



The Impact of Affirmations on Self-Concept, Motivation, and Emotional Regulation among Adolescent Students at CCC Mankon Secondary School: A Mixed Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence represents a critical developmental period during which self-concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation undergo significant transformation. Within educational settings, internal self-dialogue plays an important role in shaping students' perceptions of competence, resilience, and engagement with learning tasks. This study examined the impact of structured affirmation practices on self-concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation among adolescent students at City College of Commerce Mankon, Bamenda in Cameroon. A mixed methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches was employed. Eighty students aged 13 to 18 participated in the study and were divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group engaged in daily affirmation exercises over a six-week period, while the control group continued with regular academic activities. Quantitative data were collected using standardized scales measuring self-concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation, and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired sample t tests, and analysis of variance. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and student reflection journals, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed significant improvements in self-concept, motivation, and emotional regulation among students exposed to the affirmation intervention. Qualitative findings indicated that affirmation practices contributed to increased confidence, stronger academic persistence, and improved emotional awareness. The study suggests that structured affirmation practices can serve as accessible psychological tools for enhancing adolescent wellbeing and academic engagement in school environments. The findings carry important implications for integrating psychological development practices within educational systems in African contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Across the world, adolescence is increasingly recognized as a critical developmental stage during which identity, motivation, and emotional stability undergo profound transformation (Steinberg, 2014; Eccles et al., 1998). Within the field of Educational Psychology, scholars have consistently emphasized that academic performance cannot be separated from the psychological structures that shape how young people perceive themselves, regulate emotions, and respond to challenge (Zimmerman, 2000; Dweck, 2006). For many students, the most powerful voice influencing these processes is not external but internal, the quiet narrative through which individuals interpret their worth, abilities, and possibilities (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in self-perception. During this stage of development, young people negotiate academic expectations, peer comparison, family pressures, and emerging personal identity (Steinberg, 2014). When these pressures are not accompanied by psychological support, students may develop fragile self-concept, declining academic motivation, and difficulty regulating emotional responses to stress or failure (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Research across several educational contexts indicates that low self-concept often correlates with disengagement from learning, anxiety around evaluation, and diminished perseverance in the face of academic difficulty (Eccles et al., 1998; Dweck, 2006).

Within African educational environments, these challenges are often intensified by structural and cultural factors. Many secondary schools operate within systems that prioritize examination performance while paying comparatively little attention to psychological development (Gyekye, 1997). Classrooms may be academically rigorous yet emotionally silent, environments where students are expected to perform but are rarely guided in cultivating resilience, emotional awareness, or constructive self-dialogue (Wiredu, 1998). The result is that many adolescents internalize narratives of inadequacy, fear of failure, or learned helplessness, narratives that quietly shape both motivation and behaviour (Steele, 1988).

The issue is not merely academic. Emotional dysregulation among adolescents has been associated with heightened stress, impulsivity, interpersonal conflict, and vulnerability to mental health difficulties (Gross, 1998). Developing strategies that strengthen students' psychological resources therefore represents an urgent educational priority. Increasingly, scholars within Positive Psychology have argued that schools must move beyond deficit-oriented models of student support toward approaches that actively cultivate strengths, agency, and adaptive self-belief (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

One psychological practice that has received growing scholarly attention is the use of affirmations. Affirmations are structured positive self-statements

designed to reinforce personal values, competence, and resilience (Cohen & Sherman, 2014; Steele, 1988). Rather than functioning as mere motivational slogans, affirmations operate through cognitive and emotional mechanisms that influence how individuals process threats to their self-integrity. The theoretical foundation for this process is rooted in Self-Affirmation Theory, developed by social psychologist Claude Steele (Steele, 1988). According to this framework, individuals are motivated to maintain a sense of global self-integrity. When that integrity is threatened, whether through failure, criticism, or social comparison, affirming important aspects of the self can restore psychological equilibrium and promote adaptive responses (Sherman & Hartson, 2011).

Empirical studies conducted in Western educational settings have demonstrated that affirmation exercises can improve academic persistence, reduce stereotype threat, and enhance psychological resilience among students (Cohen et al., 2009; Critcher et al., 2010). These interventions often involve brief reflective writing tasks or repeated statements that reinforce personal values and capabilities. Over time, such practices may influence internal narratives, allowing students to reinterpret challenges not as evidence of inadequacy but as opportunities for growth (Sele & Feh 2026).

