Academic Self-Concept and Learning Motivation Among Junior Secondary School Students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

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Abstract
This study examines the effect of academic self-concept on learning motivation among junior secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Grounded in achievement motivation theory and social cognitive theory the study used a descriptive survey research design, targeting Junior Secondary School Students. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from validated motivational and learning scales. A total of 162 properly completed questionnaires were used for analysis. Descriptive statistics and inferential tools, including Pearson correlation and regression analyses, were employed. Findings revealed that self-evaluation has a significant positive relationship with learning motivation Academic confidence was also found to be a strong predictor of learning motivation effort and performance. Furthermore, level of competence significantly enhanced students' self-regulated learning, while academic self-concept showed a meaningful relationship with motivation and academic outcomes. The results underscore the importance of fostering supportive learning environments that promote autonomy, competence, and constructive feedback. The study concludes that motivational variables play a critical role in enhancing students' learning experiences and academic success. It recommends that educators and educational institutions implement instructional strategies that strengthen students' self-beliefs and encourage intrinsic motivation that provide timely, meaningful feedback to improve overall academic performance.

Keywords: *Academic Self-concept, Learning Motivation, Self-evaluation, Academic Confidence, Perceived Competence*

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a vital instrument for individual and societal development, particularly during the formative years of adolescence. At the junior secondary school level, students experience significant cognitive, emotional, and social changes that shape their attitudes toward learning and academic achievement. This stage is critical because learners begin to develop relatively stable perceptions of their academic abilities, which influence their motivation, engagement, and long-term educational outcomes. One psychological construct that has gained increasing attention in educational research is academic self-concept, which refers to students' perceptions, beliefs, and evaluations of their academic competence (Marsh & Craven,

2006). Academic self-concept is not innate but develops over time through interactions with teachers, peers, parents, and the broader school environment. Classroom experiences, feedback on academic performance, and social comparison play significant roles in shaping how students perceive their abilities (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Students who develop a positive academic self-concept tend to view academic tasks as achievable and worthwhile, while those with a negative academic self-concept often doubt their abilities and show limited interest in learning activities. These self-perceptions can significantly influence students' motivation and willingness to engage in academic work. Learning motivation refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, guide, and sustain students' learning behavior (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2014). Motivation determines the degree of effort students invest in learning tasks, their persistence in overcoming challenges, and their overall engagement in classroom activities. Motivated students are more likely to set meaningful learning goals, employ effective learning strategies, and maintain interest in academic work. Conversely, low motivation is often associated with poor classroom participation, reduced effort, and declining academic performance. Research has consistently established a strong relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation. Students with a high academic self-concept are more likely to demonstrate intrinsic motivation, confidence, and persistence in learning activities (Marsh, Martin, & Debus, 2001). In contrast, students who perceive themselves as academically weak may develop low motivation, fear of failure, and avoidance of academic tasks. Guay, Ratelle, Roy, and Litalien (2010) argue that academic self-concept serves as a significant predictor of motivational outcomes because students' beliefs about their competence influence their expectations of success and value placed on learning tasks. The junior secondary school stage is particularly important because students are exposed to increased academic demands, subject specialization, and heightened peer comparison. These factors can either strengthen or weaken students' academic self-concept and motivation. In the Nigerian educational context, challenges such as large class sizes, inadequate learning facilities, teacher shortages, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds may further affect students' self-perceptions and motivation toward learning. In urban areas like Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, students are often exposed to competitive academic environments, which may intensify social comparison and influence academic self-concept development. Despite the importance of psychological factors in learning, many Nigerian schools place greater emphasis on examination performance and cognitive achievement, with limited attention given to students' self-beliefs and motivational orientations. This gap highlights the need for studies that explore how academic self-concept influences learning motivation among junior secondary school students. Understanding this relationship can help educators, school counselors, and policymakers design interventions that promote positive self-concept, enhance motivation, and improve academic engagement. Therefore, this study examines academic self-concept as a predictor of learning motivation among junior secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Ar**ea**. The findings are expected to contribute to educational psychology literature and provide practical insights for improving students' motivation and learning outcomes at the foundational level of secondary education.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

