

Assessing Students' Engagements in Virtual Resources: Impacts of Localization of PhET Interactive Simulations in Indigenous Nigerian Language

Abstracts

Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Educators are poised to contribute to the integration of localized virtual learning tools in Mathematics Education. This study assessed the impacts of localized virtual learning application (PhET Interactive Simulations) on students' achievements in Mathematics. The study adapted a questionnaire on students' engagement measurement scale (SEMS) with four latent constructs (cognitive, behavioural, agentic, and emotional engagements) to observed the impacts of a localized virtual learning tool and predicts students' achievements in Mathematics. A sample of three hundred and thirty three (333) pre-degree students within the targeted population participated. Using an exploratory factor analysis(EFA), the engagement measurement scale assumed 62.89% as the average variance extracted from the latent variables. The SEMS satisfies the adequacy criteria of convergence validity, composite reliability, cronbach's alpha index, and discriminant reliability, and was deployed in the study as independent latent variables. Using regression analysis, agentic engagement which demonstrates students' experiential and constructive contributions to the learning process shown a substantial significant impact on students' achievements in Mathematics. This underscore the positive effect of first language (L_1) integrated to the conventional instructional strategy and formal language of Mathematics Instruction in Nigeria. Students' emotional engagement with localized virtual learning tool shown a significant positive relationship on their corresponding academic achievements in Mathematics. This underscore the fact that socio-cultural and situated learning make Mathematics interest, and fun culminated to supportive learning autonomy, and improvement in learning outcomes. It was shown that both cognitive and behavioural engagements, which measures mental alertness, manipulative skills, and transfer of learning, tasks-attention-responses in class, yielded positive significant impacts on students' academic achievements in Mathematics. Hence, diversification of instructional practices through leverages offered by localized virtual digital resources enhanced learning outcomes in Mathematics.

Key words: Engagement, Mathematics, Virtual learning resources, localization, and PhET interactive simulation.

1 Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

The didactic of smart pedagogical process has been seen to be topical for Technology-Enhanced Learning in the twenty first century schooling system. This is where technological and digital solutions can be used for a variety of purposes to radically challenge and create both fearful and fascinating learning environments. On one hand, fearful conjectures regarding technology in Mathematics suggested that people uses subjective sense and believe that technologies create chaos in learning of Mathematics. They are of the pinion that students are not fully engaged in the learning process and do not take responsibility for their knowledge building because they are fully engaged with technologies which provide the possibility of reaching information immediately[1]. They posits that the use of technological solutions makes student lazy and learners to feel redundant. Smart

learning devices are blamed for a great many of the problems we are facing or will face in the near future: for example, technologies will take over all the jobs; technologies reduce the ability and desire to learn; the use of technologies reduces attention span; and so on. On the other hand, there is the effect of fascination, where technologies are assumed to be the tools which will solve all possible problems; they will make the learning process interesting; students will become motivated; they will ensure rapid knowledge growth and will support the sustainable development and the wellbeing of the society. The later perspective is in support of the future of Mathematics teaching and learning, which is inline with the possibility in attainment of sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG-4) in 2030[2]. The aspects of inclusiveness, equitable and equal Education for all in the nearest future as envisaged by Educational stakeholders can be achieved globally through ethno-techno-learning technique, and localization of virtual learning resources becomes pertinent parameter for efficient remote learning environment.

In the Nigeria Educational context, Mathematics has been envisaged as core subject in the curricula for both urban and rural secondary schools. The subject becomes an immediate antecedent for sustainable development and building of smarter human resources that can venture effectively in all facets of human explorations. It has been envisioned as the bedrock in Science Technology Engineering Art and Mathematics Education (STEAM)[3, 4] and require on optimal learning environment to inculcate right students' engagement for effective learning outcome. It is not new that technological tools has been integrated into the teaching and learning of Mathematics [5], such as the use of dynamic geometry applications and other virtual manipulative tools. On the other hand, virtual and digital learning environment breeds digital divides to remote learning, and indirectly requires more teachers commitment in improving their Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) for smooth explorations. Numerous challenges due to digital divides include the lacks of online learning resources and internet instability, and learning applications system that supports ethno-culturally related learning resources in our rural communities.

On a global scale, Language has been reported to providing a symbolic means to “direct... control... and channel” thinking in increasingly logical and discipline-appropriate ways by Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies[6]. They high-light language as a factor that can undermines the performance of learners who speak a different language at home from the language of the examination. In the Nigeria context, the diversity of first language (L1) plurality is an added advantage for the underprivileged learners, but the exploration and integration of such opportunity is far-reaching when it comes to experiential, and flexible teaching and learning of Mathematics. Indigenous students are well equipped with home language or mother tongue before they come to the classroom, and its become advantageous to adopt a language integrated technique during instructional delivery. Thus the adoption of L1 in relation to the language of instruction has been envisaged as a pathway to effective communication of the subject matter to the learners, while creating a more adaptive learning experiences. First language as an embodiment of enculturation preserves diversity, and inclusivity through continuous usage, and incorporating it into instructional models becomes expedient. The utilization of L1 during instructional delivery can reduce the threat on language extinction, and promote cultural relevance, croos-lingual transfer, shared group identity, socio-cultural mindedness, sense of belonging and life-long learning.

1.2 Conceptual Frameworks

1.2.1 Students' Engagements in Virtual Learning Resources

The post COVID-19 experience propels teachers and educators to venture into ways of supplementing classroom instructional delivery through students' engagements in virtual Learning Resources. Students' Engagements in connotes their physical, manipulative and psychological involvements in the teaching and learning processes as they are taking responsibilities of knowledge creation in a virtual learning landscape [7]. According to Atkins and others in [8, 9], engagement is a multi-dimensional construct that consists of direct and indirect constructs of observable and non-observable dimensions

with four (4) components namely; cognitive, behavioral, emotional and agentic[10] (see Fig. 1).