However, while the psychological literature on affirmations has expanded in recent decades, the majority of empirical studies have been conducted in North American and European contexts. African educational environments remain significantly underrepresented in this research domain (Gyekye, 1997; Wiredu, 1998). This absence is particularly striking given that African intellectual traditions have long recognized the formative power of language in shaping identity and behaviour. Across many African cultures, proverbs, oral narratives, and communal declarations have historically functioned as tools for cultivating courage, discipline, and moral responsibility. In this sense, the practice of affirmations resonates with longstanding African epistemologies in which spoken words are not merely descriptive but formative (Wiredu, 1998).

Despite this cultural resonance, affirmation-based interventions have rarely been systematically studied within African secondary schools. As a result, educators and policymakers lack empirical evidence regarding whether such practices meaningfully influence students' psychological and academic outcomes within local contexts. This gap in the literature presents both a scholarly challenge and an opportunity. Investigating affirmation practices among African adolescents may contribute not only to global psychological knowledge but also to the development of culturally responsive educational strategies.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the impact of structured affirmation practices on adolescent students at City College of Commerce

Mankon. Situated within the North West region of Cameroon, this secondary school provides an educational environment representative of many African institutions that strive to combine academic rigor with moral formation. Yet, like many schools across the continent, students navigate intense academic expectations alongside the emotional and developmental challenges characteristic of adolescence.

This study explores three psychological constructs that are central to adolescent functioning within educational settings. The first is self-concept, which refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of their own abilities, identity, and worth (Rogers, 1951; James, 1890). Classical psychological perspectives emphasize that self-concept plays a foundational role in shaping behaviour and aspiration. Students who perceive themselves as capable and valuable are more likely to engage with academic challenges and pursue long-term goals (Zimmerman, 2000).

The second construct is academic motivation, a psychological force that drives engagement with learning tasks. Motivation research has been strongly influenced by Self-Determination Theory developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). This theory proposes that human motivation flourishes when three fundamental needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When students feel capable and internally empowered, they are more likely to invest effort in learning activities. Affirmations may contribute to this process by reinforcing perceptions of competence and agency (Cohen & Sherman, 2014).

The third construct examined in this study is emotional regulation, defined as the processes through which individuals monitor, evaluate, and modify emotional reactions (Gross, 1998). Adolescents who develop effective emotional regulation skills are better able to cope with academic stress, interpersonal conflict, and performance anxiety (Gross, 1998; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). While these constructs have been widely studied independently, fewer investigations have explored how a single psychological practice such as affirmations might influence them simultaneously within a school setting. Understanding this relationship is particularly important in contexts where access to formal counseling services may be limited. If affirmation practices demonstrate measurable benefits, they could represent a low-cost and scalable strategy for strengthening students' psychological wellbeing.

To address this question, the present study adopts a mixed methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data provide measurable evidence regarding changes in self-concept, motivation, and emotional regulation following affirmation practice. Qualitative insights, gathered through student reflections and interviews, offer deeper understanding of how students interpret and experience the intervention in their daily lives. This integration of numerical data and lived

experience allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The purpose of this study is therefore to examine the impact of structured affirmation practices on self-concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation among adolescent students at City College of Commerce Mankon. By combining statistical analysis with qualitative exploration, the study seeks to illuminate not only whether affirmations influence psychological outcomes, but also how students internalize and interpret these practices within their personal and academic journeys.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a broader educational conversation. If schools are to nurture not only intellectual competence but also psychological resilience, then attention must be given to the internal narratives through which students interpret their abilities and challenges. Transforming those narratives may be one of the most powerful educational interventions available (Steele, 1988; Cohen et al., 2009).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing Self-Concept in Adolescent Development

Self-concept refers to the organized set of beliefs individuals hold about their abilities, identity, and worth (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Rogers, 1951). Within psychological scholarship, the development of self-concept has long been recognized as a foundational element of human functioning. Early philosophical and psychological discussions by William James distinguished between the "I," the experiencing self, and the "Me," the self that becomes the object of reflection. This distinction helped establish the understanding that individuals actively interpret and evaluate themselves through internal dialogue (James, 1890).

Later humanistic psychology further expanded this perspective. The work of Carl Rogers emphasized that individuals possess an inherent drive toward growth and self-actualization, yet this process is profoundly influenced by the messages they receive about themselves (Rogers, 1951). When adolescents internalize positive evaluations and supportive feedback, their self-concept becomes more stable and resilient. Conversely, persistent criticism, failure experiences, or conditional acceptance can lead to fragmented or negative self-perceptions (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020).

