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PSYCHOSOCIAL INDICES AS DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS' INTEREST IN CHEMISTRY IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN IBESIKPO ASUTAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract

The study examined psychosocial indices as determinant of students' interest in Chemistry in senior secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. The study was guided by four research questions. The population of the study consisted of 736 Senior Secondary Two (SS II) students in public secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area. A sample size of 259 SS II students obtained using Taro Yamane's formula was used for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample size for the study. Two researcher-developed instruments were used in collecting data for the study. The instruments were tagged "Psychosocial Variables Questionnaire (PVQ)" and "Students' Interest in Chemistry Questionnaire (SICQ)". The instruments were duly validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, after which Cronbach Alpha was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and 0.86 for the PVQ and SICQ respectively. Regression analysis was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study showed that anxiety, parents' involvement and motivation influenced students' interest in Chemistry to a high extent while peer pressure influenced students' interest in Chemistry to a moderate extent in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Thus, it was concluded that positive peer relationships, reduced anxiety, active parental involvement and increased motivation played a major role in enhancing students' interest in Chemistry. Hence, it was recommended, among others, that Chemistry teachers should create a friendly and supportive classroom environment that reduces students' fear and anxiety toward learning Chemistry. Also, school counsellors should provide guidance and counselling services to help students to manage anxiety and develop confidence in the subject.

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Keywords: Parents' Involvement, Anxiety, Motivation, Peer Pressure.

Introduction

Students' interest in a subject is an important factor that influences participation, engagement and academic success in the educational process. Subject interest refers to the level of curiosity, attention, enthusiasm and willingness demonstrated by students toward a particular subject or area of study. When students are interested in a subject, active participation in classroom activities and commitment to studying the subject are more likely to occur. Interest in a subject can also encourage students to ask questions, seek additional information, practise relevant skills and develop positive attitudes toward the subject. In contrast, a lack of interest in a subject may lead to poor concentration, low participation, absenteeism and weak academic engagement. Eyo (2022) posits that students' interest in a subject can be influenced by several factors, including teaching methods, learning environment, teacher-student relationships, parental support, peer influence and students' personal characteristics. In secondary schools, maintaining students' interest in subjects is particularly important because such interest can influence academic performance. Interest in a subject is closely related to students' academic performance because students who develop strong interest are generally more willing to invest effort and persist when difficulties are encountered. Schunk (2021) states that students who develop a strong interest in a subject are more likely to attend classes regularly, complete assignments, participate in discussions, and prepare adequately for examinations. In subjects such as Chemistry, students' interest may determine how effectively they engage with abstract concepts, practical activities, calculations and scientific explanations. However, some students may perceive Chemistry as difficult and complex, or unrelated to everyday life, which can reduce their interest in the subject. Farham and Sohail (2023) opine that such perceptions may negatively affect students' motivation, classroom participation, and eventual academic achievement. Consequently, developing and sustaining students' interest in Chemistry is essential for encouraging active engagement and improving academic performance in the subject. Besides, so many factors influence students in Chemistry, but the outstanding ones are students' psychosocial factors.

Psychosocial indices are measurable indicators used to assess the psychological and social factors that influence an individual's thoughts, feelings, behaviour, relationships and overall functioning. Wigfield (2022) asserts that the term "psychosocial" combines psychological aspects, such as emotions, motivation, attitudes, self-concept and beliefs, with social aspects, such as family relationships, peer interactions, social support and the school environment. Moreover, psychosocial indices therefore provide a way of examining how these psychological and social conditions affect individuals in a particular setting. Ade (2021) asserts that in education, psychosocial indices can be used to assess factors that influence students' learning experiences, interest, motivation, participation and academic performance. Examples of psychosocial indices relevant to students include self-esteem, academic motivation, learning anxiety, self-concept, peer influence, parental support and teacher-student relationships (Sibomana *et al.*, 2021). These indicators can be measured through questionnaires, rating scales, interviews, observations, or other appropriate research instruments. Shah (2018) states that so many psychosocial variables that could enhance students' interest in learning exist, but the outstanding ones are peer pressure, anxiety, parents' involvement and motivation. Peer pressure is defined as the influence that individuals within the same age group or social group exert on one another to think, behave or act in particular ways (Aldo, 2024). It occurs when a person's decisions, attitudes or

