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**EZEAKACHI KELECHI VALENTINE**

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**THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY ON ADULT LEARNERS’ EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. J.N. EWELUM**

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This study investigates the critical role of motivation and self-efficacy in shaping educational outcomes for adult learners. By examining the complex psychological factors that influence learning success, the research explores how both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, along with self-efficacy beliefs, impact adult learners' engagement, persistence, and academic achievement. Despite the growing significance of adult education, challenges persist, including balancing multiple life responsibilities and overcoming self-doubt. The findings reveal a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between motivation and self-efficacy that significantly influences adult learning experiences across various educational contexts. Key insights emphasize the importance of creating supportive learning environments that foster self-confidence, provide personalized feedback, and align educational experiences with learners' personal and professional goals. The study offers strategic recommendations for educators and policymakers to enhance adult learners' motivation and self-efficacy, ultimately contributing to their educational success. The research underscores the need for institutions to understand and address the psychological factors underpinning adult learning in order to develop more effective strategies for supporting lifelong learning and professional development.

**INTRODUCTION**

Adult learning has become an essential facet of modern education, reflecting the growing importance of lifelong learning in an ever-changing world. With rapid technological advances, economic shifts, and increasing demands for workers to adapt and grow professionally, the need for adult education has never been more significant. Adults are now pursuing education not only to acquire new skills or improve existing ones but also to adapt to new career opportunities or personal development goals. However, despite the critical role that education plays in adult life, the outcomes for adult learners are often unpredictable and varied, influenced by a wide range of factors. Among these factors, motivation and self-efficacy have been recognized as two central psychological elements that significantly shape the success of adult learners (Bandura, 2019). Motivation is the driving force that propels learners toward their goals, while self-efficacy is the beliefs in one’s capabilities to achieve those goals; these factors play pivotal roles in determining how adults engage with learning and the extent to which they persevere in the face of challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Understanding how these constructs affect educational outcomes in adult learning contexts is therefore a key area of inquiry that can provide essential insights for improving educational practices, enhancing learner support, and ultimately fostering better learning outcomes for adults.

The problem at the heart of this study is the insufficient exploration of how motivation and self-efficacy influence the educational outcomes of adult learners. Despite a substantial body of research examining motivation and self-efficacy in the context of traditional students, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding adult learners, particularly those who balance education with various life responsibilities such as work, family, and community obligations. Many adult learners are enrolled in programmes that are designed with the assumption that all learners are able to dedicate significant time and energy to their studies. However, the reality is that adult learners often face unique challenges that may undermine their motivation or sense of self-efficacy, including competing priorities, financial constraints, and feelings of isolation or inadequacy (Knowles, 2021). For example, adults returning to education after a long absence may experience a lack of confidence in their academic abilities, potentially exacerbating the negative effects of stress and time pressures (Zimmerman, 2018). Furthermore, while motivation is often cited as a key determinant of academic success, the specific types of motivation—whether intrinsic (driven by personal satisfaction) or extrinsic (driven by external rewards)—and how they interact with self-efficacy beliefs to affect learning outcomes, remain inadequately understood within the adult education context. Understanding how these factors interact and impact adult learners’ academic persistence, engagement, and success is crucial in developing more effective educational strategies tailored to their needs.

The significance of this study is multifaceted. First, as the global economy shifts toward knowledge-based industries, the demand for adult learners to acquire new skills and knowledge is increasing. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), adult education is not only essential for economic growth but also for social inclusion and personal well-being (OECD, 2020). By examining the impact of motivation and self-efficacy on adult learners' educational outcomes, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how adult education programmes can be better designed to support diverse learners, leading to improved retention and completion rates. Furthermore, this research can help identify specific motivational strategies and interventions that could increase learner engagement and persistence, especially for those who are at risk of dropping out due to external pressures or low self-confidence. In an era where the global workforce must continuously adapt to technological advancements and shifting job markets, fostering successful educational outcomes for adult learners can help ensure that individuals remain competitive and resilient in the face of change.