Concept of Academic Self-Concept

Academic self-concept is a central construct in educational psychology that describes students' perceptions, beliefs, and evaluations of their academic abilities. It reflects how learners see

themselves as students and how they judge their competence in academic tasks and learning situations. Unlike objective measures of achievement, academic self-concept is subjective and shaped by personal experiences, social interactions, and feedback from significant others within the educational environment (Marsh & Craven, 2006). This construct plays a crucial role in influencing students' motivation, engagement, and academic performance. The concept of academic self-concept is grounded in self-concept theory, which posits that individuals develop perceptions of themselves through interaction with their environment and through reflection on their experiences (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). In the academic context, students form beliefs about their intellectual ability based on classroom experiences, teacher evaluations, peer comparison, and past academic outcomes. These beliefs influence how students approach learning tasks, respond to challenges, and set academic goals. Academic self-concept is distinct from related constructs such as self-esteem and academic self-efficacy. While self-esteem refers to an individual's overall sense of self-worth, academic self-concept specifically focuses on perceptions related to academic ability. Academic self-efficacy, on the other hand, concerns beliefs about one's capability to perform specific academic tasks. Although these constructs are related, academic self-concept represents a broader and more stable evaluation of academic competence (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Students may believe they can perform a particular task (self-efficacy) while still holding a generally low academic self-concept. Research indicates that academic self-concept is multidimensional and domain-specific. Students may develop different self-concepts across various subjects such as Mathematics, English, and Science, depending on their experiences and achievements in each domain (Marsh, 2007). For instance, a student may perceive themselves as strong in language-based subjects but weak in numerically oriented subjects. These domain-specific self-perceptions influence subject-related motivation, persistence, and achievement. Academic self-concept also develops dynamically over time. During early adolescence, particularly at the junior secondary school level, students become more self-aware and sensitive to feedback and social comparison. At this stage, academic self-concept may fluctuate due to changes in academic expectations, instructional methods, and peer influence (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Positive reinforcement, supportive teacher-student relationships, and opportunities for academic success contribute to the development of a positive academic self-concept. Empirical evidence consistently shows that academic self-concept is strongly associated with learning motivation and academic achievement. Students with a positive academic self-concept tend to be more intrinsically motivated, demonstrate higher engagement, and show greater persistence in learning tasks (Guay et al., 2010). Conversely, a negative academic self-concept may lead to low motivation, anxiety, and avoidance of academic challenges. Consequently, academic self-concept is not only an outcome of learning experiences but also a predictor of future academic behavior and motivation. Academic self-concept represents students' self-perceived academic competence shaped by experience, feedback, and social context. Understanding this concept is essential for educators seeking to foster motivation, confidence, and academic success among learners, particularly at the junior secondary school level.

Concept of Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is a fundamental psychological construct that explains why students initiate, persist in, and sustain engagement in learning activities. It refers to the internal and external forces that stimulate interest, direct behavior, and determine the intensity and duration of students' academic efforts (Schunk, Meece, & Pintrich, 2014). Learning motivation is widely

