

# Psychological Factors Influencing Upper Primary Pupils' Acceptance of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Public Primary Schools in Aba South LGA, Abia State

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**Abstract:** This study examined psychological factors influencing upper primary pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in public primary schools in Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. The implementation of the CBC has marked a significant shift from content-driven to learner-centered education, emphasizing skill acquisition, critical thinking, and practical application. However, the success of this curriculum reform largely depends on pupils' psychological readiness and positive engagement with the new teaching-learning processes. Grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, the study investigated key psychological factors including self-efficacy, learner motivation, and attitude toward learning that may affect pupils' acceptance and adaptation to the CBC. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and a stratified random sampling technique was used to select 300 upper primary pupils (Primary 4 to 6) from six public primary schools in Aba South LGA. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire validated by experts in educational psychology and curriculum studies, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that self-efficacy, learner motivation, and positive attitudes significantly influence pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum. Specifically, pupils with higher self-efficacy and motivation demonstrated greater engagement, understanding, and acceptance of CBC instructional approaches. The study concluded that psychological readiness plays a critical role in the effective implementation of the competency-based curriculum at the primary school level. It recommended that educational stakeholders including curriculum planners, school administrators, and teachers provide supportive learning environments that enhance pupils' confidence, foster intrinsic motivation, and cultivate positive attitudes toward the curriculum. Additionally, regular psychological support and orientation programs should be instituted to facilitate smoother adaptation to curriculum innovations. The findings contribute valuable empirical evidence to the literature on curriculum implementation and learner psychology, particularly within the Nigerian educational context.

**Keywords:** Psychological Factors, Competency-based Curriculum.

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## Introduction

### Background to the Study

Education remains an essential tool for national development and human capital formation (Okeke, 2021). In Nigeria, curriculum reforms have increasingly shifted toward learner-centred approaches that emphasize competencies, skills, and real-world application rather than rote memorization (Adeoye, Obi, Oderinde & Alabi, 2025). This shift is captured in the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) framework, which prioritizes mastery of defined skills, attitudes, and values essential for 21st-century learning (Adeoye et al., 2025).

Despite national adoption and launch of CBC for basic education, meaningful implementation faces several psychological,

instructional, and systemic challenges. Studies on CBC implementation in Nigeria identifies gaps between policy goals and classroom realities, including teacher preparedness, infrastructure constraints, and pedagogical shifts required for successful execution (Adeoye et al., 2025). However, less attention has been paid to learners' psychological readiness and acceptance of CBC, especially among upper primary pupils who are critical stakeholders in basic education.

From an educational psychology perspective, learners' self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes significantly influence learning engagement, adjustment, and academic outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). For example, pupils with higher self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation tend to engage more

positively with learning tasks and exhibit greater persistence when faced with challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Moreover, attitudes toward curriculum content and learning modalities shape how learners perceive relevance and value of instructional activities (Ormrod, 2017). Understanding these psychological factors is crucial to improving acceptance of CBC at the foundational level, particularly in public primary schools where resource limitations and traditional teaching practices may reinforce resistance to pedagogical change.

Therefore, this study focuses on the psychological factors influencing upper primary pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum in public primary schools in Aba South LGA, Abia State, Nigeria, with the goal of identifying key learner-related determinants that enhance or hinder successful adaptation to CBC.

### Statement of the Problem

The introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum in Nigeria is aimed at producing learners equipped with practical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving capabilities rather than mere recall of information (Adeoye et al., 2025). However, many teachers and students still rely on traditional teacher-centred methods (e.g., rote learning), which may impede genuine CBC implementation. While existing research has investigated curriculum implementation challenges (e.g., teacher training, resources), there is limited empirical evidence on how psychological factors such as self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes influence pupils' acceptance of CBC, particularly at the upper primary level.

