



**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-
CONFIDENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN
PINETOWN DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS**

BY

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2024

DECLARATION

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As the candidate's supervisor, I agree with the submission of this dissertation.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have supported me on my journey to higher education, especially those who have inspired and motivated me to pursue my dreams.

To my parents, who have always encouraged and nurtured me, I am grateful for your unwavering support and love. Your constant belief in me has been a source of strength, and I am deeply thankful for all you have done for me.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to all those pursuing their dreams and facing the challenges of higher education. May this work serve as a testament to the power of perseverance and hard work and inspire others to follow their passions and achieve their goals.

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ABSTRACT

Self-confidence (SC) and academic performance (AP) are crucial educational constructs. SC has been reported to empower individuals, enabling them to tackle challenges, persevere through setbacks, and pursue their goals with assertiveness and resilience. In contrast, AP has been reported to boost learners' self-esteem. Both are influenced by factors such as family background, school environment, and teaching quality. Although there has been an increasing interest in the relationship between SC and AP in the past decade, their relationship has not always been shown to be uniform across individuals and contexts. Using a mixed methods research approach, this study explores the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in KwaZulu-Natal, and the study addresses a critical gap in the existing literature.

Quantitative data from questionnaires administered to a diverse sample of 94 high school learners and qualitative insights obtained through interviews with 10 teachers were employed to generate data. Statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analyses were performed to identify patterns and trends in the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. Meanwhile, thematic analysis was used to formulate themes on factors influencing learners' confidence and educational outcomes. Findings indicate a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and academic performance. Socioeconomic background emerged as another influential factor, with students from supportive and resource-rich environments displaying higher levels of self-confidence and better academic performance.

Additionally, the study found that effective teaching practices, such as encouragement and constructive feedback, played a critical role in fostering self-confidence and academic success. Recommendations include equipping teachers with strategies to boost SC and promoting collaboration among stakeholders, including parents and policymakers. These insights guide teachers and policymakers in fostering confident, motivated learners.

KEYWORDS: Academic performance, high school, learners, relationship, self-confidence

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ACRONYMS

ANOVA - Analysis of Variance

AP - Academic Performance

APA - American Psychological Association

CAPS - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

CET - Cognitive Evaluation Theory

CONSORT - Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials

COREQ - Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research

DBE - Department of Basic Education

EITH - Everyone is a Teacher Here

FET - Further Education and Training

GPA - Grade Point Average

KZN - KwaZulu-Natal

LO - Life Orientation

OER - Open Educational Resources

PE - Physical Education

SAT - Scholastic Assessment Test

SC - Self-Confidence

SCT - Social Cognitive Theory

SE - Sport Education

SDT - Self-Determination Theory

SEL - Social-Emotional Learning

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

TEQSA - Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

TQ - Teacher Quality

TT - Traditional Teaching

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools.

1. Introduction

This study focuses on the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in the Pinetown district. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview, beginning with the introduction and background to contextualise the study. It outlines the purpose and motivation behind the research, highlighting its significance in addressing critical educational challenges. Key elements such as the problem statement, study location, research objectives, and questions are also presented to frame the investigation. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the approach and culminates a comprehensive synopsis of the study's framework.

1.1 Background

Self-confidence has been highlighted as the originator of most of the current crisis within the educational system, leading to learners having insufficient participation in lessons and unsatisfactory performance even after spending much time in the classroom (Akbari & Shahibzada, 2020). As such, it is a critical aspect of an individual's educational journey, significantly influencing their overall success and ability to develop their potential (Abdullayeva, 2024). Educational psychologists have long emphasised the significance of self-confidence in learning environments. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, self-confidence plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's beliefs about their abilities and influences their academic aspirations and achievements (Bandura, 2014). When learners possess high levels of self-confidence, they develop their potential well. However, in instances where self-confidence is low, learners become closed in and become easily frustrated when facing difficulties (Abdullah, 2019). This could impact the academic performance and success of the learners. Sufficient levels of self-confidence enable learners to express

opinions and make decisions to engage in positive activities, thereby supporting learners to achieve learning (Al-Hebaish, 2012).