behaviours are affected by the expectations, opinions or actions of their peers. Peer pressure can be either positive or negative, depending on the nature of the influence and the behaviour being encouraged. Besides, Bassey (2023) asserts that positive peer pressure may motivate students to attend classes regularly, study harder, complete assignments, and develop good learning habits. Negative peer pressure, on the other hand, may encourage students to engage in behaviours such as truancy, examination malpractice, substance use, or other activities that interfere with their education (Zeidner, 2022). Among secondary school students, peers often play an important role in shaping attitudes toward school subjects, teachers, academic activities and educational achievement. Students may sometimes change their interests or learning behaviours because they want to gain acceptance, recognition, or approval from their peers. Beyond that, Onoshakpokaiye (2024) maintains that the influence of peers can affect students' interest in learning, their level of participation in classroom activities, and their level of anxiety toward learning and academic activities.

Anxiety is a psychological state characterized by feelings of worry, fear, nervousness, or uneasiness about a perceived threat, challenge, or uncertain situation (Teo, 2018). It is a common emotional experience that can occur when an individual anticipates difficulties or feels unable to cope with a particular situation. In the educational setting, anxiety may arise from examinations, classroom activities, difficult subjects, fear of failure, or pressure from teachers, parents, and peers. Students experiencing high levels of anxiety may have difficulty concentrating, remembering information, participating in classroom activities, or completing academic tasks effectively. Harry (2022) adds that anxiety can also manifest through physical symptoms such as sweating, rapid heartbeat, trembling, restlessness and difficulty in sleeping. Although a moderate level of anxiety may sometimes encourage students to prepare adequately and remain attentive, excessive anxiety can negatively affect learning and academic performance. Moreover, Philip (2017) submits that students who are highly anxious about a subject may develop negative attitudes toward learning, and may avoid activities associated with that subject, while adequate parents' involvement can help reduce such anxiety by providing encouragement, guidance, emotional support, and motivation toward learning. Parents' involvement refers to the active participation of parents or guardians in their children's educational activities, development, and academic progress (Kassaw *et al.*, 2024). It includes the various ways parents provide support, encouragement, guidance and supervision to promote effective learning. Parents' involvement may take place at home through helping with assignments, providing learning materials, monitoring study habits, and encouraging regular attendance. Moreover, Robert (2024) maintains that parents' involvement may also occur at school through attending parent-teacher meetings, communicating with teachers, participating in school activities and showing interest in their children's academic achievements. Effective parental involvement can help students develop positive attitudes toward learning, and increase their motivation to succeed academically. Adamu *et al.* (2024) assert that when parents show interest in their children's education, students may feel supported, valued and encouraged to put greater effort into their studies. Parental involvement can also help students to develop self-confidence, discipline, responsibility and effective study habits. However, inadequate parental support or excessive academic pressure may negatively affect students' emotional well-being, motivation and interest in learning.

Motivation is the internal or external force that stimulates an individual to initiate, direct, and sustain behaviour toward achieving a particular goal (Zwane and Mukuna, 2023).