Within educational contexts, self-concept is closely tied to academic engagement and persistence. Students who believe they are capable learners are more likely to approach difficult tasks with confidence and sustained effort. In contrast, adolescents who perceive themselves as incompetent or inadequate may avoid challenging academic situations to protect their self-image (Eccles et al., 1998; Dweck, 2006). Scholars within Educational Psychology have repeatedly demonstrated that academic self-concept predicts

achievement, persistence, and long-term educational aspirations (Zimmerman, 2000).

Adolescence represents a particularly sensitive period for the formation of self-concept. During this stage, individuals increasingly compare themselves with peers, respond to evaluative feedback from teachers, and negotiate emerging identities (Steinberg, 2014). As a result, the narratives adolescents construct about themselves often become deeply embedded and influential across later developmental stages. Interventions that strengthen adaptive self-beliefs during adolescence therefore hold considerable educational and psychological importance (Cohen & Sherman, 2014).

2.2 Academic Motivation and the Psychology of Engagement

Motivation represents the psychological energy that directs behavior toward goals. Within educational settings, motivation determines whether students invest effort in learning activities, persist through difficulty, and derive satisfaction from academic achievement (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Contemporary research on motivation has been strongly influenced by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. Self-Determination Theory proposes that human motivation is shaped by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the experience of acting with a sense of personal choice and volition. Competence involves the perception that one is capable of mastering challenges and achieving desired outcomes. Relatedness reflects the need to feel connected to others and valued within social contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

When these psychological needs are satisfied, students are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation, engaging in learning for its inherent satisfaction rather than external rewards or pressures. However, when educational environments undermine these needs, motivation can decline, leading to disengagement or academic avoidance (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Affirmation practices may influence motivation by reinforcing perceptions of competence and personal agency. When students repeatedly affirm statements such as “I am capable of learning difficult material” or “My efforts lead to improvement,” these internal messages can counteract self-doubt and strengthen motivational persistence (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Cognitive reinforcement of positive self-beliefs may therefore contribute to sustained engagement in academic tasks.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated that students who engage in affirmation exercises often display improved academic persistence and greater willingness to confront challenging learning situations (Cohen et al., 2009; Critcher et al., 2010). Such findings suggest that internal dialogue may serve as a powerful psychological mechanism shaping motivation within educational contexts.

2.3 Emotional Regulation in Adolescence

Emotional regulation refers to the processes through which individuals influence the experience, expression, and intensity of their emotions (Gross, 1998). Effective emotional regulation allows individuals to manage stress, respond constructively to setbacks, and maintain psychological balance during challenging circumstances.

A widely recognized framework for understanding emotional regulation has been developed by James Gross. According to this model, emotional responses can be shaped through several regulatory strategies, including situation selection, cognitive reappraisal, and response modulation. Among these strategies, cognitive reappraisal, the reinterpretation of a situation in ways that alter its emotional impact, plays a particularly significant role (Gross, 1998). Adolescence is a period during which emotional regulation capacities are still developing. Neurological and social changes occurring during this stage often intensify emotional experiences while simultaneously challenging adolescents' regulatory abilities (Steinberg, 2014). Academic stress, peer relationships, and identity exploration can produce emotional fluctuations that influence both behavior and wellbeing.

Within school environments, difficulties in emotional regulation may manifest through anxiety before examinations, frustration during challenging tasks, or withdrawal following perceived failure. Developing psychological tools that help students reinterpret stressful experiences therefore represents a critical component of educational support (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Affirmations may contribute to emotional regulation by reshaping cognitive interpretations of challenging events. When students affirm their ability to remain calm, resilient, or capable, these statements can function as cognitive anchors that stabilize emotional responses during stressful situations (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Over time, repeated affirmation practices may help students internalize more constructive emotional narratives.

2.4 Theoretical Foundations of Affirmations

Affirmations are grounded in the psychological principles of Self-Affirmation Theory, originally articulated by Claude Steele (Steele, 1988). This theory proposes that individuals are motivated to maintain a global sense of self-integrity, defined as the perception that one is morally adequate, competent, and capable of controlling important life outcomes. According to this framework, threats to self-integrity can arise from various sources including academic failure, social rejection, or negative evaluation. When such threats occur, individuals may respond defensively, avoiding challenges, dismissing feedback, or disengaging from tasks that threaten their self-image (Sherman & Hartson, 2011).

