



Teachers' Emotional Support and Cognitive Motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) Students in the Technical Colleges in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' emotional support and cognitive motivation ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population comprised 4,345 Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the seven out of nine technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State, while a sample of 366 was determined using Taro Yamane Formula and selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled Teachers' Emotional Support and Cognitive Motivation Questionnaire (TESCMQ). The instrument was validated by three experts, one from measurement and evaluation unit in the department Psychological foundations, one from Industrial Technology Education, and one from the Department of curriculum studies, educational management and planning all from the University of Uyo, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha reliability method, which yielded coefficient of 0.82. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was a very strong positive and significant relationship between teachers' empathy and students' cognitive motivation. The study also found a strong positive and significant relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation, as well as a strong positive and significant relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Uyo Local Government Area. Based on these findings, the study concluded that teachers' emotional support is a significant predictor of students' cognitive motivation and plays a crucial role in enhancing students' engagement and learning outcomes in technical education. The study recommended that technical college administrators provide regular professional development programmes on socio-emotional teaching skills, teachers consistently demonstrate empathy, encouragement, and respect in their instructional practices, and the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education integrate socio-emotional competencies into teacher development and performance evaluation programmes.

Keywords: Cognitive Emotion, Support, , motivation, students teachers



Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental instrument for human capital development, economic growth, and sustainable national transformation because it equips learners with the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and competencies required to function effectively in a rapidly changing society. In the twenty-first century, education has assumed greater significance owing to technological advancement, globalization, and evolving labour market demands that require graduates to possess critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, and lifelong learning skills. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2022) emphasizes that technical education should produce competent graduates capable of applying scientific knowledge and technical skills to solve societal and industrial problems. Achieving these objectives, however, depends not only on the availability of qualified teachers, adequate facilities, and instructional resources among others. Meanwhile, for teachers to be resourceful, they need to be emotionally stable through adequate support.

Teachers' emotional support has increasingly been recognized as one of the most influential interpersonal factors that promote students' academic motivation, psychological well-being, learning engagement, and educational success. It refers to teachers' ability to establish warm, caring, respectful, encouraging, and psychologically safe classroom environments that foster students' emotional security and academic development. According to Ryan and Deci (2020), emotionally supportive teachers satisfy students' basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation and promoting deeper engagement in learning. Similarly, Wang *et al.* (2024) reported that emotionally supportive teaching practices significantly enhance students' motivation, self-regulation, academic persistence, and classroom engagement across diverse educational contexts. In technical colleges, where students combine theoretical instruction with intensive practical training, emotional support is particularly important because learners frequently encounter demanding workshop activities, fear of failure, and performance anxiety that require teachers' understanding and encouragement. Blankenstein *et al.* (2025) further observed that emotionally supportive teachers who combine autonomy support with structured guidance significantly improve students' motivation, classroom participation, and cognitive engagement.

Among the major dimensions of teachers' emotional support is teachers' empathy, which refers to a teacher's ability to understand students' emotions, appreciate individual learning differences, recognize academic difficulties, and respond with patience, compassion, and understanding rather than criticism. Empathetic teachers actively listen to students' concerns, provide individualized assistance, and create classroom environments where learners feel accepted



and emotionally secure (Eccles and Wigfield, 2020). Such supportive behaviour enables students to perceive mistakes as opportunities for improvement rather than evidence of failure.

Another important dimension is teachers' encouragement, which involves motivating students through positive reinforcement, constructive feedback, verbal appreciation, recognition of effort, and continuous reassurance that success is attainable through persistence. In competency-based technical education, where mastery depends on repeated practice and correction of errors, encouragement strengthens learners' confidence, resilience, curiosity, and willingness to engage in cognitively demanding tasks. Research consistently indicates that teacher empathy and encouragement significantly enhance students' academic confidence, intrinsic motivation, classroom participation, and persistence (Wentzel, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2024).