It influences a person's willingness to make an effort, remain focused and persist when faced with difficulties. In education, motivation refers to the factors that encourage students to participate actively in learning and strive to achieve academic success. Motivation can be intrinsic, where students engage in learning because they find it interesting, enjoyable or personally satisfying. It can also be extrinsic, where students are motivated by external reward, recognition, grades, parental expectations or future career opportunities. Tilly (2024) asserts that highly motivated students are more likely to attend classes regularly, complete assignments, participate in classroom activities, and study independently. Motivation can also influence students' interest in particular subjects and their willingness to overcome challenges associated with learning. In Chemistry, for example, motivated students may be more willing to understand difficult concepts, carry out practical activities and prepare adequately for examinations. However, according to Yawa *et al.* (2023), a lack of motivation may result in poor concentration, low participation, reduced interest and weak academic performance. This study is based on the roles of psychosocial variables of peer pressure, anxiety, parents involvement and motivation in enhancing students interest in Chemistry in senior secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

Students' interest in Chemistry enhances active participation, motivation and willingness to engage with concepts, practical activities and problem-solving tasks. It also promotes better concentration, deeper understanding, improved academic performance and positive attitudes toward Chemistry and related career opportunities. However, looking into the educational sector in contemporary society is the problem of poor students' interest in learning Chemistry which has brought about the problems of poor academic performance, low participation in class, difficulty in understanding chemical concepts and failure in examinations. Students, disinterest in Chemistry can lead to poor laboratory skills, absenteeism, negative attitudes toward science, reduced motivation to study, limited career choices in science-related fields and a lack of practical knowledge needed for everyday life and future employment. To address the problems associated with students' low interest in Chemistry, several researchers have conducted studies examining various factors, ranging from teacher-related factors to the school environment, as possible causes of the problem, with the aim of providing appropriate solutions. However, the continued existence of the problem suggests that previous research efforts have not yielded sufficiently reliable and sustainable results. This raises the question of whether the problem could be associated with psychosocial factors that influence students' interest in Chemistry. Considering the importance of students' interest in Chemistry in promoting active participation, motivation, academic engagement and achievement in the subject, there is a need for further investigation into the factors responsible for students' interest in Chemistry. Therefore, based on the issues identified in the background of the study, the researcher is motivated to conduct the present study on the psychosocial indices as determinants of students' interest in Chemistry in senior secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State.

Purpose of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to determine:

- i. The extent to which peer pressure influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area;

- ii. The extent to which anxiety influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area;
- iii. The extent to which parents' involvement influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area; and
- iv. The extent to which motivation influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area.

Significance of the Study

This study on psychosocial indices as determinants of students' interest in Chemistry in Senior Secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area would be of immense benefit to the students, Chemistry teachers, parents and guardians, school administrators and researchers. The students would benefit from the findings of the study as they would enable the students to understand the psychosocial factors that influence their interest in Chemistry. The findings would also encourage them to develop positive attitudes, confidence, motivation and better learning habits toward Chemistry. Chemistry teachers would benefit from the findings of the study as it would help them to identify psychosocial factors that affect students' interest and participation in the subject. Chemistry teachers could use the findings to adopt teaching strategies that improve students' motivation, confidence and engagement in Chemistry. To the school administrators, the findings of the study would be useful to provide information on factors that influence students' interest in Chemistry. The findings would further help school administrators to provide appropriate learning resources, teacher support and school programmes that promote students' interest in the subject. Parents and guardians would benefit from the findings of the study as the findings would enable the students to understand the psychosocial factors that may encourage or discourage students' interest in Chemistry. The findings would further help parents to provide emotional, academic and motivational support to their children. To the researchers, the findings of the study would be essential to serve as a useful reference for researchers interested in students' interest in Chemistry. They would also provide a basis for further studies on psychosocial factors affecting the teaching and learning of Chemistry.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study

- i. To what extent does peer pressure influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?
- ii. To what extent does anxiety influence students interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?
- iii. To what extent does parents' involvement influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?
- iv. To what extent does motivation influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?