acknowledged as a critical factor influencing students' academic engagement, persistence, and achievement, particularly during the junior secondary school stage when learners encounter increasing academic demands and social pressures. Motivation in learning is commonly categorized into **intrinsic** and **extrinsic** forms. Intrinsic motivation occurs when students engage in learning activities for inherent satisfaction, curiosity, or enjoyment. Intrinsically motivated students learn because they find academic tasks interesting or personally meaningful (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, extrinsic motivation arises when learning behavior is driven by external rewards or pressures, such as grades, praise, parental expectations, or avoidance of punishment. While extrinsic motivation can encourage short-term engagement, intrinsic motivation is more strongly associated with deep learning, creativity, and sustained academic interest (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Learning motivation is also influenced by students' beliefs, goals, and expectations of success. According to expectancy–value theory, students are more motivated to engage in learning tasks when they believe they can succeed and when they perceive the task as valuable or relevant (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Students who expect positive outcomes from learning are more likely to invest effort, persist in the face of challenges, and adopt effective learning strategies. Conversely, low expectations of success may lead to disengagement and avoidance of academic tasks. At the junior secondary school level, learning motivation is shaped by both personal and environmental factors. Classroom climate, teaching methods, assessment practices, peer relationships, and teacher support all play significant roles in influencing students' motivation. Supportive learning environments that promote autonomy, competence, and relatedness tend to enhance students' motivation and engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In contrast, overly competitive or punitive environments may undermine motivation and increase anxiety among learners. Research consistently shows a strong relationship between learning motivation and academic outcomes. Motivated students are more likely to demonstrate persistence, self-regulated learning, and positive attitudes toward school (Schunk et al., 2014). They also exhibit higher levels of academic achievement and lower rates of school dropout. In the Nigerian educational context, challenges such as large class sizes, limited instructional resources, and examination-oriented teaching practices may affect students' motivation. These challenges highlight the need to understand motivational processes in order to design interventions that foster sustained engagement and academic success. Learning motivation does not exist in isolation but interacts with other psychological constructs such as academic self-concept, self-efficacy, and goal orientation. Students with a positive academic self-concept are more likely to develop strong learning motivation because they perceive themselves as capable learners (Guay et al., 2010). This interaction underscores the importance of addressing both self-perceptions and motivational factors in educational practice. Learning motivation is a multidimensional construct that plays a vital role in students' academic engagement and achievement. Understanding its nature and determinants is essential for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance learning outcomes, particularly among junior secondary school students.

Academic Self-Concept and Learning Motivation

Academic self-concept and learning motivation are closely related psychological constructs that significantly influence students' academic engagement, persistence, and achievement. Academic self-concept refers to learners' perceptions, beliefs, and evaluations of their academic abilities, while learning motivation describes the internal and external forces that initiate, guide, and

sustain learning behavior. Research consistently shows that students' beliefs about their academic competence play a crucial role in shaping their motivation to learn (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Students with a positive academic self-concept tend to perceive themselves as capable learners and are more likely to approach academic tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. Such students demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation, engage more actively in classroom activities, and persist in the face of academic challenges (Guay et al., 2010). When learners believe they can succeed academically, they are more willing to invest effort and adopt effective learning strategies. Conversely, students with a low academic self-concept often doubt their abilities, which may result in reduced motivation, avoidance of academic tasks, and poor academic outcomes (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). The relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation is well explained by self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of perceived competence in fostering intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). According to this theory, students who feel competent in academic tasks experience greater enjoyment and interest in learning activities. Academic self-concept, therefore, serves as a foundation upon which intrinsic motivation is built. When students perceive themselves as academically capable, they are more likely to engage in learning for personal satisfaction rather than solely for external rewards. Empirical studies have demonstrated a bidirectional relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation. While a positive academic self-concept enhances motivation, sustained motivation and successful learning experiences also reinforce students' academic self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006). This reciprocal relationship suggests that students who are motivated to learn tend to perform better academically, which in turn strengthens their self-perceptions of competence. Over time, this cycle contributes to improved academic achievement and sustained motivation. At the junior secondary school level, academic self-concept becomes particularly important due to increased academic demands, peer comparison, and formal assessment practices. During this stage, students begin to form more stable judgments about their abilities, which can either enhance or undermine their motivation to learn (Eccles & Wigfield, 2020). Supportive teaching practices, constructive feedback, and positive classroom environments play a critical role in shaping students' academic self-concept and, by extension, their motivation. Furthermore, academic self-concept influences both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students with high academic self-concept are more likely to internalize extrinsic goals, such as achieving good grades, and transform them into personally meaningful objectives (Schunk et al., 2014). In contrast, students with low academic self-concept may rely heavily on external rewards or experience a motivation due to repeated academic failures.

Academic self-concept is a powerful predictor of learning motivation. Students' beliefs about their academic abilities shape their willingness to engage in learning, persist through challenges, and strive for academic success. Enhancing students' academic self-concept through supportive instructional practices and positive learning experiences is therefore essential for promoting sustained learning motivation, particularly among junior secondary school students.