Self-affirmation provides an alternative psychological pathway. By reflecting on important personal values or positive aspects of the self, individuals can restore a sense of integrity that allows them to approach threatening situations with greater openness and resilience. This process reduces defensiveness and encourages adaptive coping strategies (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Empirical research has demonstrated that affirmation exercises can buffer individuals against stress, improve academic performance among marginalized student groups, and enhance psychological resilience (Cohen et al., 2009; Critcher et al., 2010). Many affirmation interventions involve simple reflective writing tasks or repeated statements reinforcing personal strengths and values. Despite their simplicity, these practices have been shown to produce measurable psychological effects across multiple domains.

However, critics have also cautioned against viewing affirmations as universal solutions. Some studies suggest that affirmations may be less effective when they are perceived as unrealistic or disconnected from individuals' lived experiences (Critcher et al., 2010). For affirmation practices to be meaningful, they must resonate with participants' cultural context and personal beliefs. This insight underscores the importance of examining affirmation interventions within diverse cultural settings (Gyekye, 1997; Wiredu, 1998).

2.5 Affirmations, Language, and African Intellectual Traditions

Although affirmation research has primarily emerged from Western psychological science, the underlying concept resonates strongly with African cultural traditions. Across many African societies, spoken language has historically been regarded as a powerful instrument for shaping identity, courage, and moral character (Gyekye, 1997; Wiredu, 1998). Sele & Whittaker (2025) stress that African and the Caribbean oral traditions frequently employ proverbs, chants, and communal declarations that reinforce resilience, dignity, and collective responsibility. Such expressions function not merely as descriptive language but as formative tools through which individuals internalize cultural values and psychological strength.

In many communities, elders use proverbs to guide young people toward perseverance and moral clarity. These expressions often serve functions similar to modern affirmations, reinforcing self-belief and encouraging adaptive interpretations of life's challenges. Within this cultural framework, language becomes a vehicle through which individuals affirm their place within the community and their capacity to endure hardship (Sele & Whittaker, 2025; Wiredu, 1998).

Despite this cultural alignment, formal educational systems across Africa have seldom incorporated structured affirmation practices into classroom environments. Educational discourse has traditionally emphasized discipline and examination

performance, sometimes overlooking the psychological processes that sustain motivation and resilience. Integrating affirmation practices into educational settings may therefore represent an opportunity to reconnect formal schooling with indigenous traditions that recognize the formative power of words (Gyekye, 1997).

2.6 Empirical Research on Affirmations in Educational Settings

A growing body of empirical research has examined the effects of affirmation interventions on student outcomes. Studies conducted in various educational contexts have demonstrated that affirmation exercises can improve academic performance, reduce stress, and enhance psychological resilience (Cohen et al., 2009; Critcher et al., 2010).

For example, experimental research has shown that students who engage in self-affirmation writing exercises often demonstrate improved academic performance compared to control groups. These interventions appear particularly beneficial for students who face stereotype threat or persistent academic anxiety (Cohen et al., 2009). By affirming core values and personal strengths, students may reduce the psychological burden associated with evaluative academic environments. Other studies have explored the role of affirmations in promoting emotional wellbeing. Repeated affirmation practices have been associated with lower levels of stress and improved emotional regulation (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Participants often report increased confidence, optimism, and willingness to confront challenging tasks.

Nevertheless, most affirmation research has been conducted within North American or European educational systems. Relatively few studies have examined how these practices function within African school environments, where cultural norms, educational structures, and student experiences may differ significantly. As a result, the generalizability of existing findings to African contexts remains uncertain (Gyekye, 1997; Wiredu, 1998).

2.7 Research Gap

Despite the growing literature on affirmation interventions, several important gaps remain. First, there is limited empirical research examining affirmation practices among adolescents in African secondary schools. The absence of such research restricts the ability of educators and policymakers to evaluate whether affirmation based strategies can effectively support student wellbeing within local contexts.

Second, many existing studies rely exclusively on quantitative data, focusing primarily on statistical outcomes while overlooking the subjective experiences of participants. Understanding how students interpret and internalize affirmation practices requires qualitative exploration that captures their personal reflections and lived experiences.