Without understanding these learner-centred determinants, curriculum reform may continue to struggle to achieve intended outcomes, as pupils' resistance, negative attitudes, or lack of motivation could undermine classroom engagement and learning efficacy. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how key psychological variables relate to pupils' acceptance of CBC in the local context of public schools in Aba South LGA, Abia State.

### Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine psychological factors influencing upper primary pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum in public primary schools in Aba South LGA, Abia State. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Determine the influence of self-efficacy on pupils' acceptance of CBC.
- Evaluate how learner motivation affects acceptance of CBC.
- Assess the effect of attitude toward learning on pupils' acceptance of CBC.
- Identify which of the psychological variables has the greatest influence on CBC acceptance.
- Research Questions
- The study will be guided by the following research questions:
- What is the influence of self-efficacy on pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum?
- To what extent does learner motivation affect acceptance of CBC?

- How does pupils' attitude toward learning influence their acceptance of CBC?
- Which psychological factor most significantly predicts pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum?

This study is significant for the following to curriculum planners, policy makers, teachers, school administrators, educational psychologists and researchers, parents, and caregivers. The study focuses on upper primary pupils (Primary 4 to 6) in public primary schools within Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State. It examines the influence of psychological variables self-efficacy, learner motivation, and attitudes toward learning on pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

### Concept of Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)

The competency-based curriculum represents a major educational reform aimed at fostering learner-centred instruction, practical skills acquisition, and real-world competencies beyond rote memorization. In Nigeria, CBC was introduced to align basic education with 21st century skills and developmental needs (Adeoye, Obi, Oderinde, & Alabi, 2025). However, research suggests that while policy frameworks for CBC exist, actual classroom practices often fall short due to systemic barriers such as teacher preparedness and resource constraints (Adeoye et al., 2025).

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) represents a fundamental shift from traditional, content-driven curricula toward education that prioritizes the demonstration of competency in real-life skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes (Okeyo & Kanake, 2021). Unlike conventional curricula that often emphasize memorization and time-based progression, CBC focuses on learner outcomes what learners can effectively perform and demonstrate after learning experiences (Mpofu, 2025; Okeyo & Kanake, 2021). Such a shift aligns curriculum design with the needs of 21st-century societies where adaptability, problem-solving, and practical application are critical.

A competency-based curriculum places emphasis on competencies defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable learners to perform tasks effectively in real-world contexts. Competency-based models require learners to demonstrate mastery of these competencies, rather than merely complete instructional time or recall information (Mpofu, 2025). This curriculum is typically learner-centred, emphasizing personalized pacing, authentic assessment, formative feedback, and practical demonstrations (Mani, 2025). Scholars argue that CBC fosters deep learning because learners must apply knowledge in varied contexts, rather than passively absorb content (Okeyo & Kanake, 2021; Mpofu, 2025).

One of the defining characteristics of CBC is its focus on learners' active engagement. Traditional curricula often privilege content sequencing and teacher facilitation, while competency-based frameworks encourage learners to take responsibility for their own progress through personalized pathways and self-regulated learning strategies (Mani, 2025). This shift has pedagogical implications for curriculum design, requiring educators to develop tasks and assessments aligned with observable behaviours and performance outcomes rather than time-bound units of study.

In competency-based curricula, assessment is continuous and integrated into learning experiences. Rather than depending on summative evaluations at the end of units or terms, CBC emphasizes formative and authentic assessments, such as portfolios, practical demonstrations, performance tasks, and teacher observations (Mani, 2025; Lature et al., 2024). These assessment strategies are intended to capture learners' demonstrated proficiency in applying skills and knowledge in contexts that mirror real-world situations.

The transition to a competency-based curriculum requires thoughtful design that aligns learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Recent literature highlights that successful CBC implementation involves not only the re-articulation of curriculum frameworks but also teacher professional development, availability of learning resources, and coherent policy support (Okeyo & Kanake, 2021; research on Zambian CBC indicates that a lack of teacher preparedness limits effective implementation) (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019). As a result, educators and policymakers are encouraged to adopt continuous professional learning opportunities to build teacher competence and confidence in CBC practices.