Over the past decade, the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance has been a subject of significant interest. Previous research has indicated a positive correlation between self-confidence and academic achievement (Federičová et al., 2018). Learners with higher levels of self-confidence tend to exhibit greater motivation, resilience, and perseverance, factors that contribute to improved academic outcomes. However, the relationship is complex and multifaceted. While self-confidence is generally associated with positive educational outcomes, excessive self-confidence, bordering on overconfidence, may lead to complacency and hinder academic performance (Jones & Dunning, 2016).

Additionally, learners who are overconfident in themselves and their abilities may be an issue of concern as they may be running the risk of not wanting to improve or study due to the illusion that they “know it all”. On the contrary, if they are under-confident in their abilities, they may generate doubts about their abilities (Maclellan, 2014). Thus, it is crucial to strike a balance and comprehend the nuanced nature of self-confidence in the academic context, as it can facilitate or debilitate a learner’s academic achievement (Al-Hebaish, 2012).

Globally, research has shown that self-confidence and academic performance are interconnected, with self-confidence significantly impacting academic performance (Al-Hebaish, 2012). In his study on American high school learners, Ballane (2019) established that self-confidence is a vital determinant for learners’ academic performance and success, and thus recommended that teachers and parents must work collaboratively to enhance the confidence of learners, given that they are compounded with a diversity of challenges. Similarly, Moneva and Tribunalo (2020) also posit that for Asian learners, self-confidence shares a significant relationship with academic performance tasks. Learners with high self-confidence levels tend to approach academic tasks with a positive attitude. This suggests that self-confidence serves as a pivotal cornerstone in their academic success. As a result, teachers need to recognise self-confidence as an intangible but significant attribute to nurture in learners, as it can significantly enhance their academic performance. In the South African education system, where disparities in resource allocation and educational

opportunities persist, understanding the role of self-confidence becomes even more critical (Department of Basic Education, 2019). Addressing these disparities is essential for creating an inclusive educational environment that fosters self-confidence and supports academic success for all learners; however, minimal research reports on the relationship between self-confidence and learners' academic performance. Available literature in the context of South Africa reports mainly on other terms related to self-confidence, which include self-concept, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Moreover, in the South African context, the province of KZN presents a unique setting for such an exploration. As the second most populous province, KZN is characterised by a diverse socioeconomic landscape, with urban and rural areas facing distinct challenges (Pillay Lutge & Aldous, 2016). Understanding the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance within this diverse context can provide insights applicable to a broader educational spectrum.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The relationship between self-confidence and academic performance is a crucial factor in the educational arena and is a subject that has been widely studied by researchers (Gustavson & Miyake, 2017). The significance of this research is to serve insight into the impact of self-confidence on academic performance and to provide recommendations for schools to support learners in developing self-confidence. Self-confidence has been defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a task or achieve a goal (Axelrod, 2017). On the other hand, academic performance refers to the outcome of an individual's educational efforts, such as grades and test scores (Gustavson & Miyake, 2017).

Research has shown that self-confidence and academic performance are interconnected, with self-confidence significantly impacting academic performance (Hirsh & Innes, 2014). The Life Orientation learning area encompasses various aspects of personal development, including health, relationships, and safety, and is a key component of the curriculum in KwaZulu-Natal high schools (Swarts, 2021). Additionally, it provides learners with the opportunity to develop personal and social skills, as well as to explore various aspects of personal development (Department of Education, 2020). This subject plays a vital role in developing learners and their ability to successfully participate in the world around them. However, the impact of self-

confidence on academic performance in the Life Orientation learning area has not been widely studied.

This study unveils profound viewpoints on the intricate connection between self-confidence and academic performance. They inform the development of strategies to support learners in building self-confidence. This research contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance and provides a basis for further study.

1.3 Motivation of the study

Growing up in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), I witnessed firsthand the profound impact self-confidence can have on learners' academic journeys. As a learner, I navigated high school challenges alongside peers who struggled with varying levels of self-assurance. Some classmates seemed to easily tackle academic hurdles, exuding confidence in their abilities, while others grappled with self-doubt, which often hindered their academic progress. These observations sparked my curiosity about the underlying dynamics of self-confidence and its influence on academic performance. Reflecting on my educational journey, I recognised moments where my confidence played a pivotal role in shaping my approach to learning. During times of uncertainty or difficulty, a strong sense of self-assurance propelled me forward, enabling me to persevere through challenges and strive for academic excellence. Conversely, I empathise with classmates who faced obstacles rooted in low self-confidence, witnessing how it could manifest as avoidance behaviours or a fear of failure. These personal experiences ignited my passion for understanding the intersection of self-confidence and academic achievement, motivating me to embark on a research journey to unravel the complexities of this relationship.