Third, few studies have simultaneously examined the influence of affirmations on multiple psychological constructs such as self concept, motivation, and emotional regulation. Investigating these constructs together may provide a more holistic understanding of how internal dialogue shapes adolescent development. The present study seeks to address these gaps by employing a mixed methods research design to investigate the impact of structured affirmation practices among students at City College of Commerce Mankon. By integrating quantitative measurement with qualitative insight, the study aims to contribute both empirical evidence and contextual understanding to the emerging field of affirmation based educational interventions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a **mixed methods research design** integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the impact of affirmation practices on adolescent students. Mixed methods research allows investigators to combine numerical measurement with in depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of complex psychological phenomena. The study adopted an **explanatory sequential mixed methods design**. In this approach, quantitative data are collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data collection aimed at explaining and enriching the statistical findings. This design was selected because it allows measurable changes in psychological constructs to be interpreted alongside students' personal reflections on the affirmation practice.

The quantitative component measured changes in self concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation before and after the intervention. The qualitative component explored students' subjective experiences of using affirmations, including how the practice influenced their confidence, emotional awareness, and academic engagement. Integrating both strands of data strengthened the validity of the study by enabling triangulation between statistical outcomes and narrative evidence.

3.2 Study Setting

The research was conducted at City College of Commerce Mankon, a secondary school located in the Bamenda, North West Region of Cameroon. The institution serves adolescent students from diverse socio economic backgrounds and operates within a structured academic environment that combines formal instruction with moral and character development. Like many secondary schools across the region, the institution emphasizes academic performance and discipline.

However, structured psychological interventions aimed at strengthening self concept, motivation, and emotional regulation are relatively limited. This context provided an appropriate environment for investigating the potential benefits of affirmation practices within a typical African secondary school setting.

3.3 Research Participants

The study targeted adolescent students enrolled in lower and upper secondary classes. Adolescence represents a developmental period during which identity formation, emotional regulation, and academic motivation undergo significant transformation. Examining affirmation practices within this population therefore provides insight into how internal dialogue may influence psychological development during this critical stage. A sample of **80 students** participated in the study. Participants were selected using **stratified random sampling** to ensure representation across different class levels and genders.

The sample was divided into two groups:

- **Experimental group (40 students)** who participated in the affirmation intervention
- **Control group (40 students)** who continued with normal school activities without the affirmation exercises

Students ranged in age from **13 to 18 years**, representing a typical adolescent population within the secondary school system.

3.4 The Affirmation Intervention

Students in the experimental group participated in a structured affirmation program conducted over **six weeks**. The intervention was designed to help students cultivate constructive internal dialogue related to competence, resilience, and emotional stability. Each school day began with a brief affirmation session lasting approximately **5 to 7 minutes**. During these sessions, students repeated carefully designed affirmations that reinforced positive beliefs about learning, personal growth, and emotional balance.

Examples of affirmations included:

- "I am capable of learning new and difficult things."
- "My effort and discipline help me grow."
- "I remain calm and focused when I face challenges."
- "Every day I become more confident in my abilities."

Students were encouraged to repeat these statements aloud or silently while reflecting on their meaning. In addition, students were invited to write brief reflections in personal journals describing how the affirmations related to their academic or emotional

experiences during the week. The control group did not participate in these sessions but continued their regular academic activities. This comparison allowed the researchers to assess whether observed psychological changes were associated specifically with the affirmation intervention.

3.5 Quantitative Measures

The quantitative component of the study used standardized psychological instruments to assess the three primary variables of interest.

Self-Concept: Self-concept was measured using a modified version of a **Student Self Concept Scale**, designed to assess students' perceptions of their abilities, confidence, and personal worth within academic environments. Participants rated statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Academic Motivation: Academic motivation was assessed using an adaptation of the **Academic Motivation Scale**, which is grounded in the theoretical framework of Self-Determination Theory developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. The scale measures intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation related to school activities.

Emotional Regulation: Emotional regulation was measured using the **Emotion Regulation Questionnaire**, developed within the theoretical framework of emotion regulation research advanced by James Gross. The instrument evaluates the extent to which individuals use cognitive strategies such as reappraisal and emotional control.

All scales were administered at two time points:

1. **Pre intervention assessment** before the affirmation program began
2. **Post intervention assessment** after the six week intervention period

3.6 Qualitative Data Collection

To complement the quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected through two methods. **Semi structured interviews** were conducted with a subset of students from the experimental group. These interviews explored students' perceptions of the affirmation practice and how it influenced their thoughts, emotions, and academic engagement. In addition, **focus group discussions** were organized to allow students to share collective reflections about the experience. These discussions provided insights into how affirmation practices were interpreted within peer environments.