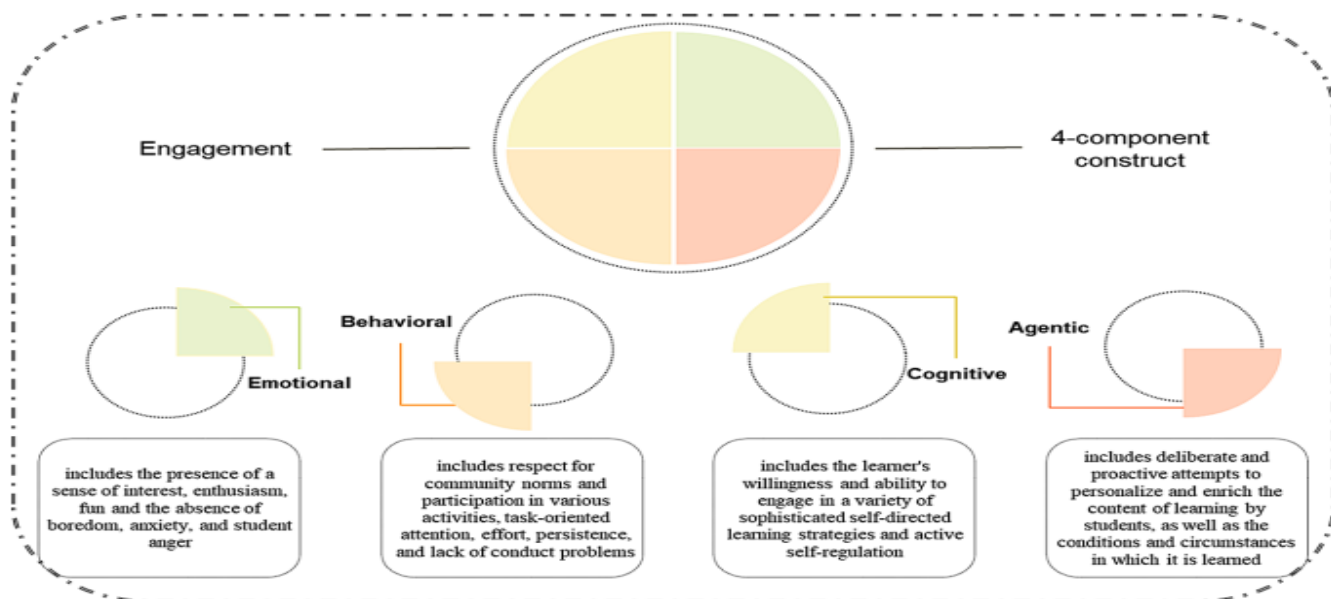


Figure 1: components of students' engagements

In Mathematics Education, it has been observed that taking the leverage of virtual learning resources to engage the learners gears towards curiosity, participation, and the drive to learn more, can determine other teaching and learning outcomes for students. Thus virtual learning resources becomes a handy tool to promotes meaningful engagements in learning. The virtual environment is an artificial reality of interactive computer based application that provides a way for the user to simulate either the real or imaginary objects, processes or actions. Augmented reality and virtual reality are both terms that refer to technological advancements that combine the digital and physical worlds by superimposing digital information over human perceptions of the real environment. On the other hand, they vary based on the fact that VR implies a computer-produced simulation that resembles a real-world experience, whereas AR is more encompassing and integrates the natural world experience together with content generated by a computer programmes. Lucid advantages of VR/AR includes the fact that students benefit from a more immersive and interesting learning experience as offered by AR/VR technology; memory is better retained in learners as a result of it. It is very helpful to learners that may have difficulties learning. Students are more likely to learn on their own and become independent as a result of this, it instills confidence. Its makes learning from a distance more interesting and fun. Mixed or Augmented Reality (AR) another of VR defines Virtual items merged with the real world and interact with one another via technology. AR technology allows actual items and virtual information to be combined in order to improve students' interaction with physical settings and their learning. The application integrates a machine's virtual item into the real environment or distinguishes three-dimensional artificial object space (objects, locations, etc.) and guides the consumer's perception as well as understanding of it. Although virtual resources can be seen as an artificially created phenomena, students perceive the experience as real, while participating actively in the learning scenario. If the physical counterpart is unavailable, hazardous, or expensive, virtual reality may be stand in effectively for learning and teaching purpose. The virtual worlds reduces high level risk that could be damaging or consequential in real life situations, even when the users are erroneously acted. Students can also get rapid feedbacks within themselves, or responses from others in the same virtual learning environment. The level of incentive to study that immersion gives, for example, is crucial. Indeed was opted that[11] immersive learning tools can sharpen the focused attention span of the learner, as demonstrated through neurocognitive simulations [12]. VLEs provides teachers and students with enormous techno-cultural dimension to visualize and communicate ideas in problem solving which are peculiar to Mathematics Instructional strategies[13]. Virtual Learning resources includes Manipulatives are constituting component of recently developed Dynamic Geom-

etry Environment (DGE) such as GeoGebra, Cabri Geometry, Cinderella, CalcPlots3D (explorative tools for multivariate calculus), Core-Maths Tools, Maplesoft, Geometer's Sketchpad, Tinkerplots, Fathom, Desmos, and Physics Education Technology (PhET) Interactive Simulations applications [14, 15]. They become veritable tool and represent emerging technological resources integrated into the teaching and learning of Mathematics.

1.2.2 PhET Simulation and Its Localization in Indigenous Nigerian Languages

PhET Interactive simulations are free technology-enabled simulation applets available in web-based and apps based versions, workable with or without internet connection and downloadable from via <https://phet.colorado.edu>. PhET Interactive Simulations consists of over two hundred (200) virtual manipulatives [16] used by more than 10 million people for teaching, learning, and research in STEM Education. The PhET project was introduced by a Noble Laureate Carl-Wieman and developed by his Research Group in 2002 at the University of Colorado in United States. PhET interactive simulations provide a dynamics and multiple representation of abstract concept which fosters students commitment and engagement, interest and motivation to learn. The visual representation of objects fosters connections between the concepts, and enhances creativity and transferable skills in learning of Mathematics [17, 18]. This application software makes learning flexible, adaptive and more personalized, since learners can engage in Mathematics learning activities at anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace. This application promotes scientific inquiry, since users interaction with these tools, give immediate feedback about the effect of the manipulation they made. This allows learners to determine the cause-and-effect relationships and answer scientific questions through engaged-exploration of the simulations in the classroom. The use of PhET Interactive Simulations (sims) in teaching Mathematics reduces Mathematical abstractions to a more concrete form, and helps the learner to internalized and externalized mental models which contributes to meaningful and effective learning of the subject matter in the classroom. PhET sims provides avenue fo appropriate scaffolding of the learning through repetitive-drill-practices, tutorials, and animated simulations of the learning contents which help the students to build a mental framework about concepts[19]. The PhET sims provide a balance challenge and little puzzles, clues, fun-like rewards and positive reinforcement that makes learning more game-like oriented and enjoyable.