As a budding researcher in the field of education, I am driven by a desire to contribute meaningful insights that can inform educational practices and support learner success. Throughout my academic endeavours, I have been inspired by teachers who prioritise fostering a positive learning environment where learners feel empowered to embrace challenges and confidently pursue their educational goals. In my interactions with teachers and school administrators in KZN, I have observed a shared commitment to addressing the diverse needs of learners within the region. However, conversations

often highlight the challenges of supporting learners who struggle with self-confidence, particularly in the context of academic performance.

Drawing from my academic background and research interests, I recognised an opportunity to bridge theory and practice by delving into the intricate dynamics of self-confidence and academic performance within Pinetown district high schools. By conducting empirical research that explores this relationship within the unique sociocultural context of KZN, I aim to provide actionable insights that can inform targeted interventions and support strategies tailored to the needs of learners in the region. Through this study, I aspire to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding learner well-being and educational equity, ultimately empowering teachers and stakeholders to foster environments where all learners can thrive academically and personally.

1.4 Significance of the study

The significance of the study on the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools lies in its potential to provide valuable insights into the factors influencing learner success. Education is a cornerstone of individual and societal development, and understanding the dynamics of self-confidence and academic performance can have far-reaching implications (Marsh & Craven, 2017). Firstly, this research can enhance educational practices by shedding light on the psychological aspects of learning. Self-confidence is a multifaceted trait that can impact a learner's motivation, persistence, and attitude towards learning (Guay, 2018). By dissecting its correlation with academic performance, teachers can tailor their teaching methods to foster a positive self-image in learners, ultimately optimising their learning experience (Juth, 2015). The findings can inform educational policymakers about the need for comprehensive programmes to nurture learners' self-confidence. Recognising that self-assurance plays a pivotal role in academic success can prompt the development of interventions and support systems that address learners' emotional well-being alongside traditional academic strategies (Reddy & Fadji, 2020). This holistic approach can lead to more resilient and self-assured individuals who are more adept at overcoming obstacles in education and life.

The study also holds implications for parents, as they act as a defining force in moulding their children's self-perception. Understanding the link between self-confidence and academic performance can empower parents to create a supportive environment that fosters their child's self-esteem. This insight can guide parents in offering constructive feedback, encouragement, and appropriate challenges to boost their child's confidence levels, thus positively influencing their academic journey (Okonkwo & Onwe, 2019). Furthermore, the research can contribute to the broader discourse on educational equity. If self-confidence is identified as a significant factor in academic performance, addressing disparities in self-esteem among learners from different backgrounds becomes imperative. This knowledge can drive initiatives to bridge the confidence gap, ensuring all learners have equal academic opportunities regardless of socioeconomic status or cultural background (Reed, 2020).

The study's significance extends beyond education, touching upon broader societal implications. Individuals with higher self-confidence are often more poised for success in various aspects of life, not just academically (Lombard & Simayi, 2019). Thus, the findings may offer insights into enhancing personal development, employability, and overall well-being, creating a more resilient and confident society (Chetty, 2019). The outcomes of this research hold real-world significance for teachers and policymakers. A deeper understanding of the link between self-assurance and academic performance can guide the creation of tailored strategies and support systems within high schools in the Pinetown district. Implementing strategies that nurture and bolster learners' self-confidence could lead to a positive ripple effect, fostering a more conducive learning environment and potentially narrowing academic performance gaps (Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014).

The inquiry into self-confidence as a determinant of academic performance holds significant implications for educational policy and practice. By unravelling the intricacies of this relationship, teachers, policymakers, and stakeholders can gain insights into designing targeted interventions to enhance learners' self-confidence and elevate academic achievements (Marsh & Craven, 2017). Additionally, a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping self-confidence may shed light on the broader sociocultural dynamics affecting educational outcomes in KZN (Reddy & Fadiji, 2020).