A further dimension of teachers' emotional support is teachers' respect, which refers to the consistent demonstration of fairness, kindness, dignity, acceptance, and genuine concern for students' academic success and personal well-being. Respectful teachers avoid ridicule, intimidation, discrimination, and humiliating comments while creating classroom environments characterized by trust, inclusion, and mutual respect (Pianta *et al.*, 2021). Roorda *et al.* (2023) noted that conducive learning environment freed of intimidations encourage students to ask questions, express opinions freely, participate actively in discussions, and learn from mistakes without fear of embarrassment. In technical colleges, where students frequently perform practical demonstrations before teachers and peers, respectful treatment reduces performance anxiety and enhances confidence in undertaking complex technical tasks (Ryan and Deci, 2020).

The positive outcomes associated with empathy, encouragement, and respect ultimately contribute to cognitive motivation, which represents learners' internal psychological drive to acquire knowledge, solve problems, think critically, explore new ideas, and persist in intellectually challenging learning activities. Unlike extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by external rewards or punishment, cognitive motivation reflects students' genuine desire to understand concepts, master learning tasks, and develop competence. Within technical education, cognitive motivation is reflected in students' enthusiasm for workshop activities, innovation, experimentation, troubleshooting, and the practical application of theoretical principles. Despite growing scholarly interest in teacher support, student engagement, and academic motivation, important gaps remain in the literature. This forms the nexus for the study to investigate the relationship between teachers' emotional support and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.



Statement of the Problem

Technical colleges are established to equip students with the cognitive, technical, and entrepreneurial competencies required for productive employment and national technological development. However, the researcher has observed that many students seem to exhibit limited interest in classroom instruction and workshop activities, demonstrate low concentration during lessons, avoid challenging learning tasks, show minimal enthusiasm for problem-solving activities, and rely heavily on teachers for direction rather than engaging in independent thinking. These observable behaviours suggest inadequate cognitive motivation, which is inconsistent with the expectations of technical education.

The persistence of low cognitive motivation among students may have serious educational and socio-economic consequences. It may result in poor academic achievement, reduced acquisition of practical and employable skills, weak problem-solving ability, low creativity and innovation, increased examination malpractice, poor classroom participation, high dropout rates, and the production of graduates who lack the competencies needed to compete effectively in the contemporary labour market. Ultimately, these outcomes may undermine the objectives of technical education and limit the contribution of technical college graduates to technological advancement and national development. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between teachers' emotional support, measured through teachers' empathy, teachers' encouragement, and teachers' respect, and cognitive motivation among Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' emotional support and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Examine the relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State
- ii. Determine the relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.
- iii. Investigate the relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State



Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- iv. What is the relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?
- v. What is the relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?
- vi. What is the relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State ?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- Ho₁:** There is no significant relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State
- Ho₂:** There is no significant relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State
- Ho₃:** There is no significant relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation of Senior Technical Two (ST2) students in the technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State

Methodology

This study adopted the correlational survey research design. According to Fraenkel *et al.* (2023) correlational survey designs enable researchers to collect data from respondents at a single point in time and determine the extent to which variations in one variable are associated with variations in another. A correlational survey design is considered appropriate because the study sought to examine the relationship between teachers' emotional support and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

The study was conducted in Technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State has nine public technical colleges established to provide Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for the development of skilled manpower. These colleges are located in Uyo (Ewet), Abak, Oron, Ikpa-Eket, Ikot Akata (Mkpat Enin), Mbioto (Etinan), Ikot Uko (Ika). Ikot Ekpene, Eket They offer competency-based technical education in engineering, construction, business, and vocational trades, equipping students with practical and entrepreneurial skills for employment, self-reliance, and further education. The colleges operate under the supervision of the State Technical Schools Board and follow the curriculum prescribed by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). The population of the study comprised 4,345 students in the seven