Students' **weekly reflective journals** also served as an important qualitative data source. These written reflections allowed participants to describe personal experiences with affirmations, including

moments when the statements helped them manage stress or maintain motivation.

3.7 Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical procedures appropriate for experimental comparison. The following analyses were conducted:

- **Descriptive statistics** to summarize mean scores and standard deviations
- **Paired sample t tests** to examine changes within groups between pre and post assessments
- **Analysis of variance (ANOVA)** to compare differences between the experimental and control groups

These statistical tests helped determine whether participation in the affirmation intervention produced significant changes in self-concept, motivation, and emotional regulation.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews, focus groups, and journals were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, following the methodological framework developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke.

The analysis involved several stages:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts
2. Initial coding of meaningful statements and patterns
3. Identification of broader themes across participants
4. Interpretation of themes in relation to the research questions

This process enabled the researchers to identify recurring psychological patterns, such as increased confidence, improved emotional awareness, or greater academic determination.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Because the study involved adolescent participants, strict ethical standards were maintained throughout the research process. First, **permission was obtained from the school administration** prior to conducting the study. Second, **informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians**, while students themselves provided assent to participate voluntarily.

Participants were assured that their responses would remain **confidential and anonymous**. Data were used solely for research purposes, and students were

informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The study also ensured that affirmation activities were supportive and non coercive. Students were encouraged to engage with the practice freely and reflectively rather than being compelled to adopt statements that felt inauthentic to them.

3.9 Trustworthiness and Validity

To enhance the rigor of the research, several strategies were employed. Quantitative reliability was strengthened through the use of standardized instruments with established psychometric properties. Statistical procedures were applied consistently to ensure accurate comparison of pre and post intervention data.

Qualitative credibility was supported through **data triangulation**, combining interviews, focus groups, and written reflections. This allowed themes to be verified across multiple sources. Together, these strategies increased the reliability and validity of the study's findings and strengthened the overall contribution of the research.

4. RESULTS

This section presents the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Consistent with the mixed methods design, statistical outcomes are presented first, followed by qualitative insights that help explain and contextualize the numerical results. The results focus on three major variables examined in the study: self concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation among adolescent students.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were first calculated to summarize the average scores and variability of the three psychological constructs measured in the study. Table 1 presents the pre intervention and post intervention mean scores for the experimental and control groups.

Table 1: Pre and Post Intervention Mean Scores

Variable	Group	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Concept	Experimental	3.01	3.85	0.62
Self-Concept	Control	3.05	3.10	0.58
Academic Motivation	Experimental	3.12	3.92	0.65
Academic Motivation	Control	3.14	3.18	0.61
Emotional Regulation	Experimental	2.95	3.70	0.67
Emotional Regulation	Control	2.97	3.05	0.63

The descriptive results indicate that students who participated in the affirmation intervention demonstrated noticeable improvements across all three psychological variables compared to the control group. While the control group exhibited only minimal changes between the pre and post assessments, the experimental group showed substantial increases in mean scores.

4.1.2 Paired Sample t Tests

Paired sample t tests were conducted to determine whether the changes observed within the experimental group between the pretest and posttest were statistically significant.

Table 2: Paired Sample t Test Results for Experimental Group

Variable	t value	p value	Interpretation
Self Concept	5.47	< .001	Significant improvement
Academic Motivation	5.91	< .001	Significant improvement
Emotional Regulation	5.12	< .001	Significant improvement

The results show statistically significant improvements in all three variables for students who participated in the affirmation intervention. These findings suggest that the structured affirmation practice

contributed to measurable psychological changes among participants.

4.1.3 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

An analysis of variance was conducted to compare the post intervention scores between the experimental and control groups.

The results revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups in all three variables.

- Self concept: $F(1,78) = 14.62, p < .001$
- Academic motivation: $F(1,78) = 16.04, p < .001$
- Emotional regulation: $F(1,78) = 13.87, p < .001$

These findings indicate that students exposed to affirmation practices scored significantly higher in self-concept, motivation, and emotional regulation compared to those who did not participate in the intervention.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative phase of the study aimed to explore students' lived experiences of the affirmation practice. Data were obtained from semi structured interviews, focus group discussions, and weekly reflective journals. Thematic analysis following the framework of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke revealed several recurring themes that illuminate how students interpreted and internalized the affirmation exercises.