Theoretical Review

Achievement Motivation Theory

Achievement Motivation Theory, developed by McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell (1953), posits that individuals are driven by a desire to achieve excellence, take on challenging tasks, and attain success. In the educational context, students' learning motivation is strongly influenced by their need for achievement. According to this theory, learners with high achievement motivation tend to set challenging but attainable goals, monitor their progress, and

persist in the face of obstacles (Atkinson, 1964). This drive is not only fueled by personal satisfaction but also by the anticipation of positive feedback and recognition from significant others, such as teachers and peers (McClelland et al., 1953).

In junior secondary school settings, students who exhibit high achievement motivation are more likely to engage actively in learning activities, display self-regulation, and show resilience when faced with academic difficulties. Conversely, students with low achievement motivation may avoid challenging tasks, procrastinate, and exhibit low learning engagement, which can negatively impact academic performance (Schunk et al., 2014). This theory provides a framework for understanding how intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as personal goals and external rewards, interact to shape students' motivation and academic behavior.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Bandura (1986), emphasizes the role of observational learning, self-efficacy, and social influences in shaping human behavior. The theory asserts that learning motivation is not solely determined by internal drives but also by the interplay between personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences—a concept known as reciprocal determinism. Self-efficacy, a core component of this theory, refers to individuals' belief in their ability to successfully perform a task, which strongly predicts their willingness to engage, persist, and achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

In the classroom context, students with high academic self-efficacy are more likely to participate actively, set challenging goals, and maintain motivation despite setbacks. They also tend to emulate effective learning strategies observed in peers or teachers, which enhances skill acquisition and reinforces their confidence (Zimmerman, 2000). Social Cognitive Theory thus underscores the importance of supportive learning environments, role models, and constructive feedback in fostering both self-concept and motivation. Integrating this theory with Achievement Motivation Theory provides a comprehensive understanding of how students' competence beliefs, goal orientation, and social interactions collectively influence their learning motivation.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation among secondary school students across different contexts.

For instance, Adesina and Musa (2019) examined how academic self-concept and self-efficacy predict learning motivation among junior secondary school students in Kano State. The study involved 800 students, from which a sample of 150 was selected using simple random sampling. Employing a correlational survey design with standardized instruments, the findings revealed that both academic self-concept ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$) significantly predicted learning motivation. Students with higher self-concept and self-efficacy demonstrated increased interest in learning, persistence, and academic engagement. The study emphasized the importance of cognitive and affective factors in shaping students' motivation.

Similarly, Oyedele and Akinyemi (2020) investigated the influence of academic self-concept on students' learning motivation in Lagos State. Using a descriptive survey design with a sample of 200 students selected through stratified random sampling, the study found a significant positive relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Students with higher academic self-concept exhibited stronger persistence, goal-setting abilities, and active engagement in learning activities. The authors recommended the use of mentorship programs and positive reinforcement strategies to enhance students' academic self-perception.