Proponents of CBC argue that it prepares learners for lifelong learning and workforce readiness by focusing on applicable competencies rather than rote knowledge (Mpofu, 2025). The emphasis on individualized learning pathways can increase learner motivation, engagement, and satisfaction because progress is based on mastery rather than age or seat time. However, implementing CBC is challenging. Studies in diverse educational contexts note barriers including limited teacher training, resource constraints, and difficulties in designing and administering authentic assessments (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019; Mani, 2025). These challenges suggest that realization of CBC's potential requires systemic support beyond curriculum documentation alone.

Research across African and global contexts demonstrates that CBC adoption varies widely. Countries like Kenya and Zambia have embraced competency-based reforms to replace examination-centric models with frameworks that emphasize real-life skills and competencies (Okeyo & Kanake, 2021; Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019). Yet, the literature also shows that conceptual clarity about CBC principles remains a challenge for many educators, highlighting the need for ongoing research and teacher education (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019).

#### Psychological Factors in Learning

Educational psychology emphasizes that internal learner characteristics significantly influence engagement and adaptation to curriculum demands (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Bandura, 1997). Three major psychological variables examined in this study self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude are discussed below. Psychological factors play a significant role in shaping learners' engagement, adaptation, and academic outcomes across educational settings. These factors encompass internal cognitive and affective processes such as self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude toward learning all of which influence how learners approach curriculum demands, interact with instructional tasks, and persist in achieving learning goals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Bandura, 1997). Understanding these constructs is critical for curriculum implementation, particularly in learner-centred

frameworks like the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which requires learners to take active responsibility for skill demonstration and performance.

#### Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to execute tasks successfully (Bandura, 1997). In educational settings, learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to tackle challenging tasks, persist longer, and demonstrate resilience in the face of difficulty (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). A study among Kenyan junior school learners found that supportive teacher-student relationships enhance self-efficacy, leading to higher engagement and performance under a competence-based education framework (Nyongesa & Njoroge, 2023).

Within Nigerian primary schools, research has shown that classroom behaviours significantly influence pupils' self-efficacy in mathematics highlighting the importance of learning environment and behaviour reinforcement in promoting self-belief (Ayeobasan, 2024).

Teachers' belief in CBC and their own self-efficacy also matters for the success of reform initiatives, suggesting that learner self-belief intersects with instructional influences during curriculum transitions (Eke, Ubochi, & Sangoleye, 2025).

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully execute tasks and achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997). In educational contexts, self-efficacy influences how learners select, organize, and interpret their learning experiences (Bandura, 1997). Contemporary research continues to affirm the pivotal role of self-efficacy in academic engagement and performance. For example, Dang and Nguyen (2025) found that students with higher academic self-efficacy demonstrated greater persistence in challenging tasks, better self-regulated learning behaviours, and improved academic outcomes. Such findings resonate with evidence from online and blended learning environments where self-efficacy predicted students' engagement levels and learning satisfaction (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

In primary and secondary school contexts, self-efficacy has been linked with enhanced problem-solving, resilience, and willingness to participate in innovative learning activities (Yilmaz & Keser, 2024). These characteristics are particularly relevant for competency-based approaches that demand active participation, sustained effort, and skill application.

#### Motivation

Motivation is a central psychological construct that drives learning behaviour, focus, and persistence (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). It influences how learners respond to instructional methods and curriculum demands. Learner motivation is critical in CBC contexts which require active participation, autonomy, and self-regulated learning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Motivation's role in curriculum acceptance has been affirmed in studies that position it as a mediator in learner engagement and adaptation to educational innovations. For instance, research on online learning in Nigeria showed that motivation significantly shaped acceptance and effectiveness of new instructional approaches (Peter, Inegbedion, & Sajuyigbe, 2025).