Methodology

A correlational research design was adopted for this study. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the identification of patterns and relationships among variables, thereby allowing predictions to be made based on observed correlations. In this study, the extent to which psychosocial indices of peer pressure, anxiety, parents' involvement and motivation influenced students' interest in Chemistry in senior secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area was investigated. The area of the study was Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The

population of the study consisted of 736 Senior Secondary Two (SS II) Chemistry students in the eight public secondary schools in Ibesikpo Asutan Local government Area. A sample size of 259 Senior Secondary Two (SS II) Chemistry students, obtained using the Taro Yamane's formula, was used for the study. Two researcher developed instruments used in collecting data for the study were tagged "Psychosocial Variables Questionnaire (PVQ)" and "Students' Interest in Chemistry Questionnaire (SICQ)." The instruments were validated by three experts: two experts of Educational Evaluation in the Department of Psychological Foundations of Education and one Chemistry expert in the Department of Science Education, both in the Faculty of Education, University of Uyo. Cronbach Alpha statistics was used to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and 0.86 for the PVQ and SICQ respectively. Regression analysis statistics was used in answering the research questions.

Results

Research Question One

To what extent does peer pressure influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?

Table 1: Summary of Regression Analysis of the extent to which Peer Pressure predicts Students' Interest in Chemistry (N=259)

Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Peer Pressure (X)	.481	.231	0.230
Students' Interest in Chemistry (Y)			

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 1 shows the extent to which peer pressure predicts students' interest in Chemistry. The coefficient of correlation (R) of .481 shows that peer pressure predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a moderate extent. Also, the coefficient of determination (R²) value of .231 indicates that peer pressure predicted up to 23.1 percent variation in students interest in Chemistry. This result shows that peer pressure predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a moderate extent.

Research Question Two

To what extent does anxiety influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis of the extent to which Anxiety predicts Students' Interest in Chemistry (N=259)

Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Anxiety (X)	.763	.582	.581
Students Interest in Chemistry (Y)			

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 2 shows the extent to which anxiety predicted students' interest in Chemistry. The coefficient of correlation (R) of .763 shows that anxiety predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a moderate extent. Also, the coefficient of determination (R²) value of .582 indicates that anxiety predicted up to 58.2 percent variation in students interest in Chemistry. This result shows that anxiety predicts students' interest in Chemistry to a high extent.

Research Question Three

To what extent does parents' involvement influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis of the extent to which Parents' Involvement predicts Students' Interest in Chemistry (N=259)

Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Parents Involvement (X)	.789	.623	.622
Students' Interest in Chemistry (Y)			

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 3 shows the extent to which parents' involvement predict students' interest in Chemistry. The coefficient of correlation (R) of .789 shows that parents' involvement predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a high extent. Also, the coefficient of determination (R²) value of .623 indicates that parents' involvement predicted up to 62.3 percent variation in students interest in Chemistry. This result shows that parents' involvement predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a high extent.

Research Question 4

To what extent does motivation influence students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area?

Table 4: Summary of Regression Analysis of the extent to which Motivation predicts Students' Interest in Chemistry (N=259)

Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Motivation (X)	.752	.565	.564
Students' Interest in Chemistry (Y)			

Source: Field Work (2025)

Table 4 shows the extent to which motivation predicted students' interest in Chemistry. The coefficient of correlation (R) of .565 shows that motivation predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a high extent. Also, the coefficient of determination (R²) value of .566 indicates that motivation predicted up to 56.4 percent variation in students interest in Chemistry. This result shows that motivation predicted students' interest in Chemistry to a high extent.

From the Findings, it was observed that:

- i. Peer pressure influenced students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a moderate extent.
- ii. Anxiety influenced students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a high extent.
- iii. Parents' involvement influenced students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a high extent.
- iv. Motivation influenced students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a high extent.

