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PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated perceived influence of teachers' motivational strategies on academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, using three research questions and three hypotheses. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The total population was 15,374 respondents consisting of 7,767 male and 7,607 students in 309 in all the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected through Taro Yemane formula and simple random sampling technique. The instrument for the study was a self-structured questionnaire titled "perceived influence of teachers' motivational strategies on academic performance of students Questionnaire" which was validated by experts in the Departments of Measurement and Evaluation and Educational Psychology; while Cronbach Alpha was used to achieve reliability indexes of 0.90, 0.88 and 0.84. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while the z-test was used in testing the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that setting clear goals and expectations, the use of gamification techniques, and building strong teacher-student relationships have positive influence on academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended that teachers should clearly outline goals and expectations at the beginning of each lesson, encourage students to set personal goals, regularly review progress, and provide examples of high-quality work to guide students toward focused academic effort, teachers should design gamified activities with clear learning objectives to ensure students understand their purpose and alignment with educational goals and teachers can foster strong relationships by learning about students' interests, engaging in one-on-one conversations, creating a respectful classroom culture, and celebrating individual progress to enhance students' motivation and sense of belonging.

Keywords: Perceived Influence, Teachers' Motivational Strategies, Academic Performance

Introduction

The academic performance of students is influenced by numerous factors, one of the most significant being the motivation provided by teachers. Motivation in education can be defined as the process that drives students to engage in learning, strive

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for success, and achieve their academic goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Teachers, as primary influencers in the educational environment, play a pivotal role in shaping this motivation through various strategies and approaches that can enhance diminish students' drive to perform well academically. The perceived influenced of teachers' motivational strategies on students' academic performance is an area of growing interest, as understanding how students interpret and respond to these strategies can provide insight into effective teaching practices.

Research by (Su & Cheng, 2015) shows that when teachers implement motivational strategies such as setting clear goals and expectations, usage of gamification techniques, building strong teacher-student relationships, providing constructive feedback, fostering a supportive classroom environment, and aligning lessons with students' interests, students tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement, persistence, and self-confidence. These positive attitudes are often linked to improved academic performance. Students who perceive their teachers as supportive, enthusiastic, and invested in their personal growth are more likely to take an active role in their learning and are motivated to achieve their full potential. However, the impact of these motivational strategies varies across students and educational contexts, with individual perceptions playing a crucial role. While some students may respond positively to certain motivational techniques, others may find them less impactful or even discouraging, depending on their unique

learning needs, personal experiences, and the classroom environment (Lee, 2011). Therefore, exploring the perceived influence of teachers' motivational strategies on academic performance not only helps identify which approaches are most effective but also encourages a more student-centered approaches are most effective but also encourages a more student-centered approach to teaching that considers diverse student perspectives.

In conclusion, the perceived influence of teachers' motivational strategies on students' academic performance underscores the importance of tailored, empathetic, and dynamic approaches to teaching. As educational environments continue to evolve, understanding and implementing effective motivational strategies that resonate with students will be crucial in promoting not only academic success but also fostering a deeper, more meaningful connection to learning (Kapp, 2012). This exploration invites further research into the varied ways in which students experience and respond to motivational strategies, highlighting the need for teaching practices that are both inclusive to the individual learner. Teachers' motivational strategies discussed in this study include setting clear goals and expectations, usage of gamification techniques, building strong teacher-student relationships as it relates to students' academic performance.

Conceptualizing Teacher Motivation

Teacher motivation is a key factor that influences not only teachers' performance but also student outcomes, classroom climate,

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and the overall school environment. Motivated teachers tend to be more enthusiastic, committed, and effective in their teaching practices, which in turn positively impacts student engagement and academic achievement (Watt & Richardson, 2008). Factors affecting teacher motivation include intrinsic interests in teaching, personal values, supportive administration, opportunities for professional growth, and adequate resources.

Teacher motivation can also be shaped by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which suggests that motivation is strongest when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In this context, teachers who feel supported in their professional development, have a sense of belonging, and feel capable of handling classroom challenges are likely to have higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction.