This study also holds importance for educational institutions and policymakers who design and implement adult education programmes. Given the substantial investment of time, money, and resources required for adult learners to engage in educational endeavors, understanding the psychological factors that contribute to or hinder success can lead to more effective strategies for enhancing learning outcomes. By focusing on the constructs of motivation and self-efficacy, this research aims to provide valuable insights into how programmes can be tailored to promote a growth mindset, increase learner agency, and build the necessary self-belief that allows adults to persist in their educational goals. Moreover, the findings of this study could be used to inform policies that provide better support structures, such as mentorship programmes, flexible learning formats, or financial aid initiatives, which could reduce the barriers to success for adult learners.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of motivation and self-efficacy on adult learners' educational outcomes, specifically focusing on how these factors influence engagement, persistence, and achievement. This study will investigate both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation, considering how each affects learners' approaches to their studies and their overall sense of self-worth and accomplishment. Moreover, the research will examine how adult learners' self-efficacy beliefs—defined as the confidence in their ability to succeed in academic tasks—affect their problem-solving abilities, persistence in the face of challenges, and ultimate academic success. The study will employ a mixed-methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of how these psychological constructs interact in real-world adult learning environments. By identifying the key factors that influence motivation and self-efficacy, the study aims to provide actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance the educational experiences of adult learners, ensuring that these individuals have the support, resources, and strategies necessary to achieve their educational goals.

**MAJOR HEADINGS AND CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE**

**Motivation**

Motivation represents a complex psychological construct that plays a pivotal role in adult learning trajectories, serving as a critical determinant of educational engagement, persistence, and ultimate academic success/performance. It is broadly understood as the internal drive that propels individuals to initiate, persist, and direct effort toward achieving specific goals. In the context of adult learners, motivation is particularly critical because these individuals often balance educational pursuits with work, family, and other life responsibilities, making their motivation a significant predictor of success (Goleman, 2013). Motivation, in this sense, is not only a personal attribute but is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which interact in complex ways to shape learning experiences. A key distinction in motivational theory is between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal desire to engage in an activity for its inherent enjoyment or personal satisfaction, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards such as grades, certifications, or career advancement (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Adult learners, who may return to education for personal growth, career advancement, or skill acquisition, often exhibit a mixture of both forms of motivation. Recent research has shown that intrinsic motivation is particularly important for adult learners as it fosters deeper engagement with the material and long-term persistence in learning (Hulleman et al., 2017). This understanding has led to the development of more nuanced theories that consider how contextual factors, such as life-stage and prior experiences, influence motivational orientation (Linnenbrink-Garcia et al., 2020).

A framework commonly applied to study motivation in educational contexts is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), which posits that motivation is enhanced when learners feel that their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. In the case of adult learners, these needs are particularly relevant because they often engage in learning within a highly structured and external context. Research has consistently shown that when adult learners perceive greater autonomy in their learning choices, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of motivation and better educational outcomes (Reeve, 2016). Moreover, competence, or the feeling of being capable of succeeding in a learning task, has been shown to be a key motivator, particularly when learners face challenges related to balancing education with other life roles (Rashid & Alzaidiyeen, 2019). Relatedness, which involves feeling connected to others within the educational environment, can be especially significant for adult learners who may struggle with feelings of isolation or lack of support (Vahedi et al., 2019). In recent years, research on motivation has also explored the role of goal setting and self-regulation in learning. Goal orientation theory, which examines how individuals’ personal goals influence their learning behaviors and outcomes, has become increasingly relevant for adult learners. Studies have found that learners with mastery goals (focused on learning and improving) tend to have better academic persistence and performance compared to those with performance goals (focused on proving competence to others) (Elliot & McGregor, 2001). For adult learners, the ability to set realistic and meaningful goals that align with their life and career aspirations is an important motivational factor that influences their academic success (Simplicio et al., 2020). Furthermore, self-regulated learning, which involves strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating one’s learning process, has been identified as another crucial element in enhancing motivation and ensuring positive outcomes for adult learners (Zimmerman, 2013).

Overall, motivation is a multifaceted construct that is influenced by both individual and contextual factors. For adult learners, motivational influences are shaped not only by personal aspirations but also by external constraints and the degree to which educational environments support their autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Recent studies suggest that creating learning environments that enhance motivation—through supportive feedback, opportunities for choice, and fostering a sense of community—can significantly improve adult learners’ educational experiences and outcomes (Lee & Reeve, 2018). As motivation is closely intertwined with other psychological constructs, such as self-efficacy, the relationship between motivation and educational outcomes is dynamic, complex, and critical to understanding how adults succeed in learning endeavors.

**Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy, a concept introduced by Bandura (1977), refers to individuals' belief in their ability to perform specific tasks or achieve goals. For adult learners, self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in their motivation, persistence, and overall educational success. This belief influences how they approach challenges, manage setbacks, and maintain focus on long-term goals. Adult learners, often juggling education with work and family, may face unique challenges that can either strengthen or weaken their self-efficacy beliefs, directly affecting their academic outcomes (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). The sources of self-efficacy include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences—successful accomplishments—are particularly important for adult learners as they shape their belief in their capabilities. Positive experiences can boost self-efficacy, while setbacks may undermine it if learners lack effective coping strategies (Zimmerman, 2000). Vicarious experiences, such as observing peers succeed, can also influence self-efficacy, especially for adult learners in similar situations (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Social persuasion, such as positive feedback, can further enhance self-efficacy and persistence (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Lastly, physiological states like stress or anxiety can affect learners' perceptions of their abilities, influencing motivation (Bandura, 1997).

The relationship between self-efficacy and motivation is reciprocal. Higher self-efficacy leads to setting more challenging goals, increased effort, and persistence, which in turn reinforces self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). This is crucial for adult learners who balance education with other responsibilities. When they believe in their abilities, they are more likely to engage in learning activities and seek support when needed. Conversely, low self-efficacy can lead to procrastination, avoidance, and decreased motivation, hindering academic success (Pajares, 2008). Self-efficacy also affects both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with learners more likely to pursue tasks for intrinsic satisfaction when they believe in their abilities (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Research has shown a strong correlation between self-efficacy and academic performance across various adult learning contexts, including higher education and vocational training (Richardson et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2019). Adult learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage with course materials, participate in discussions, and complete assignments, while those with low self-efficacy may avoid challenges and struggle with problem-solving (Komarraju et al., 2011). Thus, fostering self-efficacy is essential for enhancing educational outcomes.

In online learning environments, self-efficacy plays an even more significant role. Adult learners often face challenges such as technical difficulties or isolation, which can impact their engagement and success. Learners who feel confident in using technology are more likely to persist and perform well, while those with low self-efficacy may disengage (Martin & Grasha, 2011). Providing technical support and designing courses that promote mastery experiences can enhance self-efficacy, thereby improving motivation and academic outcomes (Hodges & Fowler, 2017). In conclusion, self-efficacy is a key psychological factor influencing motivation, persistence, and academic achievement among adult learners. By shaping their perceptions of capability, self-efficacy determines how learners approach tasks, regulate their learning, and persist through challenges. Fostering positive self-efficacy beliefs is essential for enhancing adult learners' educational success, especially in contexts where they face unique obstacles.

**The Influence of Motivation and Self-Efficacy on Adult Learners' Educational Outcomes**

Adult learners, defined as individuals who return to or engage in formal education later in life, represent a significant and diverse segment of the global student population. Unlike traditional students, adult learners often bring a wealth of life experience, responsibilities, and motivations to their educational endeavors, which profoundly influences their learning experiences and outcomes (Kasworm, 2010). In recent years, the study of adult learners has expanded to focus not only on their unique demographic and motivational characteristics but also on how these factors intersect with broader psychological constructs, such as motivation and self-efficacy, to shape educational success. Adult learners are typically characterized by specific challenges, such as balancing education with work, family, and other life commitments, which can either enhance or impede their learning progress. These life circumstances often influence their expectations, motivations, and engagement in learning, making the understanding of adult learners’ educational outcomes complex and multifaceted (Cross, 2020).

The impact of motivation and self-efficacy on adult learners' educational outcomes is profound and multifaceted. Motivation, defined as the internal drive that guides behavior and decision-making, plays a pivotal role in determining whether adult learners persist in their educational endeavors, particularly in the face of obstacles like balancing work, family, and other responsibilities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-efficacy, on the other hand, refers to an individual’s belief in their capacity to achieve specific tasks and goals, and it is considered a key psychological construct that influences both the direction and intensity of an adult learner's efforts (Bandura, 1997). Building on the unique challenges faced by adult learners, motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—emerges as a critical factor influencing their engagement and success in educational settings. Motivation in adult learners can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is driven by personal interest, curiosity, or the desire for self-improvement, whereas extrinsic motivation is influenced by external rewards, such as career advancement, financial incentives, or social recognition (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Adult learners, especially those returning to education after years of absence, often experience a blend of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, with intrinsic factors like personal fulfillment or intellectual growth complementing extrinsic factors such as job security or promotion prospects (González et al., 2016). While motivation drives the initial desire to engage in learning, self-efficacy determines how adult learners manage their efforts, overcome obstacles, and ultimately persist through the challenges they encounter. Research shows that when adult learners align their educational pursuits with both personal interests and career goals, they are more likely to remain engaged, persist through challenges, and achieve positive educational outcomes (Bennett & O’Brien, 2020). For instance, adult learners who are motivated by a passion for learning are often more resilient when confronted with the stresses of balancing education with family or work responsibilities.