out of the nine government-owned technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State during the 2025/2026 academic session. The sample of 366 students was determined using Taro Yamane Formula. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select sample and was considered appropriate because it increases representativeness by ensuring that every subgroup (ie. technical colleges: Government Technical College, Ewet-Uyo (68) Government Technical College, Abak (49), Community Technical College, Ikot Akata, (45) Government Technical College, Oron (52) Union Technic 49al College, Ikpa Eket, (49), Government Technical College, Ikot uko Ika (53) and Government Technical College, Mbioto 11 (50) within the population is fairly represented while minimizing sampling bias. Fraenkel *et al.* (2023) observed that probability sampling techniques improve the generalizability of research findings.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Teachers' Emotional Support and Cognitive Motivation Questionnaire (TESCMQ). The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A elicited respondents' demographic information such as school and class. Section B contained items measuring the study variables. The questionnaire comprised 28 items distributed as follows: Teachers' Empathy – 7 items, Teachers' Encouragement – 7 items, Teachers' Respect and Care – 7 items. Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. To establish validity, copies of the questionnaire together with the research objectives, research questions, and hypotheses were submitted to three experts, one from measurement and evaluation unit in the department Psychological foundations, one from Industrial Technology Education, and one from the Department of curriculum studies, educational management and planning all from the University of Uyo, in University of Uyo. The experts examined the instrument regarding: relevance of items; clarity of language; adequacy of coverage of the study variables; appropriateness of the response format; and alignment of the items with the research objectives. Their observations, comments, and recommendations were incorporated before producing the final version of the questionnaire.

Thirty (30) students from the population of the study, who were not from the sample size but possess similar characteristics to the study participants were used for the trial test. Data obtained from the trial test were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha statistics and it yielded a coefficient of 0.82 indicating good internal consistency.

Data collected for the study were coded for data analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), was used to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses at 0.05



level of significance using The null hypothesis was rejected when the calculated p-value is less than 0.05 ($p < .05$) vice versa

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: PPMC showing relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State

Variables	N	r-value	Remarks
Teachers' Empathy (X)	366	.704	Very Strong and positive relationship
Cognitive Motivation (Y)	366		

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Result in Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.704, indicating a strong positive relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges. This implies that as teachers' empathy increases, cognitive motivation tends to increase among Senior Technical 2 students in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: PPMC showing relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa bom State.

Variables	N	r-value	Remarks
Teachers' Encouragement (X)	366	.618	Strong and positive relationship
Cognitive Motivation (Y)	366		

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Result in Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.618, indicating a strong positive relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom



State. This implies that as teachers' encouragement increases, cognitive motivation of ST2 tends to increase in the study area.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State?

Table 3: PPMC showing relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Uyo LGA

Variables	N	r-value	Remarks
Teachers' Respect (X)	366	.592	Strong and positive relationship
Cognitive Motivation (Y)	366		

(Source: Field Survey, 2026)

Result in Table 3 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis yielded a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.592, indicating a strong positive relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges. This implies that as teachers' respect increases, cognitive motivation tends to increase among of ST2 students in the study area.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State

Variables	N	df	r-cal value	p-value	α -level	Decision
Teachers' Empathy (X)	366	364	0.704	0.000*	0.05	Reject H_{01}
Cognitive Motivation (Y)						

* = significant, $P > .05$

Table 4 shows that the p-value (0.000) associated with the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.704$) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation among of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State is rejected.



Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 5: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State

Variables	N	df	r-cal value	p-value	α -level	Decision
Teachers' Encouragement (X)	366	364	0.618	0.000*	0.05	Reject H_{01}
Cognitive Motivation (Y)						

* = significant, $P > .05$

Table 5 shows that the p-value (0.000) associated with the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.618$) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State is rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 6: Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis between teachers' respect and Cognitive motivation of ST2 students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State

Variables	N	Df	r-cal value	p-value	α -level	Decision
Teachers' Respect (X)	366	364	0.592	0.000*	0.05	Reject H_{01}
Cognitive Motivation (Y)						

* = significant, $P > .05$

Table 6 shows that the p-value (0.000) associated with the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.592$) is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State is rejected.