Influence of Setting Clear Goals and Expectations on Students Academic Performance

Goal setting and establishing clear expectations are critical components of student achievement and motivation. These practices guide students by providing clarity, direction, and motivation, allowing them to measure their progress, maintain focus, and improve outcomes. Research indicates that clear goals and expectations enhance academic performance by fostering motivation, self-regulation, and a growth mindset among students (Zimmerman, 2008; Schunk, 2009). Schunk (2009) opined that

setting specific and challenging goals enhances intrinsic motivation by providing students with a clear purpose and objectives. A study by Wentzel (2009) found that students with clear academic goals had higher motivation levels and were more engaged, which positively impacted their grades. This intrinsic motivation often leads to a deep approach to learning, as students seek to understand material rather than simply memorize it. In the view of Dweck (2006) clear goals and expectations help students foster a growth mindset, a belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed with effort. According to Hattie (2009) setting high expectations is one of the most impactful teacher influences on student achievement. When students understand what is expected of them, they are more likely to strive to meet these standards. Hattie's research suggests that clear expectations, combined with feedback, are critical for maximizing student potential.

Influence of Gamification Techniques on Students Academic Performance

Gamification, defined as the application of game-design elements in non-gaming contexts, has gained considerable attention in education. Gamification techniques, such as points, leaderboards, badges, and levels, aim to increase engagement and motivation by harnessing the same motivational principles that make games compelling. Studies by Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke (2011) and Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa (2014) indicates that gamification can positively influence academic performance by enhancing motivation, fostering active

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learning, and improving students' attitudes toward challenging subjects. According to a study by Dominguez, Saenz-de-Navarrete, de-Marcos, Pages, & Martinez-Herraiz (2013) students in a gamified course demonstrated better retention of course content compared to those in a traditional course setup. This improvement may be attributed to the repetitive nature of certain game-based elements, such as quizzes and practice tasks, which reinforce learning and memory. By making learning a series of small, achievable goals, gamification allows students to build upon their knowledge gradually and retain information more effectively.

Influence of Building Strong Teacher-Student Relationships on Students' Academic Performance

The quality of teacher-student relationships is a powerful factor influencing students' academic outcomes. Strong, positive relationships with teachers foster a sense of belonging, enhance motivation, and improve emotional well-being, all of which contribute to academic success (Roorda, Koomen, Split, & Oort 2011). A trusting relationship with a teacher provides students with a supportive environment where they feel valued and understood, leading to increased engagement and effort in their studies. Roorda, Koomen, Split, and Oort (2011) averred that a strong teacher-student relationship fosters a positive classroom climate, enhancing students' motivation and engagement. According to a meta-analysis by Roorda, Koomen, Split, and Oort (2011) students who perceive a positive connection with their teachers are more

motivated to participate and engage in academic tasks. Motivation directly influences students' willingness to invest time and effort in learning, which positively affects their academic performance. Martin and Dowson (2009) stated that when students feel emotionally connected to their teachers, they are more likely to take risks in learning and seek help when needed, further supporting academic growth. Wentzel (2009) stated that positive teacher-student relationships promote social-emotional development, which has been shown to support academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Academic performance is a critical indicator of student success and has far-reaching implications for individual growth, future opportunities, and societal development. However, motivating students to reach their full academic potential remains a challenge in many educational contexts. Teachers employ a range of motivational strategies, such as setting clear expectations, offering constructive feedback, personalizing instruction, and building supportive relationships, all intended to enhance student engagement and performance. Despite these efforts, there is gap in understanding how students perceive these strategies and how these perceptions influence their academic performance. The problem this study seeks to address is the need for a deeper understanding of the perceived influence of teachers' motivational strategies on students' academic performance. While various motivational techniques are widely practiced, their effectiveness may vary based on

individual student perceptions and personal motivational needs. If students do not respond positively to certain strategies or perceive them as ineffective, this disconnect could impact their engagement, motivation, and overall performance in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate perceived influence of teachers' motivational strategies on academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the extent setting clear goals and expectations as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. examine the extent use of gamification techniques as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. ascertain the extent building strong teacher-student relationships as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does setting clear goals and expectations as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent does the use of gamification techniques as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does building strong teacher-student relationships as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public

senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Methodology

The research design used for the study was the descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 15,374 respondents consisting of 7,767 male and 7,607 female students from the 309 public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample size of 400 respondents consisting of 220 males and 180 females were derived through Taro Yemane formula and simple random sampling. A self-developed questionnaire titled: Perceived Influence of Teachers' Motivational Strategies on Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (PITMSAPSQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. The instrument had two (2) sections; Sections A and B. Section A dealt with demographic information while Section B had 15 questionnaire items based on the objectives of the study. The response scale was structured on a 4-point Likert rating scale of Very High Extent (VHE); High Extent (HE); Low Extent (LE); and Very Low Extent (VLE) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine and obtain reliability indexes of 0.90, 0.88 and 0.84. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions with a criterion mean of 2.50. Questionnaire items with ratings below 2.50 denoted "Low Extent" while 2.50 and above signified "High Extent". The hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Analyzed data therefore, with calculated z-values above the z-critical value of ±1.96 were rejected and below ±1.96 were accepted.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does setting clear goals and expectations as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Extent Setting Clear Goals and Expectations Influence Academic Performance of Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

S/N	Item	Males N=220 $\overline{X}$	SD	Females N=180 $\overline{X}$	SD	Average mean set	Decision
1	Teachers clearly explain the goals of each lesson or activity	3.25	1.07	2.95	0.58	3.10	HE
2	Students understand what is expected of them in class due to the teacher's instructions	3.00	1.05	3.09	0.53	3.05	HE

S/N	Item	Males		Females		Grand	Decision
3	Teachers set clear goals that help students focus on what they need to achieve	3.27	1.10	3.04	0.62	3.16	HE
4	Teachers provide specific examples or guidelines to help students meet expectations	3.19	1.09	3.30	0.76	3.25	HE
5	Teachers' explanation of goals and expectations make it easier for students to plan and complete assignments	3.39	0.97	3.11	0.65	3.25	HE
	Grand Mean/SD	**3.22**	**1.06**	**3.10**	**0.63**	**3.16**	**HE**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The result on table 1 revealed that male and female students perceived to a high extent to all the questionnaire items with average mean scores of 3.10, 3.05, 3.16, 3.25 and 3.25. This infers that setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the use of gamification techniques as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Extent the Use of Gamification Techniques Influence Academic Performance of Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

S/N	Item	Males N=220		Females N=180		Average mean set	Decision
		$\overline{X}$	SD	$\overline{X}$	SD		
6	Teachers incorporate elements of games (e.g., points, levels, rewards) into classroom activities	3.41	1.01	3.22	0.80	3.32	HE
7	The use of rewards or points motivates the students to complete tasks in class	3.12	1.04	3.12	0.61	3.12	HE
8	Students are motivated to participate by teachers' inclusion of game elements in learning activities	3.06	1.08	2.64	0.51	2.85	HE
9	Students feel excited to learn when class activities are designed like games (with points, rewards, or levels)	3.02	1.20	3.21	0.86	3.12	HE

S/N	Item	X	SD	X	SD		Decision
10	Students are motivated when teachers use games or gamified activities in class	2.89	1.22	3.18	0.70	3.04	HE
	Grand Mean/SD	**3.10**	**1.11**	**3.07**	**0.70**	**3.09**	**HE**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The result on table 2 revealed that male and female students perceived to a high extent to all the questionnaire items with average mean scores of 3.32, 3.12, 2.85, 3.12 and 3.04. This infers that the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 3: To what extent does building strong teacher-student relationships as perceived by male and female students influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Extent Building Strong Teacher-Student Relationships Influence Academic Performance of Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