Four major themes emerged from the analysis.

Theme 1: Emerging Confidence in Academic Ability

Many students reported that repeating affirmations helped them rethink their academic abilities. Students who previously doubted their competence described gradually developing a stronger sense of confidence in their capacity to learn. One participant explained: "Before this program, I always felt like some subjects were too hard for me. But saying the affirmations every day made me start believing that I could actually understand difficult things." Another student wrote in a reflective journal: "When I told myself that I am capable of learning, I started trying harder in class instead of giving up quickly." These reflections suggest that affirmations helped reshape students' internal narratives about their academic competence, thereby strengthening their self-concept.

Theme 2: Increased Academic Motivation

Students frequently reported that affirmations encouraged them to persist in their studies and invest greater effort in school tasks. For some participants, the practice served as a daily psychological reminder that effort and discipline could produce improvement. One student noted during a focus group discussion: "Sometimes when I felt lazy to study, I remembered the affirmation that said my effort helps me grow. That made

me go back to my books." Another participant stated: "The affirmations made me feel that school is something I can succeed in if I put in effort." These responses suggest that affirmation practices may reinforce motivational beliefs associated with competence and personal agency, concepts emphasized within Self-Determination Theory developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan.

Theme 3: Improved Emotional Awareness and Calmness

Several students described using affirmations as tools for managing stress and emotional reactions, particularly during examinations or difficult classroom situations. One student explained: "When I was nervous before a test, I repeated the affirmation that I remain calm when facing challenges. It helped me relax and think clearly." Another participant reflected: "Before, when something went wrong in class, I became very frustrated. But the affirmations reminded me to stay calm and try again." These experiences suggest that affirmation practices may support cognitive reappraisal strategies associated with emotional regulation. Such strategies align with the theoretical framework proposed by James Gross, which emphasizes the role of cognitive interpretation in shaping emotional responses.

Theme 4: Transformation of Internal Dialogue

Perhaps the most striking theme that emerged from the qualitative data was the transformation of students' internal dialogue. Many participants reported becoming more aware of the negative thoughts they previously directed toward themselves. Through the affirmation practice, students began replacing these thoughts with more constructive internal messages. One student observed: "I realized that before this program I was always telling myself I was not good enough. The affirmations helped me start speaking differently to myself."

Another participant stated: "It felt strange at first, but after some weeks the words started feeling true." This theme highlights the broader psychological significance of affirmation practices. By consciously reshaping internal dialogue, students may gradually develop more adaptive patterns of thinking that influence both emotional wellbeing and academic engagement.

4.3 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a deeper understanding of the impact of the affirmation intervention. Statistical analysis demonstrated significant improvements in self concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation among students who participated in the program. Qualitative insights help explain these changes by revealing how students experienced the affirmation practice in their

daily academic lives. Students reported increased confidence, greater willingness to engage with challenging tasks, and improved emotional stability during stressful situations.

Together, these findings suggest that affirmation practices may function as simple yet powerful psychological tools capable of influencing adolescents' internal narratives, motivational beliefs, and emotional responses within educational environments.

5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of structured affirmation practices on self-concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation among adolescent students at City College of Commerce Mankon. Using a mixed methods research design, the study integrated quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative insights drawn from students' reflections and interviews. The results revealed that students who participated in the affirmation intervention demonstrated significant improvements across all three psychological domains compared with students in the control group. The discussion interprets these findings in light of existing psychological theory and educational research while considering their implications for adolescent development within African educational contexts.

5.1 Affirmations and the Development of Self Concept

One of the most notable findings of this study was the significant improvement in students' self concept following the affirmation intervention. Students who participated in the daily affirmation exercises reported greater confidence in their abilities and a stronger sense of personal competence. These findings align with long standing theoretical perspectives that emphasize the central role of self perception in shaping human behavior.

Early psychological insights from William James proposed that individuals construct a sense of self through reflective awareness and evaluation of their abilities and experiences. Later developments within humanistic psychology, particularly the work of Carl Rogers, further emphasized that positive self regard plays a critical role in psychological growth and adaptive functioning.