Discussion of Finding

Teachers' Empathy and Cognitive Motivation among Students

The finding of the study revealed that there is a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' empathy and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. This finding may be attributed to the fact that empathetic teachers create emotionally supportive classrooms where students feel valued, understood, and psychologically safe. Such learning environments reduce anxiety and fear of failure, thereby increasing students' confidence to ask questions, participate in practical activities, and apply higher-order thinking skills. In technical colleges, where learning is largely competency-based and involves practical demonstrations, students are more willing to experiment, innovate, and persist when they perceive that their teachers genuinely understand their challenges and provide appropriate academic and emotional support. Another reason for this outcome is that empathetic teachers are more likely to adopt learner-centred instructional strategies, provide individualized feedback, recognize students' unique learning needs, and adjust instructional approaches to accommodate varying abilities. These practices stimulate students' curiosity, improve concentration, and strengthen their commitment to learning, which collectively enhance cognitive motivation.

The finding agrees with the principles of Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2020), which emphasizes that students become intrinsically motivated when their psychological needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are fulfilled. The finding also supports Wentzel (2022), who reported that caring and empathetic teacher-student relationships significantly predict students' academic engagement, motivation, and persistence. Teacher education institutions should incorporate emotional intelligence, interpersonal communication, and learner-centred pedagogy into teacher preparation curricula.

Teachers' Encouragement and Cognitive Motivation among Students

The study further found that there is a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' encouragement and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. This indicates that students who receive regular encouragement, praise, constructive feedback, and motivational support from their teachers are more likely to develop greater interest in learning, sustain attention during instructional activities, and actively engage in cognitive tasks. The strong relationship observed may be explained by the fact that teacher encouragement enhances students' self-confidence and academic self-efficacy. Students who receive positive reinforcement tend to believe in their abilities to overcome academic



challenges and complete practical tasks successfully. Continuous encouragement motivates learners to persevere despite initial failures and strengthens their problem-solving abilities, creativity, and innovation.

This finding is consistent with Eccles and Wigfield (2020) who maintained that positive teacher expectations and encouragement increase students' task value, academic interest, and persistence in learning activities. The implication of this finding is that teachers should consistently employ positive reinforcement strategies such as verbal praise, constructive feedback, recognition of students' efforts, and supportive classroom interactions.

Teachers' Respect and Cognitive Motivation among Students

The study also established that there is a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' respect and cognitive motivation among students in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. The strong relationship may be attributed to the fact that respectful teacher-student interactions foster trust, mutual understanding, and a positive classroom climate. Students who perceive that they are respected by their teachers are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward learning, express their ideas freely, seek clarification when necessary, and participate confidently in classroom discussions and practical exercises.

This finding corroborates the work of Roorda *et al.* (2023), who found that positive teacher-student relationships characterized by mutual respect significantly enhance students' motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. It is also consistent with Pianta *et al.* (2021), who emphasized that respectful classroom relationships create emotionally secure learning environments that promote students' academic motivation and cognitive development. The implication of this finding is that teachers should consciously cultivate respectful relationships with students by demonstrating fairness, patience, active listening, and impartiality in classroom management.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers' emotional support, expressed through empathy, encouragement, and respect, has a significant positive relationship with students' cognitive motivation in technical colleges in Akwa Ibom State. The findings underscore the importance of fostering supportive teacher-student relationships as a means of enhancing students' motivation, engagement, and overall learning outcomes in technical education

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings



- i. Technical college administrators should organize regular professional development programmes to equip teachers with skills in empathetic teaching, emotional intelligence, and learner-centred instructional practices that enhance students' cognitive motivation.
- ii. Teachers should consistently provide constructive encouragement, and treat all students with fairness and respect by creating supportive classroom environments that promote active participation, confidence, and sustained interest in learning.
- iii. The Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Education and the Technical Schools Board should incorporate empathy, encouragement, and respectful teacher-student interactions, into teacher recruitment standards and performance appraisal to improve students' motivation and academic success in technical colleges.

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