However, motivation alone is insufficient to guarantee success. Self-efficacy—the belief in one’s ability to succeed in specific tasks—plays a critical role in determining how adult learners approach challenges and persist in the face of difficulties (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). High self-efficacy leads to greater motivation, as individuals are more likely to set ambitious goals, put forth greater effort, and persist longer in overcoming obstacles (Bandura, 1997). Thus, the dynamic interplay between motivation and self-efficacy is not one-directional, but rather a mutually reinforcing cycle, where each factor influences the other and together shapes adult learners' persistence and success. For adult learners, self-efficacy influences how they manage competing life responsibilities, how they approach learning tasks, and whether they remain engaged when faced with setbacks. For example, adult learners with high self-efficacy tend to approach difficult assignments with greater confidence and are more likely to seek help when necessary, while those with low self-efficacy may experience anxiety, procrastination, or avoidance, negatively affecting their motivation and academic outcomes (Pajares, 2008).

The reciprocal relationship between motivation and self-efficacy is particularly evident in adult learning contexts. Motivation and self-efficacy mutually reinforce one another: higher self-efficacy leads to increased motivation, which in turn strengthens self-efficacy beliefs (Zimmerman, 2000). For example, adult learners who experience success in overcoming challenges are likely to develop stronger beliefs in their abilities, which motivates them to set and achieve more challenging goals. This positive feedback loop is especially important for adult learners, who may encounter unique challenges, such as the fear of returning to education after a long gap or difficulties balancing multiple responsibilities. Research by Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) suggests that when adult learners succeed in small, manageable tasks, their self-efficacy increases, which in turn fuels further motivation and engagement. Conversely, failure or setbacks can diminish self-efficacy, leading to reduced motivation and disengagement from the learning process.

The impact of motivation and self-efficacy on adult learners' outcomes is also shaped by the learning environment. Adult learners, particularly those returning to education after years of absence, may face difficulties adjusting to new learning environments or technologies. This is particularly true in online learning contexts, where self-regulation and technological skills are crucial for success. Research indicates that online learning environments can either enhance or hinder motivation and self-efficacy, depending on the level of support provided. For example, adult learners who receive timely feedback, technical support, and opportunities to engage in mastery experiences are more likely to develop higher self-efficacy, which improves their motivation and persistence in online courses (Martin & Grasha, 2011; Hodges & Fowler, 2017). In contrast, learners who face isolation or technical difficulties without adequate support are more likely to experience a decline in self-efficacy, which can lead to disengagement and poor academic performance (Hodges & Fowler, 2017). Moreover, the learning context in which adult learners engage plays a significant role in how motivation and self-efficacy manifest and influence their educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the role of self-efficacy and motivation extends to workplace learning and vocational education. In these contexts, adult learners often pursue education to enhance their professional skills, advance their careers, or meet industry standards. Motivation in workplace learning tends to be more extrinsically driven, as learners are often motivated by the prospect of career advancement or salary increases. However, self-efficacy plays a significant role in determining how well these learners engage with training programmes. Research by Liu et al. (2017) found that employees who believe in their ability to succeed in skill development programmes are more likely to engage actively and apply new knowledge in their jobs. In contrast, employees with low self-efficacy may avoid training or fail to fully engage, which reduces the likelihood of career advancement or skill development. Thus, fostering self-efficacy in workplace learning is essential for improving both motivation and performance. In formal higher education, where adult learners often return to complete a degree or pursue personal intellectual goals, self-efficacy plays a critical role in determining how learners engage with the academic tasks at hand. Studies show that adult learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to use effective study strategies, seek help when needed, and persist through academic challenges (Richardson et al., 2012). On the other hand, learners with low self-efficacy may experience feelings of inadequacy, procrastination, or avoidance, leading to lower academic performance and reduced motivation (Komarraju et al., 2011). This highlights the importance of creating learning environments that support adult learners' self-efficacy, such as offering personalized feedback, setting achievable goals, and celebrating small successes. By fostering self-efficacy and motivation, higher education institutions can help adult learners overcome challenges and achieve academic success.