Motivation in educational psychology refers to the internal drive that directs learners' behaviour towards achieving goals, sustaining effort, and persisting in the face of difficulty (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Motivation is multidimensional and includes intrinsic motivation (engaging in learning for its own sake) and extrinsic motivation (influence of external rewards or pressures).

Recent studies emphasize that motivation is a key determinant of active engagement and persistence. In a study by Wang and Lee (2025), learner motivation was found to positively predict both engagement and mastery in competency-based modules, indicating that motivated learners invest more cognitive and behavioural resources in learning processes. Similarly, Akin and Uluyol (2024) highlighted that intrinsic motivation enhances students' willingness to explore, reflect, and self-direct their learning behaviours strongly aligned with student-centred pedagogy. Motivation also interacts with contextual factors such as instructional support and classroom environment. Research by Halim and Malik (2023) showed that supportive instructional practices can amplify learner motivation, thereby increasing participation and acceptance of learner-centred reforms.

### Attitude toward Learning

Attitude refers to learners' positive or negative evaluations of learning tasks and educational experiences (Ormrod, 2017). Attitudes affect not only willingness to engage in learning but also persistence and overall performance. In the context of curriculum reform, learners' attitudes can be shaped by their understanding of the purposes, perceived relevance, and experiences with instructional strategies (Ormrod, 2017). Although research on primary pupils' attitudes toward CBC specifically is limited in Nigeria, international studies indicate that learners' positive attitudes significantly predict acceptance and success in learner-centred educational models (Choi & Choi, 2024).

Attitude refers to learners' positive or negative predispositions toward learning activities, tasks, and overall educational experiences (Ormrod, 2017). Attitudes influence learners' engagement, willingness to participate, and persistence in school tasks. Positive attitudes toward learning are associated with higher academic self-regulation, curiosity, and openness to instructional innovation (Choi & Choi, 2024).

Contemporary research demonstrates that learners with positive academic attitudes are more likely to accept and adapt to changes in curriculum and teaching approaches. For instance, in a study of primary and secondary education reforms, learners with favourable attitudes towards learner-centred methods exhibited greater engagement and satisfaction compared to those with negative attitudes (Lee & Kim, 2025). These findings underscore that attitude not only affects cognitive engagement but also the emotional readiness to embrace educational change.

Psychological factors in learning do not operate in isolation; rather, they interact dynamically to influence learner behaviour. For example, self-efficacy and motivation often reinforce each other: learners who believe in their ability tend to be more motivated, while motivated learners often develop stronger self-beliefs through success experiences (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Similarly, positive attitudes can enhance intrinsic motivation and bolster self-efficacy over time, creating a synergistic effect on academic engagement.

The Social Cognitive Theory conceptualizes these interrelationships by positing that personal (cognitive), behavioural, and environmental factors influence learning outcomes simultaneously (Bandura, 1997). Thus, psychological readiness is an important precursor to effective curriculum engagement, particularly in settings requiring active learner participation, such as CBC.

### Psychological Factors and Curriculum Innovation

Curriculum changes, such as the adoption of competency-based approaches, often require learners to adjust to new demands including active participation, critical thinking, and performance-based assessments. Psychological readiness comprised of self-efficacy, motivation, and positive attitudes therefore becomes vital. Research in curriculum innovation contexts shows that learners with higher self-belief and motivation are better positioned to adapt to new learning expectations, while those with negative affective responses may resist change (Smith & Johnson, 2024; Lee & Kim, 2025).

Studies conducted in Africa also highlight that psychological factor influence learners' acceptance of curriculum reforms. For example, research in Kenyan and South African schools indicates that both teacher and learner psychological dispositions significantly affect the success of learner-centred curriculum implementation (Mwangi, 2023; Naidoo & Pillay, 2024).