PhET interactive simulations worth even more for marginalized or disadvantaged learners, where digital divides persisted, because the application is available in mobile/phones apps accessible with or without internet facilities over a wide geographical area and socioeconomic domains. The application has been translated to local languages across sub-Saharan Africa including five (5) indigenous languages in Nigeria namely; Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Efik/Ibibio and Ewe languages. Nigeria as a plurilingual community stands to benefits from the innovation in PhET translation Programme. The programme trained over hundred (100) Trusted PhET Translators; instructional designers, Educational Technologist and STEM educators on how to translate the PhET sims into local languages with classified orthography in different cohorts between the years 2021 and 2023. The Translators Network for African Languages was created in support of the translation project and members are notified when new sims are ready translations. In consequence the practice of PhET sims translation becomes a continuous project in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and even up to date. The PhET translation utility enable instructors and learners to switch to translated sims in the application that have textual object, images, animations, and audio translated in L1 language or local dialect in during classroom instruction. Hence the dynamics nature of the dual version of the PhET Interactive Simulations operating in both L1 language and L2 Language of instruction(i.e English) expand engaged-adaptation and optimal involvement of the learners while creating an experiential learning environment. This project broadens the scope of functionality of PhET Interactive Simulation as an assistive technological tool that mediate instructional delivery among learners with special needs. The element of localizing virtual resources such as PhET sims promote situated-learning environment, preserves the socio-cultural milieu, promote digital humanity, and prevents the extinc-

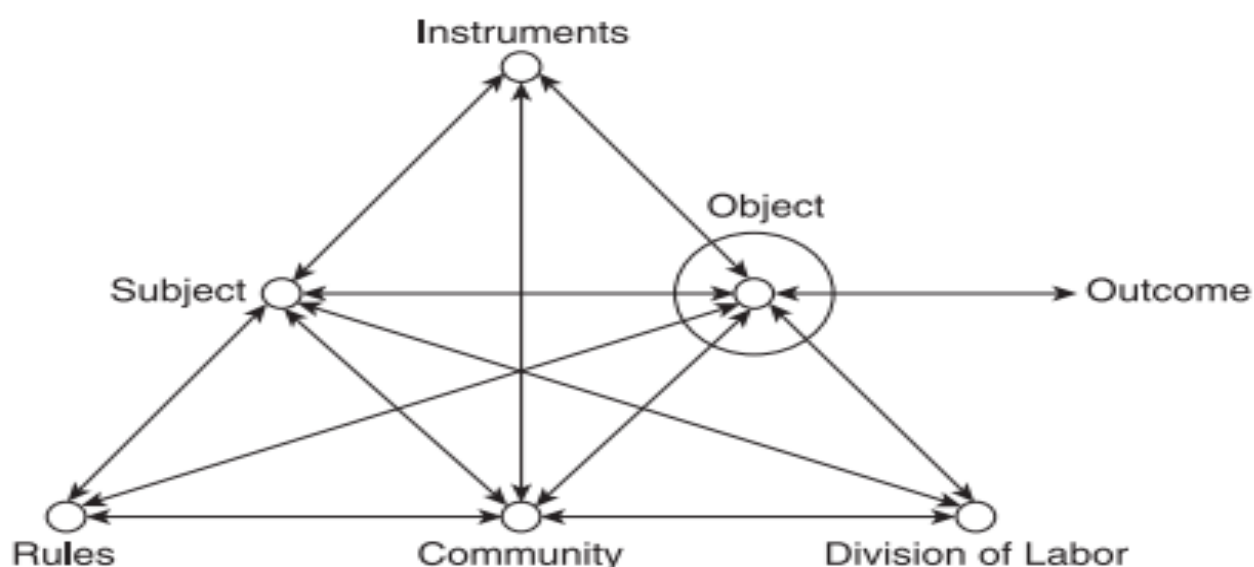


Figure 2: schematic model of activity system analysis

tion of indigenous African languages. Localization of virtual learning resources provide alternative means of communicating abstract concepts and breaking complex learning objects through the use of a readily available L1 language which seems familiar to the learners. These enable the learners to make new connections with prior experiences, therefore increasing students' interest, motivation, knowledge and metacognitive skills during learning.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

1.3.1 Cultural-Historical-Activity Theory (CHAT)

The CHAT framework also known as "activity system analysis" provides a systematic and systemic approach to understanding human activities and interactions in real-world complex environments. The CHAT framework was developed by Vygotsky, Leont'ev and Engestrom[20, 21, 22], and they explained that learning being the development of unique higher cognitive functions(goal or object) occurs through the interdependent relations between the learners (subject) and socio-cultural structure (mediated artifacts, tools or instruments). In figure 2 students depict the subject acted upon by the on object in order to transform it using mediating artefacts or instruments to the unique outcomes. In turn, the rules of the system mediate between the subject and the community, and the division of labour mediates between the community and the objects. Engeström referred to this triangular relations as activity system analysis. In activity system analysis, the mediated artifacts and tools connote semiotics, texts, language, notations, digital tools, and more knowledgeable others used to augment or act as resources to the subject. An arguable tenants of the CHAT framework is that cognitive deficit is as a result of cultural deficit during learning. So the first Language (L1) as a historical mediated tool in the activity system analysis provides a dialectic functions during learning and reduces cultural deficits. This theory supports the synergy between content and language integrated learning, as learning occur when learners dialogue between different languages to complete meaning making process. Envisioning Mathematics as a culturally related knowledge and learning as socioculturally mediated process expand learners mathematical and cultural identities, and social representations in the classroom. Its becomes pertinent for instructors to seek and maintain cultural cohesiveness by using learners immediate language for instructional purposes because they feel confident using it. Since schools and classrooms become places where teachers, students, and parents are exposed to cultural differences, then teachers should response by integrating the inherent cultural symbols such as language during instructional deliveries. In the lens of post-Vygotskian perspective, explicit mediation has been envisaged as the use of technological tools depicting the

notion of "...more knowledgeable and competent others.." and as a tool to shrink the Vygotskian Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Mathematics classroom[23, 24]. The ZPD is where the learners' interpersonal and intrapersonal activities blend and fuse and no longer exist as different entities. Hence technological tools such as virtual manipulatives should be use as artifacts to promotes transformational learning in a Mathematics classroom which blends or fused the learners' zone proximal development(ZPD). A further implication of a component of CHAT is the use of virtual manipulative tools as the object of mediation which enhances expansive learning of Mathematics in the classroom. Expansive learning implies learning that leads to an entirely new unit of activity system analysis, with a new object, or problem space. That is, the use of tools, such as language or indeed the computer software, can lead to shifts in the object of the activity after existing contradiction, leading to a new kind of learning which is characterized as expansive in that it leads to new concepts, new agency and a new way of acting in the new activity system. Virtual manipulative as a cognitive tool, transforms pedagogical practices by impacting on division of labour and the object of the activity, with teachers and students taking on different roles and responsibilities during teaching and learning processes[25].