The affirmation intervention appears to have strengthened students' self perceptions by reshaping their internal dialogue. When students repeatedly affirmed statements emphasizing competence and growth, they gradually internalized more constructive beliefs about their academic capabilities. Qualitative reflections from participants indicated that many students began replacing habitual self doubt with a more encouraging internal narrative. This transformation of self dialogue may have contributed to the measurable improvements observed in the self concept scale.

These findings also resonate with the theoretical framework of Self-Affirmation Theory developed by Claude Steele. According to this theory, individuals strive to maintain a sense of global self integrity. When that integrity is threatened by academic challenges or negative feedback, affirming valued aspects of the self can restore psychological balance and reduce defensiveness. The present findings suggest that structured affirmation practices may provide adolescents with a cognitive mechanism for maintaining a more stable sense of self within demanding educational environments.

5.2 Influence of Affirmations on Academic Motivation

The results of the study also revealed a significant increase in academic motivation among students who participated in the affirmation program. Participants reported greater willingness to engage with academic tasks and a stronger belief that effort could lead to improvement. These findings can be interpreted through the theoretical lens of Self-Determination Theory proposed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan. This framework suggests that individuals are more likely to sustain motivation when they experience a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Affirmation practices appear to reinforce the perception of competence, a key psychological need within this theory. By repeatedly affirming statements that emphasize capability and personal growth, students may begin to view academic challenges as manageable rather than threatening. This shift in perception can increase intrinsic motivation and encourage persistence in the face of difficulty. Qualitative responses from participants further support this interpretation. Several students reported that affirmations served as reminders that effort and discipline could produce improvement. Rather than viewing academic tasks as fixed indicators of intelligence, students began to interpret them as opportunities for growth. Such shifts in motivational beliefs can have profound implications for long term educational engagement.

5.3 Affirmations and Emotional Regulation

Another important finding of the study was the improvement in students' emotional regulation. Participants who practiced affirmations reported feeling calmer during stressful academic situations and more capable of managing frustration or anxiety. These findings correspond with theoretical models of emotional regulation, particularly those developed by James Gross. According to this framework, cognitive appraisal plays a central role in shaping emotional responses. When individuals reinterpret challenging situations in constructive ways, they are better able to regulate emotional reactions.

Affirmations may function as cognitive cues that facilitate this process of reinterpretation. For example, affirming statements such as "I remain calm when I face

challenges” encourage students to frame stressful situations as manageable rather than overwhelming. Over time, repeated exposure to such messages may strengthen cognitive pathways that support emotional stability.

Qualitative data in the present study illustrate this process clearly. Several students reported using affirmations as mental anchors during examinations or moments of frustration in the classroom. By recalling the affirmations, students were able to pause, regulate their emotions, and refocus on the task at hand. These findings suggest that affirmation practices may serve as accessible tools for promoting emotional resilience among adolescents.

5.4 Cultural and Educational Implications for African Contexts

Beyond their psychological significance, the findings of this study carry broader implications for educational practices within African contexts. Many African educational systems have historically emphasized academic discipline, memorization, and examination performance. While these priorities have contributed to intellectual rigor, they have sometimes overshadowed the importance of psychological wellbeing in the learning process. The results of this study suggest that relatively simple psychological interventions, such as structured affirmation practices, may enhance students’ internal resources without requiring extensive financial investment or specialized infrastructure. By encouraging positive self-dialogue, schools may help students cultivate resilience, motivation, and emotional balance.

Furthermore, affirmation practices resonate with longstanding African cultural traditions that recognize the formative power of language. Proverbs, communal declarations, and oral teachings have historically served as tools for reinforcing courage, moral responsibility, and perseverance. Integrating affirmation practices within educational environments may therefore represent a meaningful bridge between indigenous cultural wisdom and contemporary psychological science.

5.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

A major strength of the present study lies in the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Statistical analysis demonstrated measurable improvements in self-concept, academic motivation, and emotional regulation following the affirmation intervention. Qualitative findings provided deeper insight into how these changes occurred at the psychological level. Students’ reflections revealed that affirmations influenced their internal dialogue, encouraged persistence, and helped them manage emotional challenges. These narratives complement the statistical findings by illustrating the lived experiences behind the numerical trends.

Together, the mixed methods approach provides a richer understanding of how affirmation practices influence adolescent development. Rather than functioning merely as abstract motivational statements, affirmations appear to operate as cognitive tools that reshape self-perception, motivational beliefs, and emotional responses.

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