In conclusion, the interaction between motivation and self-efficacy plays a vital role in shaping the educational outcomes of adult learners. Motivation drives adult learners to set and pursue goals, while self-efficacy influences how they approach tasks and persist through challenges. Both factors are interconnected, with each reinforcing the other, and their impact extends across various learning contexts, from workplace learning to online education and formal higher education. Research consistently shows that enhancing self-efficacy through support, feedback, and mastery experiences can lead to increased motivation and better academic performance for adult learners. Understanding this dynamic relationship can guide educators, policymakers, and institutions in creating supportive learning environments that maximize the potential for success among adult learners.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study on motivation and self-efficacy in adult learning provides critical insights into the complex psychological factors that influence educational outcomes for adult learners. By examining the intricate relationship between motivation, self-efficacy, and academic success, the research offers several important implications for educators, institutions, and policymakers seeking to support adult learners more effectively.

1. Educational institutions must develop more targeted support systems that recognize the unique challenges adult learners face. This means creating flexible learning environments that provide personalized feedback, technical assistance, and resources that can help build learners' self-efficacy and maintain their motivation, especially for those balancing multiple life responsibilities.

2. Educators should design learning experiences that address both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. This involves creating opportunities for personal growth, connecting learning to career advancement, and ensuring that educational programmes align with learners' personal and professional goals to enhance engagement and persistence.

3. Institutions should implement structured approaches to build learners' confidence through achievable milestones, positive reinforcement, and opportunities for mastery experiences. By helping adult learners experience small successes, educators can create a positive feedback loop that continuously strengthens motivation and self-belief.

4. Learning programmes must be designed with a deep understanding of the diverse contexts in which adult learners operate. This includes creating adaptable learning formats, providing technological support for online environments, and developing curricula that recognize the rich life experiences adult learners bring to their educational journey.

5. Policymakers and educational leaders should develop comprehensive support structures that extend beyond traditional academic resources. This includes offering mentorship programmes, financial aid initiatives, flexible scheduling, and community-building opportunities that address the multifaceted challenges adult learners encounter while pursuing their educational goals.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that motivation and self-efficacy are critical psychological constructs that profoundly influence adult learners' educational outcomes, with intrinsic motivation and strong self-efficacy beliefs emerging as the most significant approaches. The effectiveness of these psychological factors is evident in improved educational engagement, persistence, and academic performance, although challenges in maintaining consistent motivation and self-belief still remain. The study highlighted the strong reciprocal relationship between motivation and self-efficacy, particularly in how adult learners approach learning challenges and persist through complex educational environments. However, persistent challenges—such as balancing multiple life responsibilities, overcoming self-doubt, and adapting to new learning technologies—continue to limit the full potential of adult learners. The research underscores the need for a multi-faceted approach to improve educational experiences, with priorities including creating supportive learning environments, developing targeted strategies to enhance self-efficacy, and recognizing the unique contexts of adult learners. The success of future adult education programmes will largely depend on addressing these identified areas while maintaining current positive practices in motivational support and personalized learning approaches. Although significant progress has been made in understanding adult learning psychology, there is still considerable potential for further improvement. Better institutional support, adaptive learning strategies, and stronger recognition of adult learners' complex motivational landscapes are essential to enhance the impact and sustainability of adult education efforts.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Educational institutions should develop more personalized and flexible support systems that recognize the unique challenges adult learners face, including comprehensive technical assistance, adaptive learning environments, and targeted mentorship programmes.

2. Curriculum designers should create learning experiences that strategically balance intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, ensuring that educational programmes align closely with learners' personal and professional goals while providing clear pathways for advancement.

3. Institutions should implement structured approaches to build learners' self-efficacy, including systematic feedback mechanisms, opportunities for incremental achievements, and targeted interventions that help adult learners overcome self-doubt and develop confidence in their academic abilities.

4. Policymakers and educational leaders should develop more comprehensive support ecosystems that address the multifaceted challenges of adult learners, including flexible scheduling, financial aid initiatives, and recognition of prior learning experiences.

5. Learning environments, particularly online platforms, should be redesigned to provide robust technological support, user-friendly interfaces, and adaptive resources that accommodate the diverse technological skills and learning needs of adult learners.

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