1.3.2 E-Learning Theory

E-learning theory is a constellation and refinement of Mayer's multimedia instructional design principles [26] and Sweller's cognitive load hypotheses[27]. In one hand, the multimedia instructional principles connote a systematic process of designing and developing effective and efficient learning experiences through the use of innovative virtual learning resources. On the other hand, cognitive load constructs entail harnessing learners' intrinsic cognitive load to optimize the germane cognitive load, while mitigating extraneous cognitive load during instructional deliveries. The major tenets of e-learning theory is that appropriate instructional design with technological tools and effective usage can create new learning opportunities and promote effective learning. Consequently, e-learning theory explains that by reducing extraneous cognitive load and managing germane and intrinsic cognitive load at an appropriate level of learners' cognitive capacity and through the use of educational technological tools, students can learn effectively and efficiently. The diagram below (fig.3) show the three types of cognitive loads; intrinsic, extrinsic and germane cognitive load. The antecedent of cognitive loads is derived from the nature of human cognitive architecture. In cognitive science, human cognitive architecture explains that the short-term and working memories are limited in capacity to store information for a long time, and then appropriate secondary knowledge requires strategic and schematic transfer or integration into the long term memory for ease of recall and re-usage. Secondary knowledge yields germane cognitive load, and extraneous cognitive load can be reduced through proper multimedia instructional design principles. It's pertinent for designers of virtual learning environment to conform to these instructional principles; modality, coherence, contiguity, segmenting, redundancy, pre-training and so on. The modality principle state that multiple ways (texts, audio, visuals, and intimations) of information presented to learners reduces extraneous cognitive load. Thus rather than displaying a diagram and written text that rely solely on the visual channel, a diagram and spoken text that rely on audiovisual modalities should be utilized. Also, unnecessary noise brings redundancy in cognitive process which can inhibits understanding in the learning environment. Hence effective instructional resources such as virtual manipulatives should be used to reduce redundant effects in the classroom. Another principle of e-learning is adaptability to the learning environment(see figure 3). The implication is that, primary biological knowledge which consists of generic-cognitive skills such as first language(L1)[27] should be used as an informal communication style to aids the understanding and comprehension of secondary knowledge which uses the formal language of instruction (L2). Other implications of adopting e-learning resources are highlighted in figure 3.