Discussion of Findings

The answer to the first research question has shown that peer pressure influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a moderate extent. This is achievable because students are often affected by the attitudes and behaviours of their friends. When peers have a positive attitude toward Chemistry, they can encourage one another to participate actively in lessons and study together. However, students who

associate with peers who dislike Chemistry may gradually develop negative attitudes toward the subject. The influence of peers may also depend on students' personal interests, confidence and academic goals. Some students may resist negative peer influence and continue to enjoy Chemistry because of their own motivation and career aspirations. In addition, factors such as teachers' methods, availability of learning materials and classroom environment may have greater effects on students' interest in the subject. The findings of the study are in line with the submission made Bassey (2023) that motivation significantly influences students' interest in learning. The answer to the second research question shows that anxiety influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a high extent. This is possible because many students perceive the subject as difficult and challenging. The fear of making mistakes during practical activities, solving chemical equations, or answering questions can make students feel uncomfortable and discouraged. Students who experience high levels of anxiety may avoid participating in Chemistry lessons because they are afraid of giving wrong answers or being embarrassed by their classmates. Anxiety can also reduce students' concentration and confidence, making it difficult for them to understand and enjoy Chemistry. When students repeatedly experience poor performance because of anxiety, they may develop a negative attitude toward the subject and lose interest in learning it. Supportive teachers, encouragement from classmates, and appropriate teaching methods can help reduce students' anxiety and improve their confidence in Chemistry. The finding of the study is in agreement with the submission made by Harry (2022) that anxiety is an outstanding variable that can influence students' interest in Chemistry.

The data for the third question show that parents' involvement influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a high extent. This is achievable because parents can provide encouragement and motivation that help students develop a positive attitude toward the subject. When parents show interest in their children's Chemistry education, students are more likely to take the subject seriously and put greater effort into learning it. Parents can also provide learning materials, create a suitable study environment and support students in completing their Chemistry assignments. Regular communication between parents and students can help identify difficulties and encourage students to seek assistance when they do not understand certain Chemistry concepts. In addition, parents who appreciate the importance of Chemistry can inspire their children to see the subject as useful for their future education and careers. However, lack of parental support or excessive pressure to perform well may reduce students' confidence and interest in the subject. This finding is in agreement with the submission made by Robert (2024) that parents' active involvement in academic activities tends to enhance students' interest in studying to promote academic achievement. The finding of the fourth research question indicates that motivation influences students' interest in Chemistry in Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Area to a high extent. This is possible because motivation encourages students to develop a positive attitude toward learning a subject. Highly motivated students are more willing to participate actively in Chemistry lessons and engage in practical activities. Motivation also encourages students to study regularly, complete assignments, and make efforts to understand difficult chemical concepts. When students receive encouragement, praise, rewards, or recognition for their achievements, they often become more confident and interested in Chemistry. Strong motivation can also help students overcome challenges and persist when they encounter difficulties in learning the subject. In addition, students who understand the importance of Chemistry to their future

careers may become more committed and enthusiastic about studying it. This finding is in line with the submission made by Tilly (2024) that motivation is an important psychosocial variable that could influence students interest in a subject.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that positive peer relationships, reduced anxiety, active parental involvement and increased motivation are predictors of students' interest in Chemistry.

Recommendations

- i. Chemistry teachers should create a friendly and supportive classroom environment that reduces students' fear and anxiety toward learning Chemistry.
- ii. Also, school counsellors should also provide guidance and counselling services to help students manage anxiety and develop confidence in the subject.
- iii. Chemistry teachers should use interesting teaching methods, practical activities and appropriate rewards to motivate students to develop greater interest in Chemistry.
- iv. Furthermore, schools should also recognize and encourage students' achievements in Chemistry to strengthen their confidence and willingness to learn.
- v. Chemistry teachers should encourage positive peer relationships and cooperative learning activities that promote students' interest in Chemistry.
- vi. Moreover, schools should also educate students on the negative effects of unhealthy peer pressure and encourage them to associate with peers who have positive attitudes toward learning.
- vii. Parents should actively participate in their children's Chemistry education by providing learning materials, monitoring their academic progress, and encouraging regular study.
- viii. In furtherance, schools should also organize parent-teacher meetings and educational programmes to help parents understand how their involvement can improve students' interest in Chemistry.

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