S/N	Item	Males N=220		Females N=180		Average mean set	Decision
		— X	SD	— X	SD		
11	Students feel motivated when teachers show genuine interest in their learning and personal growth	3.31	1.08	2.90	0.72	3.11	HE
12	Having a teacher who cares about students increase their motivation to participate in class	3.08	1.14	2.65	0.51	2.87	HE
13	Having strong relationship with teachers makes learning more enjoyable	3.13	1.07	3.09	0.73	3.11	HE
14	Supportive relationship with teachers helps students reduce stress or anxiety related to schoolwork	2.73	1.03	2.96	0.69	2.85	HE
15	Having strong relationship with teachers makes students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and ideas in class	3.20	1.09	3.05	0.76	3.13	HE
	Grand Mean/SD	**3.09**	**1.08**	**2.93**	**0.68**	**3.01**	**HE**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The result on table 3 revealed that male and female students perceived to a high extent to all the questionnaire items with average mean scores of 3.11, 2.87, 3.11, 2.85 and 3.13. This infers that building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 4: z-test Analysis of Difference Between the Mean Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Extent Setting Clear Goals and Expectations Influence Academic Performance of Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Respondents	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Males	220	3.22	0.86					
				398	0.05	1.20	±1.96	Failed to reject No Significant Difference
Females	180	3.10	0.63					

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on Table 4 above revealed z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. At 0.05 level of significance and 398 degree of freedom, the z-calculated value of 1.20 was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96; therefore the null hypothesis was accepted which states that there is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

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Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: z-test Analysis of Difference Between the Mean Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Extent the Use of Gamification Techniques Influence Academic Performance of Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Respondents	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Males	220	3.10	1.11					
				398	0.05	0.30	±1.96	Failed to reject No Significant Difference
Females	180	3.07	0.70					

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data on Table 5 above revealed z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. At 0.05 level of significance and 398 degree of freedom, the z-calculated value of 0.30 was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96; therefore the null hypothesis was accepted which states that there is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: z-test Analysis of Difference Between the Mean Perceptions of Male and Female Students on the Extent the Building Strong Teacher-Student Relationships Influence Academic Performance of Students in Public Senior Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Respondents	N	$\overline{X}$	SD	Df	SL	z-cal.	z-crit.	Decision
Males	220	3.09	1.08					
				398	0.05	1.60	±1.96	Failed to reject No Significant Difference
Females	180	2.93	0.68					

Source: Field Survey, 2024

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Data on Table 6 above revealed z-test analysis of difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. At 0.05 level of significance and 398 degrees of freedom, the z-calculated value of 1.60 was less than the z-critical value of ±1.96; therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted which states that there is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Findings on research question 1 on Table 1 revealed that male and female students perceived to a high extent that setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with grand mean score of 3.09, for both male and female. Hypothesis 1 on Table 4 showed there that is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent setting clear goals and expectations influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with z-calculated value of 1.20 which was less than z-critical value of ±1.96. This finding agrees with Wentzel (2009) who found that students with clear academic goals had higher motivation levels and were more engaged, which positively impacted their grades.

Findings on research question 2 on Table 2 revealed that male and female students perceived to a high extent that the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with grand mean score of 3.01, for both male and female. Hypothesis 2 on Table 5 showed there that is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent the use of gamification techniques influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with z-calculated value of 0.30 which was less than z-critical value of ±1.96. This finding was in line with Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke (2011) and Hamari, Koivisto, & Sarsa (2014) who indicated that gamification can positively influence academic performance by enhancing motivation, fostering active learning, and improving students' attitudes toward challenging subjects.

Findings on research question 3 on Table 3 revealed that male and female students perceived to a high extent that building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with grand mean score of 3.01, for both male and female. Hypothesis 3 on Table 6 showed there that is no significant difference between the mean perceptions of male and female students on the extent building strong teacher-student relationships influence academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with z-calculated value of 1.60 which was less than z-critical value of ±1.96. This finding

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was in line with Roorda, Koomen, Split, and Oort (2011) who averred that a strong teacher-student relationship fosters a positive classroom climate, enhancing students' motivation and engagement.

Conclusion

In view of the results obtained from the study, it was concluded that setting clear goals and expectations, the use of gamification techniques, and building strong teacher-student relationships have positive influence on academic performance of students in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. Teachers should clearly outline goals and expectations at the beginning of each lesson, encourage students to set personal goals, regularly review progress, and provide examples of high-quality work to guide students toward focused academic effort.
2. Teachers should design gamified activities with clear learning objectives to ensure students understand their purpose and alignment with educational goals.
3. Teachers can foster strong relationships by learning about students' interests, engaging in one-on-one conversations, creating a respectful classroom culture, and celebrating individual progress to enhance students' motivation and sense of belonging.

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