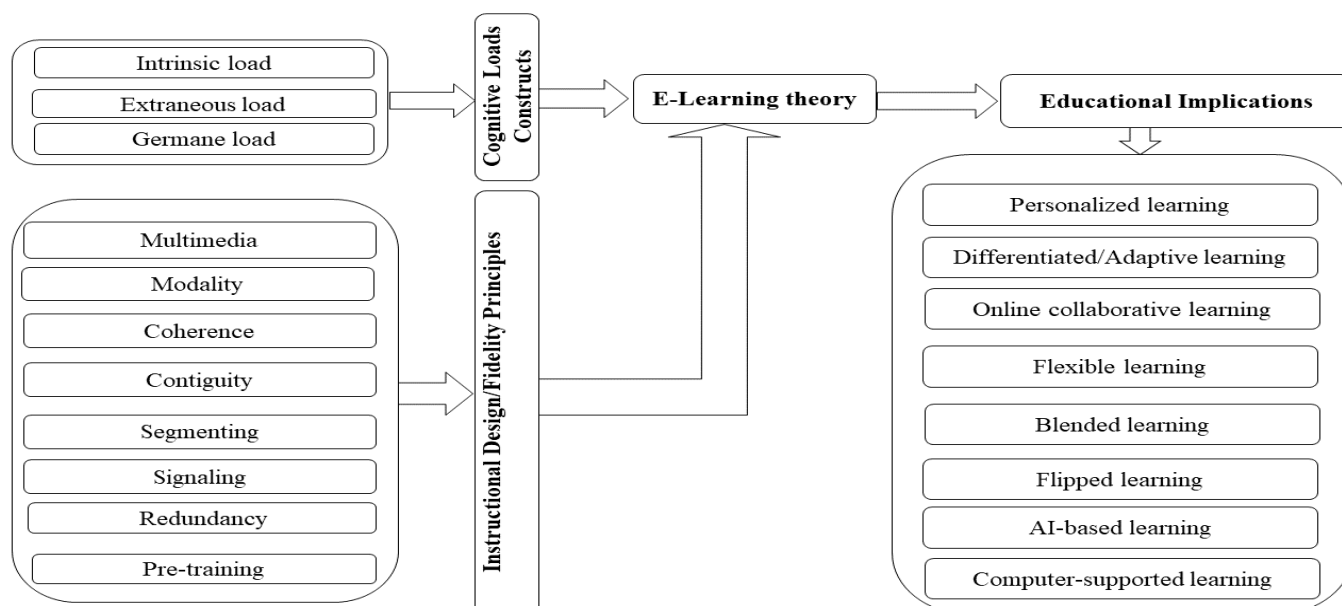


Figure 3: e-learning theoretic Framework and implications

1.4 Empirical Review

Although there are many data-driven research works on PhET Interactive simulations and students' performance, more results are yet to be established about the effects of localizing PhET Interactive Simulations in Indigenous Nigerian Language. In a study of the effects of virtual manipulatives on students' performance and retention in quadratic graphs, PhET Interactive Simulations was used as a virtual manipulative learning strategy [28]. They found out that a virtual manipulative applet in PhET Interactive Simulations used as an instructional aid enhances students' performance and retention of the concept of quadratic graphs. They attributed significant differences in students' performance when using PhET sims to the dynamic and interactive features of the application. Also, they found that PhET interactive simulations are gender sensitive, exhibited inclusive features, and they recommended PhET sims to be used as assistive technological tools to augment the teaching and learning of Mathematics. An experimental comparative technique was used to investigate the effectiveness of PhET Interactive Simulation-based activities in improving the Students Academic Performance in Sciences [29]. It was revealed that students' given treatment using PhET Interactive Simulation-based activities performed significantly higher than students taught the same concepts in conventional method. The students' in experimental group proved to be more engaging and motivated to manipulate the learning resources, and these serve as antecedents to their improved performances in sciences. There were substantial improvements in students' learning outcomes, motivation and attitude in junior secondary school students in Basic Science subject after using PhET in a simulation-based interactive learning environment [30]. They opted that PhET sims can be utilized as an effective pedagogical tool in science teaching, particularly in developing countries where learning resources could be challenging. PhET Interactive Simulation has been proven to give a high level of students' engagement in Physics, and they recommended the use of computer simulations as a valuable tool for enhancing student involvement in Physics Education [31].

1.5 Statements of the Problem

Although the emergence of smart learning tools has made learners to be technologically savvy, its integration in Mathematics Education in Nigeria seems to be far-reaching. The problem persists deeply in the rural area and among disadvantaged learners, as appropriate remote learning strategies have not been used to augment the routine instructional practices in form of synchronous and asynchronous patterns. The evidence is clear that improvements in proficiency underpin future economic development, and the building of more cohesive and equal societies [32]. Thus, localized virtual learn-

ing strategy could complement the critical components; effective teaching, suitable technology, and engaged learners which have direct experiential effects on learners proficiency indicators. The translated PhET Simulations into indigenous Nigerian languages in particular efik/ibibio language could ameliorate or reduce the back-log learning loss due to COVID-19 in pursuance of the Recovering Education Agenda[33]. It is pertinent to localized virtual learning tools such as PhET Interactive Simulations and assess the impacts on students proficiency indices or learning outcomes when engaged in the virtual learning environment. On the other hand students' engagement is deeply rooted in Mathematics learning, research and practices, but a substantially valid and reliable engagement measurement scale is lacking. Despite the significance of the engagement concept, the lack of instruments with robust psychometric constructs has hindered adoption of engagement constructs in exploring the relationships some latent observable constructs and continuous measurable parameters. This study would suggest the utilization of a robust engagement instrument to boosting research in this promising area.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

There is a research gap on the investigation of impacts of localization of virtual manipulative; PhET Interactive Simulations on students' engagement in Mathematics. The question if how inclusive is the virtual learning resources? has not been established. The study will establish a valid and reliable but adapted engagement measurement scale. In the same vein, this study seeks to determine the impacts of localization of PhET Interactive Simulations on students' perceived engagements for predicting academic achievements of students in Mathematics in the concept of quadratic graphs. The following research questions and the corresponding null hypotheses will guide the study

1.6.1 Research Questions

- What is a substantially valid and reliable engagement Measurement scale to assess students' perceived engagements on the use of localized virtual Mmanipulative (PhET Interactive Simulations) in learning the concepts of quadratic graphs in Mathematics?
- What is the impacts of localization of PhET Interactive Simulation on students' engagements in predicting academic achievement of students in Mathematics in the concept of quadratic graphs.

1.6.2 Research Hypotheses

- There is no significant inter-correlations between the engagement measurement constructs as observed by students taught Mathematics using localizing PhET interactive simulations.
- There is no significant explanatory effect of localization of PhET Interactive Simulation on students' engagements in predicting academic achievements of students in Mathematics.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Procedure

This study used a mixed research design method. The participants of the study consisted of senior secondary one (1) students of Efficient secondary school in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state. A purposeful random sampling technique of sample size ($n = 333$) obtained using the modified Cochran's formula [34] given as

$$n_0 = \frac{Nt^2\rho^2}{N + t^2\rho^2} \quad (1)$$

where n_0 is the required sample size, N is the population of the study, t is the t – value at the desired probability level of .05 with degree of freedom $N - 1$, ρ is the sample control ratio estimated as a categorical dataset as $\frac{\sqrt{p(1-p)}}{\epsilon}$, ϵ is the proportion of acceptable error, and ρ is the proportion of presence of an attribute in the population. The sample size was selected based on the criteria that, the school have adequate internet facility and educational resource laboratory and furnished with computer local area networked system. Qualitatively, a questionnaire entitled Students’ Engagement Measurement Scale (SEMS)” in Mathematics was adapted was for the study to measure the students’ perceived engagement with the localized virtual manipulative (PhET Interactive Simulations). The Questionnaire has a 20-item questionnaire that measure five Engagement constructs; cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Behavioural Engagement and Agentic Engagement. The components of each factor levels of SEMS of the questionnaire is given in table 1. The instrument was trial test on a sample of one hundred (100) students within the target population. Its face, content validity were carried out by research experts in the field of test and evaluation. Students responded using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Similarly, each component factors of the questionnaire yielded internal consistencies, obtained using cronbach’s alpha technique; cognitive engagement($\alpha = 0.927$), emotional engagement ($\alpha = .878$), behavioural engagement ($\alpha = .889$), and agentic engagement ($\alpha = .850$). This established a modest reliability indices in this study. The Cronbach’s alpha’s assumptions of equal factor loading in each constructs underestimates the notion of substantial reliability[35] and remains unjustifiable for an engagement measurement scale developed in this study.

Table 1: Students’ Engagement Measurement Scale(SEMS) in Mathematics

Latent Constructs	Indicators
Cognitive Engagement(COE)	item 1: I interprets mathematical concept using L1 item 2: I can recall previous mathematical concepts using L1 item 3: I use mathematical concepts to solve a real life problem item 4: I give attention to mathematical concepts taught using L1 and L2 item 5: I am inquisitive to learn maths concepts using L1
Egentic Engagement(EGE)	item 1: I share mathematical ideas to peers in class using L1 item 2: I asked questions about Mathematics concept in class using L1 item 3: I response to answers of mathematics concepts when explained in L1 item 4: I communicates mathematical concepts to others in class using L1 item 5: During class, I express my preferences and opinions using L1
Behavioural Engagement(BEE)	item 1: I manipulate maths concepts using localized virtual apps in class item 2: I use different skills to solve maths problem when taught in L1. item 3: I perform class tasks when taught mathematics using L1 item 4: I manipulates maths concepts with localized virtual app in my own pace item 5: I learn maths concepts individually when taught in L1.
Emotional Engagement(EME)	item 1: I have interest in mathematics when taught using local language item 2: Learning mathematics using local language is fun item 3: I enjoy learning mathematics using local language item 4 I have feelings of self-belonging when taught maths using L1 item 5: I develop deep self-esteem in mathematics when taught using L1