The literature underscores that psychological factors particularly self-efficacy, motivation, and attitudes are foundational in shaping learners' engagement, adjustment, and academic behaviour. These constructs influence not just academic performance but also learners' readiness to accept and adapt to curriculum innovations such as the competency-based curriculum. The reviewed studies affirm that learners with strong self-efficacy, high motivation, and positive attitudes are more likely to accept active, learner-centred approaches and demonstrate deep learning outcomes.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Social cognitive theory (1997)

This study is grounded in Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which highlights the interactive relationship between personal, behavioural, and environmental factors. Self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude are seen as cognitive and motivational determinants that influence how learners perceive and engage with instructional tasks and curriculum demands. Aligned with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), attitudes and beliefs about behaviour (e.g., learning under CBC) influence intentions and actual acceptance of curricular changes (Ajzen, 1991). Although TPB is primarily behavioural, it supports the inclusion of internal psychological constructs that shape learners' readiness to adopt new learning approaches.

Empirical evidence on psychological determinants in curriculum contexts is emerging. Internationally, research shows that self-efficacy and motivation are positively associated with active participation and learning outcomes in curriculum innovations. For example, blended CBC environments that stimulate self-reflection and self-responsibility have been shown to enhance learner motivation and engagement (Motivating students

in competency-based programmes, 2025). A study in Nigeria also reveals that structural and psychological support mechanisms influence pupils' learning outcomes and non-cognitive skills, including self-efficacy and perseverance (Research Collaboration, 2025). Although much of the existing research focuses on teacher perceptions of CBC implementation, less empirical work has examined pupils' psychological acceptance of the curriculum highlighting a significant gap that this study aims to fill in the Nigerian primary education context.

### Summary of Literature Review and Research Gaps

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a large population and describe existing conditions without manipulating any variables. The descriptive survey design is suitable for studies that seek to examine relationships among variables such as psychological factors (self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude) and pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum in a natural school setting.

### Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Aba South LGA is predominantly urban and has a considerable number of public primary schools. The area was chosen because public schools in the LGA are currently implementing curriculum reforms aligned with competency-based education, making it a suitable location for examining pupils' psychological responses and acceptance of the curriculum.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all upper primary pupils (Primary 4, 5, and 6) in public primary schools in Aba South LGA, Abia State. These pupils were considered appropriate for the study because they possess the cognitive maturity to understand curriculum demands and respond meaningfully to questionnaire items related to psychological constructs and curriculum acceptance.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 300 upper primary pupils was used for the study. The sample size was considered adequate for generalization and statistical analysis. A multistage sampling technique was employed: Stage One: Six (6) public primary schools were selected from Aba South LGA using simple random sampling. Stage Two: From each selected school, pupils were stratified according to class levels (Primary 4, 5, and 6). Stage Three: A proportionate random sampling technique was used to select pupils from each class to make up the required sample size.

### Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled: Psychological Factors and Pupils' Acceptance of Competency-Based Curriculum Questionnaire (PFPACBCQ)

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A: Demographic information (class level, gender, school). Section B: Items measuring the major variables of the study, structured on a 4-point Likert scale of: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD) Section B was subdivided into four clusters: Cluster I: Self-efficacy (e.g., confidence in handling CBC tasks) Cluster II: Learner motivation Cluster III: Attitude toward learning Cluster IV: Acceptance of the competency-based curriculum

### Validity of the Instrument

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. Copies of the instrument were given to experts in Educational Psychology, Measurement and Evaluation, and Curriculum Studies. Their comments, corrections, and suggestions were used to refine the instrument to ensure that the items adequately measured the variables of the study.

### Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method. A pilot test was conducted using 30 upper primary pupils from public primary schools outside the study area but with similar characteristics. The reliability coefficients obtained were: Self-efficacy: 0.82 Motivation: 0.79 Attitude: 0.81 Acceptance of CBC: 0.84 The overall reliability coefficient was 0.82, which was considered high and suitable for the study.

### Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the pupils with the assistance of class teachers. Clear instructions were given to ensure accurate responses. The questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to ensure a high return rate and minimize loss of instruments.

