example, said:

I get hungry, there is no food at home, and so I feel hopeless, and the owners whom I rented a room insult me and nag me when I wake up in the night to study. In the context of these problems, it is difficult to be academically successful.

The other problem the students stated was management of their everyday lives. They said that the money they were given (Birr 180.00 by the time data was collected) was too little to be sufficient to cover their housing, food and other miscellaneous expenses. Most of them reported they came from regions outside Addis Ababa and poor families. They said that it was difficult and time taking for them to manage their stipend. This highly contributed to their lack of concentration when they studied.

Another student said that:

...those of us who came from regions outside Addis Ababa think more about what to eat, what to pay for house rent and transportation, and with what money to buy soaps and get shower services than concentrating on our studies. Secondly, if we try to use the library until it is closed, we cannot get buses afterwards since paying for taxi is unaffordable.



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The students also said that they skipped meals to be able to overcome complications of shortage of money. One student, particularly, said he was tired and bored of being a student in the college for three years because his life was full of hunger, sickness, and all sorts of problems. He said he always cursed the day he joined the college. Other students complained that they joined the college (or the department) without their choice. This made their lives more miserable and difficult.

### **Instructors**

The students said that some teachers discouraged them by using inappropriate expressions whenever the students were unable to answer questions in class. The students suggested that the student-teacher interaction should be improved. They said instructors should try to understand and be considerate of the students' various problems. Some students wanted their teachers to teach slowly, while others said that teachers took much of their time by giving extra make-up classes.

### **Facilities and Services**

The facility most students complained about was the library. They said that there were no enough books, and no enough space. Some female students especially reported that they could not sufficiently use the library as they had to go home before it got dark. They were afraid of street violence. They said that this was because of lack of dormitory facility, which in turn had negatively affected their results.

The other complaint the students made was about the large number of students in the college. This had made them always face long lines (queues) to get services in the cafeteria, receive stipend, or use toilet and shower. The campus, they said, was full of noises, and people

bumped onto one another on the stairs. The other important service they reported to have lacked was counseling. They said many needed counseling service on study skills and other personal matters. However, the service was not given.

### **Summary and Discussions**

This study tried to find out the level of Academic Achievement Motivation (AAM) of students who joined college of commerce in 2003/2004 academic year. The result shows that 61.3% of the respondents had above average AAM score. The distribution of the AAM total score was also skewed to the left depicting that the majority of the respondents reported to be academically motivated. However, when the correlation between AAM and academic performance is observed, there was a statistically non-significant negative relationship. This is in contrast to both local and international studies which asserted that AAM was strongly related with and even predicts academic performance (Daniel, 1992; Mulugeta, 1998; and Girma, 1997; Murdon, 2000; and McClelland, 2004)

This study is rather consistent with Assefa's (1998) findings that showed no relationship between the two variables. A possible explanation of this could be social desirability; where the students responded to the questionnaire the way they believed to be accepted instead of revealing their true academic achievement motivation.

The other objective of this study was to explore the relationship between entrance exam and college performance. After collecting both primary and secondary data from the target population, the study came up with a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. This finding is consistent with what Mohammed (2004) who used ESLCE, Kebede (1991) who used DATVR+NA, and Shenkute (1991) who used ESLCE and MCT. However, the finding of Legesse

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(2006) who used EHEECE came up with different results. Legesse saw no correlation between EHEECE and academic performance.

As shown in Table 2, when the subjects' status was assessed through their results on EHEECE, which was marked out of 400, 96% of the entrants stood below 200. This was also clearly observed in Fig. 3 (see the findings section). So, they joined the college with relatively poor (below average) entrance exam scores. Their three-semester performance in the college was also poor as the mean of CGPA is 2.27. This means that 60.3% of the students stood below the mean. On the other hand, the students' AAM score was high but not related with their academic performance. This makes us presume that the students' poor academic performance in the college is more explained through their poor academic background that is meant to be lack of skill (Tuckman, 1999; Abiot, 2006) than lack of motive/will.

The other subject of investigation in this study was if EHEECE English score and academic performance were related. The study showed that English language result alone explained 36% of the variation in cumulative grade point average. Not only this, English score was also statistically significantly positively related with college performance. This shows that the students' poor language skill negatively affected their achievement. Similar findings were reported by Abiot (2006), Legesse (2006), Tamire (1995), Kebede (1991), Ataollah and Ibrahim (2007) and Vinke and Jochems (1993).

College life and its relationship with academic performance was another area of coverage in this study. Among the respondents to the primary data, 72% were from regions out of Addis Ababa (see Table 3), and hence the majority of the respondents reported that they suffered from lack of accommodation (boarding and food facility), shortage of study time because of double responsibility of learning and managing one's life, and various frustrating situations in the

rented houses, including shortage of money. These facts were consistent with what Tsige (2001) found out among commercial college students and Abiot (2006) reported about KCTE out-of-campus residents. Like Abiot's (2006), this study also identified female students' fear of harassment (because they were not housed in-campus) instructors' demotivating approach towards their students; shortage of library, cafeteria, and counseling services had negatively affected the students' academic performance.

### **Recommendations**

In this study, rather than lack of academic achievement motivation, skill (that is interpreted in terms of academic background) has been found to be the major problem that contributed to the students' low college performance. So, the students who go into college preparatory programs and who join higher learning institutions should be helped to be well prepared with sufficient academic background that qualifies them to be competitive in academics and when they join the work force.

The English language result of the sample used in this study was statistically significantly positively related with college performance. It also explained 36% of the variation in the criterion variable (CGPA). This strongly asserts that the students' in the sample lacked English language skill, and this deterred their college success. Therefore, emphasis should be given to developing the language skill of students who will be joining colleges and universities so that their academic success will partly be guaranteed.

Lack of accommodation is a severe problem for students who came from different regions outside Addis Ababa. Since the students have double responsibility of learning and managing their lives with very minimal resources, lack of accommodation inhibited academically

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competitive atmosphere among the students of the college. The college is now part of Addis Ababa University, which should not play double standard of providing half of the students with boarding facility and denying the same service to the other half. Without forgetting cost sharing principles, therefore, the students should be provided with places they can stay.

Strong guidance counseling services should be offered in the college so that personal and academic problems that influenced students' academic performance could be closely attended to.

Instructors in the college should try to accommodate the students' sufferings that are caused by lack of boarding facility.

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