L1: Local language (Efik/Ibibio) L2: Language of Instruction (English)

An Exploratory Factor Analysis(CFA) was used to obtain convergent and discriminant validity after standardizing the datasets using the formula

$$X_{normalized} = \frac{X_{value} - \bar{X}}{SD_X} \tag{2}$$

where X denotes the construct of interest. The convergent and discriminant validity strengthens the assumption that the amount of variance of each indicator captured by a factor is substantial, and no indicator cross-loads(unidimensionality) on any other factor. Thus the composite reliability(CR),

average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity were computed using the formulas;

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} AVE_X = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i^2}{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p Var(\xi_i)} \\ CR_X = \frac{\left(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i\right)^2}{\left(\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i\right)^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p (1-\lambda_i^2)} \\ DV_X = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i^2}{\sum_{i=1}^p \lambda_i^2 + \sum_{i=1}^p Var(\xi_i)}} \end{array} \right. \quad (3)$$

where p is the number of items called the indicators of named construct X , and λ_i is the completely standardized factor loading of the i^{th} indicator. Since the both indicators and construct are standardized, the value of AVE is equivalent to the average of the square of completely standardized factor loadings across all its indicators. The AVE should be greater than 0.5 to demonstrate an acceptable level of convergent validity, meaning that the latent construct explains no less than 50% of the indicator variance in the study. Also, any CR values greater than or equal to 0.7 depicts a good reliability. In other words, the total error variance consist of less than 30% of the variance of the latent variable. The discriminant validity measurement was obtained as the square root value of the AVE for each constructs to ensure unidimensionality (i.e., each indicator loads uniquely on only one construct).

Quantitatively, the corresponding academic achievement scores of students were obtained after a treatment given to the study sample. This intervention focused on the use of Localized virtual manipulative (instructional strategy) to teach Mathematics concepts. The Academic achievement test (AAT) was a 20-item multiple choice questions, where correct answers was assigned a numeric value one(1) and wrong answer was assigned the numeric value (0). The instrument had a reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.78$), using Kuder-Richadson (KR_{21}). This ensures equal difficulty level for each of the question used. A hybrid Regression Analysis-Artificial Neural Network (RA-ANN) Approach is used to analysis and predicts the interrelationship between the dependent variable (academic achievement scores of students taught quadratic graph using Localized Virtual Learning Strategy) and independent variables (Students' Perceived Engagements through the use of Localized Virtual Learning strategy). The Artificial Neural Network(ANN) approach provides a reliable way to validate the percentages of unique contribution of each factor of the independent variables by specifying their normalized importance in the model [36]. Let the response variable y be estimated with an \mathbf{X} matrix of n sample observations and p predictor variables, represented as \mathbf{X}_j . $\mathbf{X}^T = (X_1, X_2, \dots, X_p)$. Then, the i^{th} person's response variable is y_i , modeled by $\mathbf{x}_i = (x_{i1}, x_{i2}, \dots, x_{ip})^T$ and an error term ϵ . Thus the multiple linear regression model is fitted using the following equations

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} y = f(\mathbf{X}) = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^p X_j \beta_j + \epsilon \\ \beta_i = \operatorname{argmin} \left(\frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \left(y_i - \sum_{j=1}^p x_{ij} \beta_j \right)^2}{2} \right) \\ R^2 = 1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (\hat{y} - y_i)^2}{\sum_{i=1}^n (\bar{y} - y_i)^2} \\ R_{adj}^2 = 1 - \frac{(1-R^2)(n-1)}{n-p-1} \end{array} \right. \quad (4)$$