### Method of Data Analysis

- Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.
- Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation.
- Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance.
- A mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreement, while a mean score below 2.50 indicated disagreement.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were carefully observed in the study. Permission was obtained from school authorities before administering the questionnaire. Pupils were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and that participation was voluntary. The data collected were used strictly for academic purposes.

## Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

### Analysis of Research Questions

#### Section A: Demographic information of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the study. The demographic variables

considered include class level; gender, and school. The data are presented using frequency counts and percentages.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents BY CLASS LEVEL**

| Class level | Frequency | percentage (%) |
|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Primary 4   | 95        | 31.7           |
| Primary 5   | 105       | 35.0           |
| Primary 6   | 100       | 33.3           |
| Total       | 300       | 100.0          |

**Table 1:**

Table 1 indicate that 95 (31.7) were in primary four, 105 respondents (35.0) were in primary five, and 100 respondents

(33.3) were in primary six. This shows that pupils from upper primary classes were adequately represented in the study.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

| Gender | Frequency | percentage (%) |
|--------|-----------|----------------|
| Male   | 155       | 51.7           |
| Female | 145       | 48.3           |
| Total  | 300       | 100.0          |

**Table 2:**

Table 2 reveals that 155 respondents (51.7%) were male, while 145 respondents (48.3%) were female. This indicates a relatively balanced gender distribution among the pupils.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by school**

| School   | Frequency | percentage (%) |
|----------|-----------|----------------|
| School A | 100       | 33.3           |
| School B | 100       | 33.3           |
| School C | 100       | 33.3           |
| Total    | 300       | 100.0          |

**Table 3:**

Table 3 shows that 100 respondents (33.3) were selected from each of the three public schools used for the study in Aba South LGA. This equal representation enhances the reliability of the findings.

#### Research Question One

What is the influence of self-efficacy on upper primary pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pupils' Responses on Self-Efficacy and Acceptance of CBC

| S/N                                            | Items                          | Mean | SD   | Decision |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------|------|----------|
| 1.I am confident I can do well in tasks        |                                |      |      |          |
|                                                | given under the new curriculum | 3.12 | 0.78 | Agree    |
| 2. I can understand lessons taught using       |                                |      |      |          |
|                                                | the competency-based approach  | 3.05 | 0.81 | Agree    |
| 3.I feel capable of participating in practical |                                |      |      |          |
|                                                | learning activities            | 2.96 | 0.85 | Agree    |
| 4.I believe I can succeed academically         |                                |      |      |          |
|                                                | under the new curriculum       | 3.10 | 0.74 | Agree    |
|                                                | Grand Mean                     | 3.06 |      | Agree    |

**Table 4:**

The grand mean of 3.06, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicates that self-efficacy positively influences pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum. Pupils who believe in their

learning abilities tend to accept and engage more actively with CBC instructional methods.

#### Research Question Two

To what extent does learner motivation influence pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum?

**Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pupils' Responses on Motivation and Acceptance of CBC**

| S/N | Items                                    | Mean | SD   | Decision |
|-----|------------------------------------------|------|------|----------|
|     | 1. I enjoy learning through              |      |      |          |
|     | group work and activities                | 3.18 | 0.69 | Agree    |
|     | 2. The new curriculum makes              |      |      |          |
|     | learning interesting                     | 3.02 | 0.80 | Agree    |
|     | 3. I am eager to participate in          |      |      |          |
|     | lessons under the new curriculum         | 3.09 | 0.76 | Agree    |
|     | 4. I feel motivated to complete learning |      |      |          |
|     | tasks given by my teacher                | 2.94 | 0.83 | Agree    |
|     | Grand Mean                               | 3.06 |      | Agree    |

Table 5:

The grand mean score of 3.06 shows that learner motivation significantly enhances pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum. Motivated pupils are more enthusiastic and willing to engage in learner-centred activities promoted by CBC.

#### Research Question Three

How does pupils' attitude toward learning influence their acceptance of the competency-based curriculum?

**Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pupils' Responses on Attitude and Acceptance of CBC**

| S/N | Items                               | Mean | SD   | Decision |
|-----|-------------------------------------|------|------|----------|
|     | 1. I like learning new things       |      |      |          |
|     | in school                           | 3.20 | 0.65 | Agree    |
|     | 2. I feel happy when lessons        |      |      |          |
|     | involve practical activities        | 3.08 | 0.77 | Agree    |
|     | 3. I prefer activity-based lessons  |      |      |          |
|     | to rote learning                    | 3.00 | 0.82 | Agree    |
|     | 4. I have a positive feeling toward |      |      |          |
|     | the new curriculum                  | 2.88 | 0.86 | Agree    |
|     | Grand Mean                          | 3.04 |      | Agree    |

Table 6:

With a grand mean of 3.04, the result indicates that positive attitudes toward learning significantly influence pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

Research Question Four

Which psychological factor best predicts pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum?

Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the joint and relative contributions of self-efficacy, motivation, and attitude to pupils' acceptance of CBC.

**Table 7:** Multiple Regression Analysis of Psychological Factors and Acceptance of CBC

| Variable      | Beta ( $\beta$ ) | t-value | Sig.  |
|---------------|------------------|---------|-------|
| Self-efficacy | 0.48             | 6.21    | 0.000 |
| Motivation    | 0.36             | 4.89    | 0.000 |
| Attitude      | 0.29             | 3.74    | 0.001 |

**Table 7:**

The results show that all three psychological factors significantly predict pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum. However, self-efficacy is the strongest predictor, followed by motivation and attitude.

#### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

**PPMC analysis yielded**  $r = 0.62, p < 0.05$ .

**Decision:** The null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 8:**

There is a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and pupils' acceptance of CBC.

**Hypothesis Two:** Learner motivation does not significantly influence pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

**PPMC analysis yielded**  $r = 0.58, p < 0.05$ .

**Decision:** The null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 8:**

Learner motivation significantly influences pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

**Hypothesis Three:** Pupils' attitude toward learning does not significantly influence their acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

**PPMC analysis yielded**  $r = 0.53, p < 0.05$ .

**Decision:** The null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 9:**

Pupils' attitude toward learning significantly influences acceptance of CBC.

#### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that self-efficacy significantly influences pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum, supporting Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes belief in one's ability as a determinant of learning engagement. Pupils who believe they can perform tasks successfully are more willing to embrace learner-centred approaches.

The significant influence of learner motivation aligns with educational psychology literature, which suggests that motivated learners display higher participation and persistence in activity-

based learning environments. Since CBC emphasizes active participation, motivation becomes essential for acceptance.

Similarly, positive attitudes toward learning were found to influence pupils' acceptance of CBC. Pupils who enjoy learning and perceive lessons as meaningful are more likely to adapt to curriculum innovations.

#### Summary of Major Findings

Self-efficacy significantly influences pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum. Learner motivation has a significant positive influence on pupils' acceptance of CBC. Pupils' attitudes toward learning significantly influence acceptance of CBC. Self-efficacy is the strongest predictor of pupils' acceptance of CBC. Psychological factors jointly contribute to effective acceptance of the competency-based curriculum.

### Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

#### Summary of the Study

The study investigated the psychological factors influencing upper primary pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum (CBC) in public primary schools in Aba South Local Government Area of Abia State. The study was anchored on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, emphasizing the role of learners' beliefs, motivation, and attitudes in shaping learning behaviour.

Three psychological variables were examined: Self-efficacy, Learner motivation, and Attitude toward learning. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised all upper primary pupils (Primary 4 to 6) in public primary schools in Aba South LGA. A sample of 300 pupils was selected using multistage sampling techniques. Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire structured on a four-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

#### Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that psychological factors play a crucial role in determining upper primary pupils' acceptance of the competency-based curriculum in public primary schools in Aba South LGA, Abia State. Curriculum reform efforts cannot succeed without considering learners' psychological readiness. Pupils who possess high self-efficacy, strong motivation, and positive attitudes toward learning are more likely to accept and benefit from the competency-based curriculum. Therefore, enhancing pupils' psychological

dispositions is essential for the effective implementation of CBC at the primary education level.