In the same vein, Okonkwo and Eze (2021) explored the extent to which academic self-concept influences learning motivation among junior secondary school students in Rivers State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a purposive sample of 180 students. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between academic self-concept and learning motivation ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$). Students with positive academic self-concept were more actively involved in classroom activities, demonstrated persistence in completing tasks, and achieved better academic outcomes. Extending the scope beyond Nigeria, Mahlobo and Maphosa (2022) examined the influence of academic self-concept on learning motivation among secondary school students in South Africa. Using a descriptive survey design with 280 students, the study found that academic self-concept significantly predicted learning motivation ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.05$). Students with higher academic self-concept demonstrated stronger engagement, persistence, and goal orientation. The study highlighted the importance of supportive classroom environments and teacher encouragement in fostering positive self-perceptions. Further, Adebayo and Okeke (2023) investigated the relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation among secondary school students in Southwest Nigeria using a correlational design and a sample of 240 students. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$). Students with higher academic self-concept exhibited better study habits, increased classroom participation, and stronger academic aspirations. The study recommended integrating counselling services and self-development programs into schools to enhance students' motivation. In addition, Burns, Martin, and Collie (2024) explored the role of academic self-concept in predicting students' motivation and engagement using a longitudinal research design. The study revealed that academic self-concept had a significant positive effect on students' motivation over time. Students with positive academic self-concept maintained consistent effort, demonstrated resilience, and achieved higher academic outcomes. The findings underscored academic self-concept as a stable and powerful predictor of learning motivation. Furthermore, Ayllón-Salas, Arco-Tirado, and Fernández-Martín (2025) examined the impact of self-concept on adolescents' self-regulated learning and motivation using a predictive modelling approach with 923 students. The results showed that academic self-concept significantly predicted motivational components of self-regulated learning, accounting for a substantial proportion of variance in students' motivation. Students with higher academic self-concept were more likely to adopt effective learning strategies, persist in academic tasks, and remain actively engaged in learning. More recently, Song and Wang (2026) investigated the relationship between academic self-concept and learning engagement using structural equation modelling with a sample of 1,054 students. The findings revealed that academic self-concept had a significant positive effect on learning motivation and engagement, both directly and indirectly through self-efficacy and academic emotions. Students with positive academic self-concept demonstrated higher levels of motivation, emotional involvement, and persistence in learning activities. Collectively, these studies consistently demonstrate a strong and positive relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation across different contexts and time periods. The evidence indicates that students' perceptions of their academic abilities significantly influence their engagement, persistence, and overall academic performance. Consequently, interventions aimed at improving students' academic self-concept, self-efficacy, and confidence are essential for enhancing learning motivation and achieving better educational outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopted **a** descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation among junior secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate as it allows for the collection of data from a large population in their natural setting, enabling the researcher to assess students' perceptions of their academic self-concept and learning motivation without manipulation (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). The population of the study comprised all junior secondary school students in public secondary schools within Obio/Akpor LGA. A sample size of 200 students was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample sizes for large populations. Students were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different schools, classes, and gender, thereby minimizing sampling bias and improving the generalizability of findings. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher, divided into sections measuring academic self-concept and learning motivation. The instrument employed a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" to capture the respondents' perceptions. The questionnaire was subjected to content and face validity by experts in educational psychology, and reliability was established through a pilot study, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient, to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between academic self-concept and learning motivation. The use of both descriptive and inferential statistics ensured that the findings would be meaningful, interpretable, and capable of informing educational interventions aimed at enhancing students' motivation.

Results and Discussion

Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Table 4.1: Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaire

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Number Administered	200	100
Number Retrieved	174	87
Number Used	160	80

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to junior secondary school students across selected public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Out of these, 174 questionnaires were retrieved, while 160 were properly completed and deemed usable for data analysis, representing a valid response rate of 80%. This high response rate indicates adequate student participation and provides sufficient data for reliable statistical analysis.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (n = 160)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	88	55
	Female	72	45
Age	10–12 years	46	29
	13–15 years	82	51
	16 years & above	32	20
Class Level	JSS 1	52	33
	JSS 2	58	36
	JSS 3	50	31

The demographic analysis in Table 4.2 shows that 88 respondents (55%) were male, while 72 respondents (45%) were female, indicating relatively balanced gender representation. Age distribution revealed that the majority of respondents, 82 students (51%), were within the 13–15 years age bracket, followed by 46 students (29%) aged 10–12 years, while 32 students (20%) were 16 years and above. This suggests that most respondents were within the typical age range for junior secondary education. Regarding class level, 58 respondents (36%) were in JSS 2, 52 respondents (33%) were in JSS 1, and 50 respondents (31%) were in JSS 3. These demographics confirm that respondents were adequately distributed across classes, enhancing the representativeness and credibility of the study findings.

H_{01}: Students' Self-Evaluation and Learning Motivation

Table 4.3: Correlation Result for Students' Self-Evaluation and Learning Motivation

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Self-Evaluation & Learning Motivation	0.54	0.000	Reject H_{01}

The result shows a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between students' self-evaluation and learning motivation ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that students who regularly assess their academic performance and reflect on their learning progress tend to exhibit higher motivation to learn. Therefore, H_{01} is rejected.