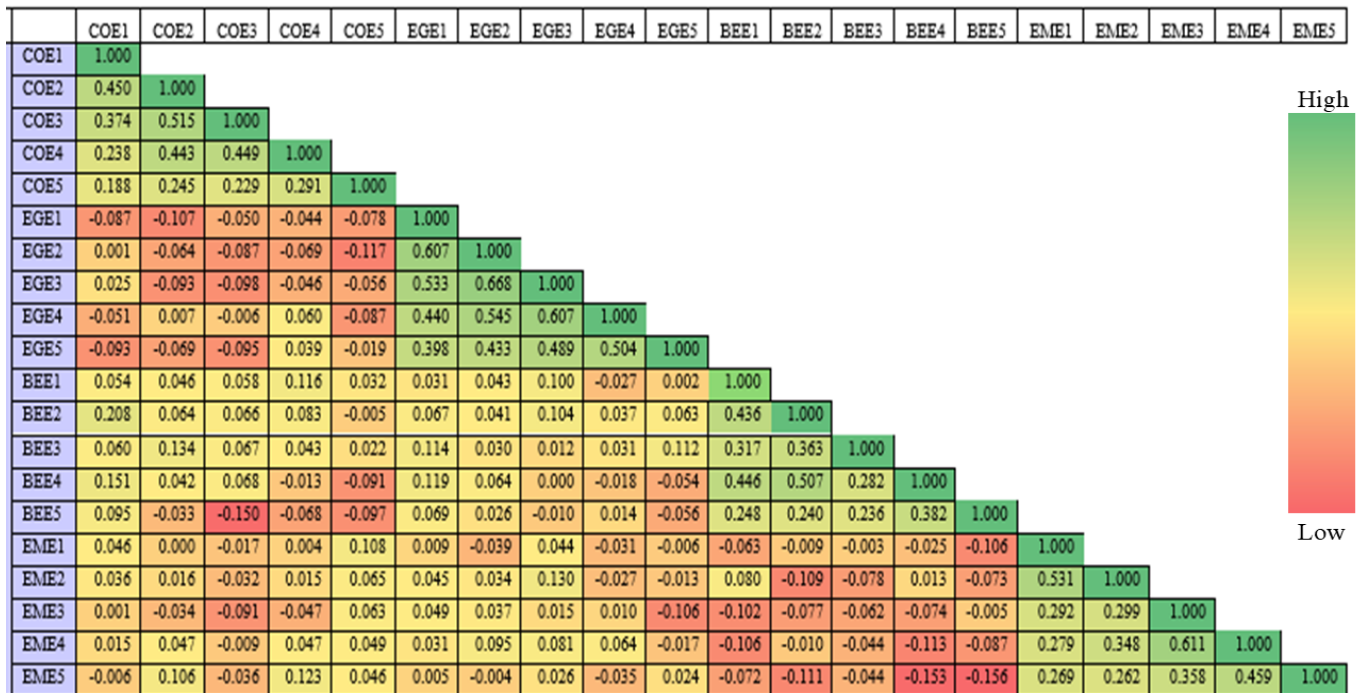


Figure 4: Heat map of inter-related engagement measurement scale

3 Analytics and Results

3.1 Validation and Reliability of Engagement Measurement Constructs using EFA

This section answers research question 1 and hypothesis 1, which seek to ascertain the validity and reliability of an engagement measurement scale. The appropriateness of the Engagement measurement variables and latent constructs supported the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), since the measure of sample adequacy ($KMO = .725$) was higher than 0.5, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 1955.26, p < .00001$) is significant as shown in table 2. Hence the sample data-set is adequate for a factor analysis.

Table 2: KMO-Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.725
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	1995.25
	df	190
	Sig.	.00001

To ensure that the latent variables are highly inter-correlated within each major constructs; Cognitive Engagement (COE), Egentic Engagement (EGE), Behavioural Engagement (BEE), and Emotional Engagement, the heat-map of correlation between the latent constructs is given below in figure 1. For a substantial validation of the measurement datasets, factor loadings of the engagement constructs was extracted using principal axis factoring, and promax rotation with Kaiser normalization. Using the criteria in [37], factor loadings with absolute values (< 0.4) was suppressed, and four (4) observed factor levels were extracted to determine convergent and discriminant validities of the engagement measurement scale as shown in table 3. All the items in egentic engagement was loaded in factor 1, items loaded in factor 2 were responses on emotional engagement, factor 3 was loaded with items on cognitive engagement, while factor three was loaded with behavioural engagement. All factor loadings were higher that 0.4, as shown in table 3 and following the criteria in [38, 39], this shows a good correlation within each item in its corresponding factor with 62.89% as the average variance extracted from the latent constructs.

Although the cronbach’s alpha reliability indices were higher than the required threshold value of

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Engagement Measurement Scales

Engagement Constructs	Item indicators	F_1	F_2	F_3	F_4	CA	AVE	CR	DV
Egentic Engagement(EGE)	EGE3	.911				.85	0.73	.93	.852
	EGE4	.910							
	EGE2	.902							
	EGE1	.777							
	EGE5	.747							
Emotional engagement(EME)	EME4		.845			.878	.620	.89	.787
	EGE3		.831						
	EGE2		.792						
	EGE5		.741						
	EGE1		.716						
Cognitive Engagement(COE)	COE2		.823			.927	.610	.89	.780
	COE3			.800					
	COE4			.800					
	COE1			.789					
	COE5			.661					
Behavioural Engagement (BEE)	BEE4				.923	.889	.540	.86	.735
	BEE4				.776				
	BEE4				.750				
	BEE4				.719				
	BEE4				.406				
Factors inter-correlation	F_1	(.852)							
	F_2	-.23*	(.787)						
	F_3	-.35	-.213*	(.780)					
	F_4	-.086	.389*	-.314*	(.735)				

*significant at 0.01, level $F_i(i=1,2,...,4)$ as factors, CA = Cronbach's Alpha, AVE = Average Variance Extracted, CR = Composite reliability, DV = Discriminant Validity

0.7 across all factors as shown in table 3, its neglected sampling error in the measurement, and the assumptions of equal factor loadings (tuo-equivalence) in each latent construct underestimate the overall substantial reliability of the engagement measurement scale as adapted. The frequent misuse of Cronbach's alpha may be attributable to several factors: (a) unawareness of the problems of Cronbach's alpha [40], (b) easy estimation of Cronbach's alpha using commonly-available statistical software packages, (c) widely-accepted standards for evaluating the adequacy of Cronbach's alpha, and (d) requests from reviewers and/or editors for Cronbach's alpha, resulting in its inclusion in manuscripts. Hence a convergent and discriminate validities of the engagement measurement scale were computed using the standardized factor loadings of the latent constructs. The Average variance extracted (AVE) for the four (4) factors ranged from 0.54 to 0.73 (shown in Table 3) which indicates a good convergent validity as AVE values are more than 0.50. Observe that the square root of AVE values for each construct, as indicated in table are all higher than their corresponding factors inter-correlation coefficients, indicating sufficient differentiation among constructs and supporting the fulfillment of discriminant validity criteria. The confirmation of discriminant validity ensures that there is no significant overlap and redundancy among these constructs, which is crucial during establishing an accurate measurement scale for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Also, the engagement measurement scale has a good congeneric reliability with values higher than 0.7 referred to as construct validity (CV).

3.2 Regression Analysis

This section is used to answer research questions (2 and 3) and hypotheses (2 and 3) respectively. The Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was conducted on the engagement measure scale, and it satisfies the normality assumption, as shown in table 4, which ensured the use of parametric test statistic.

The regression model in table 5 shows that students' engagements in localized virtual resources predicted significant impacts on academic achievements in Mathematics [$F(4, 328) = 16.86, p < .05$].

Table 4: Levene’s Test of Homogeneity of Error Variance

Engagement Measurement Constructs	Descriptive Measures	Levene’s Statistic	df_1	df_2	Sig.
	Based on Mean	.895	3	1325	.443
	Based on Median	1.124	3	1328	.338
	Based on adjusted median and df	1.124	3	1325	.338
	Based on trimmed mean	1.087	3	1328	.354

Null hypothesis: there is equality of error variance between the engagement measurement scales.

Table 5: ANOVA of Students’ Engagements and Academic Achievement in Mathematics

Measurement Model	Sum of Squares of Measurement Model	df	Mean Measure	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	1173.10	4	293.27	16.86	.0001
Residual	5706.13	328	17.40		
Total	6879.23	332			

Dependent variable: Academic Achievement. Predictors: (constant), (EGE), (EME), (COE), and (BEE).

Similarly, the engagement constructs that accounted for the significant impacts in predicting academic achievement of students in Mathematics after using the the localized virtual learning resources has been shown using the unstandardized (β) coefficient in table 6.