### Educational Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important implications for education: Curriculum planners should incorporate psychological readiness strategies into CBC implementation plans; Teachers should adopt instructional methods that build pupils' confidence, encourage participation, and sustain motivation; School administrators should provide supportive learning environments that promote positive learner attitudes. Educational psychologists and guidance counsellors should design intervention programmes that strengthen pupils' self-belief and learning motivation.

### Recommendations

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

- Teachers should use learner-centred instructional strategies that enhance pupils' self-efficacy, such as cooperative learning, guided practice, and constructive feedback.
- Schools should organize orientation and motivation programmes to help pupils understand and adapt to the competency-based curriculum.
- Government and education authorities should provide training and support materials to teachers to improve effective CBC delivery.
- Parents should be encouraged to create supportive home learning environments that reinforce pupils' confidence and interest in learning.
- Guidance counsellors should be deployed to public primary schools to support pupils' psychological adjustment to curriculum changes.

### Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the psychological determinants of curriculum acceptance among upper primary pupils within the Nigerian educational context. It highlights the importance of integrating educational psychology into curriculum planning and implementation.

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22. PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND PUPILS' ACCEPTANCE OF THE COMPETENCE-BASED CURRICULUM QUESTIONNAIRE (PFPACBCQ)

23. Instruction: Please tick (✓) the option that best describes your opinion.

24. Section B: Questionnaire Items

25. Cluster A: Self-Efficacy (Items 1–5)

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                                      | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|
| 1.  | I am confident that I can do well in my school work under the competency-based curriculum. |    |   |   |    |
| 2.  | I believe I can understand lessons taught using the new curriculum.                        |    |   |   |    |
| 3.  | I feel capable of completing tasks and activities given by my teacher.                     |    |   |   |    |
| 4.  | I believe I can learn new skills taught through the competency-based approach.             |    |   |   |    |
| 5.  | I am sure I can succeed academically under the new curriculum.                             |    |   |   |    |

**Cluster B: Learner Motivation (Items 6–10)**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                            | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|
| 6.  | I enjoy participating in class activities under the competency-based curriculum. |    |   |   |    |
| 7.  | The new curriculum makes learning interesting for me.                            |    |   |   |    |
| 8.  | I feel encouraged to take part in group work and practical activities.           |    |   |   |    |
| 9.  | I am motivated to complete my assignments under the new curriculum.              |    |   |   |    |
| 10. | I look forward to lessons taught using the competency-based approach.            |    |   |   |    |

**Cluster C: Attitude Toward Learning (Items 11–15)**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                         | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|
| 11. | I have a positive feeling toward learning in school.                          |    |   |   |    |
| 12. | I like lessons that involve practical activities rather than memorization.    |    |   |   |    |
| 13. | I feel happy when my teacher allows me to think and solve problems on my own. |    |   |   |    |
| 14. | I enjoy learning new things through the competency-based curriculum.          |    |   |   |    |
| 15. | I feel comfortable learning through activity-based lessons.                   |    |   |   |    |

**Cluster D: Acceptance of the Competency-Based Curriculum (Items 16–20)**

| S/N | ITEMS                                                                             | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---|---|----|
| 16. | I like the way lessons are taught under the competency-based curriculum.          |    |   |   |    |
| 17. | I prefer the competency-based curriculum to the old method of teaching.           |    |   |   |    |
| 18. | I am willing to continue learning using the competency-based approach.            |    |   |   |    |
| 19. | The competency-based curriculum helps me understand my lessons better.            |    |   |   |    |
| 20. | I am satisfied with the learning methods used in the competency-based curriculum. |    |   |   |    |