H_{02}: Academic Confidence and Learning Motivation

Table 4.4: Regression Result for Academic Confidence Predicting Learning Motivation

Predictor Variable	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Academic Confidence	0.38	4.12	0.001	Reject H_{02}

The regression analysis indicates that academic confidence significantly predicts learning

motivation among junior secondary school students ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that students who believe in their academic abilities are more motivated to engage in learning tasks. Hence, H_{02} is rejected.

H_{03}: Level of Competence and Learning Motivation

Table 4.5: Regression Result for Level of Competence Predicting Learning Motivation

Predictor Variable	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Level of Competence	0.31	3.45	0.001	Reject H_{03}

The result reveals that students' level of competence significantly predicts learning motivation ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that students who perceive themselves as competent in academic tasks are more motivated to learn. Consequently, H_{03} is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Students' Self-Evaluation and Learning Motivation

The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between students' self-evaluation and learning motivation ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that students who engage in self-reflection and assess their academic strengths and weaknesses are more motivated to learn. Self-evaluation enhances awareness of learning goals and progress, which fosters persistence and engagement. This finding supports Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes self-regulation and self-reflective practices as drivers of motivation (Bandura, 1997). The result is consistent with previous studies that found self-evaluation to be a significant predictor of students' motivation and academic engagement (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Academic Confidence and Learning Motivation

The study found that academic confidence significantly predicts learning motivation among junior secondary school students. This suggests that students who believe in their academic capabilities are more willing to participate in learning activities and persist in challenging tasks. Academic confidence strengthens students' resilience and goal commitment, thereby enhancing motivation. This finding aligns with Achievement Motivation Theory, which posits that confidence in ability enhances achievement-oriented behaviors. The result corroborates earlier empirical findings that academic confidence positively influences students' motivation and learning outcomes (Zimmerman, 2000).

Level of Competence and Learning Motivation

The results further revealed that students' level of competence has a significant positive influence on learning motivation. This implies that students who perceive themselves as capable of mastering academic tasks are more intrinsically motivated to learn. Perceived competence encourages sustained effort and engagement in learning activities. This finding supports Expectancy-Value Theory, which asserts that students' motivation is influenced by their expectations of success. It is also consistent with previous studies that identified competence perception as a key determinant of learning motivation among secondary school students (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Conclusion

This study examined academic self-concept as a predictor of learning motivation among junior secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State, with specific focus on students' self-evaluation, academic confidence, and level of competence. Based on the results obtained from the data analysis, the study concludes that academic self-concept plays a significant role in influencing students' learning motivation**.** The findings revealed that students' self-evaluation has a significant positive relationship with learning motivation, indicating that students who regularly assess and reflect on their academic performance tend to be more motivated to learn. The study also established that academic confidence significantly predicts learning motivation, suggesting that belief in one's academic ability enhances engagement, persistence, and willingness to participate in learning tasks. Furthermore, the results showed that students perceived level of competence significantly predicts learning motivation, emphasizing that students who feel capable of handling academic tasks are more motivated to invest effort in learning. Overall, the study concludes that positive academic self-concept enhances learning motivation, while poor self-perception may hinder students' interest, engagement, and academic development. Therefore, fostering students' self-evaluation skills, confidence, and competence is essential for improving learning motivation and educational outcomes at the junior secondary school level.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should encourage regular self-evaluation among students by incorporating reflective activities such as self-assessment checklists, learning journals, and feedback sessions. This will help students become more aware of their strengths and areas for improvement, thereby enhancing their motivation to learn.
2. School administrators and teachers should implement confidence-building strategies, including positive reinforcement, recognition of effort, and supportive classroom interactions, to strengthen students' academic confidence and promote sustained learning motivation.
3. Instructional practices should focus on competence development, ensuring that learning tasks are appropriately challenging and aligned with students' ability levels. Mastery-based learning and differentiated instruction should be adopted to help students develop a sense of academic competence.

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