Table 6: Beta-coefficients of the Engagement Measurement Constructs

Model	Unstandardized (β)	Standardized (β)	t	Sig.	Lower bound	Upper bound
Constant	6.07		3.00	0.003*	2.09	1.27
Cognitive(COE)	.67	.12	2.19	.029*	.07	1.98
Egentic (EGE)	2.113	.37	7.12	.000*	1.53	2.7
Behavioural (BEE)	.96	.15	2.71	.007*	.26	1.66
Emotional (EME)	1.35	.22	4.19	.000*	.72	1.98

* = significant at 0.05 level.

Dependent variable: Academic Achievement. Predictors: (constant), (EGE), (EME), (COE), and (BEE).

Cognitive engagement (COE) shown statistically significant relationship with the corresponding academic achievement scores of students in mathematics [$\beta = .67$, $t(3) = 2.19$, $p = .029$]. The beta coefficient shown that academic achievement increases by .67 unit for every unit increase in the cognitive engagement or mental activities of the students with the localized virtual learning resources. Egentic engagement yielded the highest predictive evidence in the model. Its connotes learners’ exploratory inputs and contributions to the use of local language in the learning environment and shown statistically significant relationship with the corresponding academic achievement scores [$\beta = 2.11$, $t(3)=7.12$, $p = .000$]. Behavioural engagement (BEE) which includes social interactions with peers and learning environment shown statistically significant relationship with students academic achievement in Mathematics [$\beta = .96$, $t(3)=2.71$, $p = .007$], because first language (L1) has been integrated into the virtual learning environment through localization of PhET interactive simulations. Emotional engagement (EME) or students’ empathetic understanding yielded a statistically significant relationship and predicts corresponding increase in students academic achievement score in Mathematics [$\beta = 1.35$, $t(3) = 4.19$, $p = .000$].

3.3 Discussion

This study provides substantial insights into the interrelationships that exist among engagement measurement scales and adapted a valid and reliable students’ engagement indicators to measure students’ perceived engagement with localized virtual learning application in Mathematics. This reports is in line with [41], because the understanding of students’ engagement components and interact can influence the crucial advancement and integration of technology to Mathematics Education. Empirically, the study demonstrates the positive impacts of students’ engagement in language and content integration as predictors of students’ academic achievement and learning outcomes. According to the review[42], Mathematics tension and dreaded perception of difficulty of the subject matter can be reduced through the integration of socio-linguistic or biligual approaches to teaching and learning of

Mathematics. In support of the findings in this study, it has been reiterated that first language is a sociocultural and situated learning tool that fosters competence in Mathematical communication[43].

In this study, students' agentic engagement in localized learning resources yielded the highest predictable value of increase in academic achievements or learning outcome in Mathematics. This finding underscores the fact that students' agentic engagement skills and indicators such as sharing mathematical ideas to peers in class using L1, asking questions about Mathematics concept in class using L1, responding to answers of mathematics concepts when explained in L1, and communicating mathematical concepts to others in class using L1, foster a great potential in terms of enhancing learning outcomes. This is in line with the previous study in [44], as they emphasized that agentic engagement makes learning environment more personalized, interesting, and develops students' mindset to constructively contribute meaningfully to learning of Mathematics. In order to facilitate agentic engagement in the classroom, teachers should make learning supports for learners to be free and autonomous as they strive to exercise optimal engaging effort in the classroom [45].

Also the findings of this study indicated that students' learning outcomes are predictable by their emotional engagement in the classroom. Seeking learning scenarios that reduce boredom while promoting interactivity to elicit joy, and fun-like moments in the classroom are variables that improve students' academic achievement in Mathematics. This is similar to a study seen in [46] on relationship between emotional intelligence and mathematical competency among secondary school students. They opted that teachers' emotional intelligence can reduce the fear, anxiety and the dreaded perception of students about Mathematics, which translates to improvement in academic achievement of students in Mathematics. A previous study reported similar findings, that digital learning tools that are mediated by motivation-emotional-engagement in the learning environment promote learning outcome in Mathematics classroom[47].

This study shows that behavioural engagement such as students' manipulative skills, sustained attention and persistence in performing classroom tasks and use of local language have direct consequences on their academic achievements. This underscores the finding presented in a study on students' behavioural engagement during mathematics educational video game instruction[48]. They observed that behavioural engagement such as focus attention, and persistence are associated with better performance on an assessment of the skills being taught in Mathematics game-like learning environment. New evidence has been reported in[49], that behavioural engagement affects students' achievement growth on multiple levels; within the individual, in the classroom environment, and the interaction of the individual and classroom environment all relating to math outcomes.

The study shows that cognitive engagement is a direct measure of students' academic achievement in mathematics. The provisions for learning, interpretation of mathematical expressions, and symbols using a more familiar local dialect create mental patterns and establish cognitive schema and networks between primary (intrinsic) and secondary (learned) knowledge of Mathematics with the stipulated language of instruction. This is supported in the report made by[50], on students' virtual Mathematics learning. They observed that cognitive engagement promotes self-regulated deep learning strategies, higher-order thinking skills and frequent and interactive engagement between internalization and externalization of Mathematical concepts.

3.4 Conclusions

This study established a valid and reliable engagement measurement scale used to measure students' perception of impacts of localization of virtual manipulatives for teaching and learning of Mathematics. This is a predictive model that assesses the significant relationships between students' engagements in PhET interactive simulations that has been translated to indigenous language (efik/ibibio) in Nigeria for flexible learning in STEM Education. The relationships between the behavioral, social,

cognitive, and emotional engagement were found to be significant indicating that increasement in any type of engagements is consequential to increase in students' academic achievement in Mathematics, when taught using localized virtual learning tools. Thus the sssessment of students' engagement innovative digital learning tools that facilitates situated and experiential learning of Mathematics underscores seamless learning of Mathematics concepts. In this study various empirical evidences have shown that the integration of socio-cultural relevance and first order language with virtual learning tools facilitates students' engagement in learning Mathematics with a direct improvements on students' academic achievement in Mathematics concepts.

Code Availability: Access to PhET translation utility page was granted and five(5) unpublished sims were translated to efik/ibibio language and were used for the study.

Data availability and transparency: All data and materials as well as software applications or custom code support published claims and comply with field standards. The data generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations for ethical approval: All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards and principles for conducting a research in the institution. All research participants were guaranteed anonymity.

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