1.5 Problem statement

South African schools are grappling with a literacy and academic performance crisis, evidenced by poor learner outcomes in international and national assessments (Reed et al., 2020). Disadvantaged schools, particularly in low-income settings, struggle with insufficient resources, contributing to systemic inequities and learners' low self-confidence, which impacts their academic engagement (Lombard & Simayi, 2019). The education system, still affected by the legacy of apartheid, fails to support learners from marginalised communities, compounding these challenges adequately. Additionally, the teacher education curriculum does not sufficiently address the needs of poor learners or the realities of socioeconomic disparities, further impeding efforts to improve learner outcomes (Chetty, 2019).

Low self-confidence has been identified as a key factor affecting learners' academic performance, particularly in critical subjects such as mathematics (Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014). Beyond structural issues, social challenges such as bullying and school violence also erode learners' self-esteem, leading to emotional, psychological, and academic consequences (Mathaba, 2014). When learners are subjected to bullying, their ability to cope with everyday academic tasks is significantly diminished, further compounding existing barriers to learning (Mabatha, 2013). Conversely, interventions that enhance self-confidence, such as effective physical education programs, have positively impacted learners' academic performance and overall well-being, emphasising holistically addressing this issue (Guay, 2018).

In KwaZulu-Natal, specifically in Pinetown district high schools, there is an urgent need to explore the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. The region's socioeconomic and cultural diversity presents unique challenges, with disparities in resource access influencing learners' confidence levels and ability to succeed academically (Cindi, 2021). Cultural factors, such as community expectations and traditions, also shape learners' self-perceptions and aspirations, further affecting their educational outcomes (Reddy & Fadji, 2020). If these dynamics are not addressed, learners in Pinetown district schools risk falling further behind, perpetuating achievement gaps and limiting their future opportunities.

Examining the interplay between self-confidence and academic performance is critical to developing strategies that promote learner resilience, motivation, and success. Understanding this relationship can inform targeted interventions that empower learners to overcome academic challenges and enhance their educational experiences (Marsh & Craven, 2017). By addressing the factors contributing to low self-confidence, this research aims to support learners' academic and personal growth in Pinetown district high schools and offer valuable insights for educational policymakers and practitioners.

1.6 Location of the study

The study is set in KwaZulu-Natal, specifically within the educational landscape of Phoenix schools in the Pinetown district. This region serves as a vital context for investigating the interplay between self-confidence and academic performance. Pinetown district contributes to the study's richness by encompassing urban and suburban settings, potentially revealing urban-rural disparities in educational experiences. Focused on quintile five schools, the research aims to delve into the unique dynamics of educational environments characterised by diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Phoenix, situated in KwaZulu-Natal, offers a rich tapestry of high schools representing various genders and ages. Gender dynamics may shape self-confidence and academic trajectories, while age-related variations could uncover developmental influences. This comprehensive approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the self-confidence-academic performance relationship across diverse learner demographics.

The choice of quintile five schools ensures a comprehensive exploration of the obstacles and prospects linked with academic performance in a setting often marked by socioeconomic disparities. Pinetown district's distinctive educational profile provides a nuanced backdrop for understanding how self-confidence influences learners' scholastic endeavours. Some of the social problems that exist in these schools are violence and safety concerns. Learners face rampant violence, bullying, and gang-related activities, jeopardising both their physical and mental health while destabilising the educational atmosphere. These persistent safety threats fuel soaring dropout rates and cultivate an overwhelming unease among learners and teachers.

By narrowing the scope to this specific location, the research aims to generate insights that can apply to similar contexts while acknowledging the unique characteristics of KwaZulu-Natal high schools. Including learners from different genders and age groups enhances the study's breadth, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in the diverse educational landscape of Phoenix schools in the Pinetown district. Ultimately, the study's location in KwaZulu-Natal's Phoenix schools within the Pinetown district aligns with the researcher's goal of contributing to the broader academic discourse and offering insights and recommendations tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities in this distinctive educational setting. The research includes **Eastbury Secondary School** and **Phoenix Technical School**, which have a learner enrollment ranging from 620 to 700 learners. The teaching staff at these schools ranges from 20 to 30 teachers. Additionally, both institutions operate as fee-paying schools.

1.7 Objectives

- 1.4.1 To explore Pinetown district high school learners' perceived self-confidence and academic performance.
- 1.4.2 To determine how learners' perceived self-confidence relates to academic performance.
- 1.4.3 To determine the factors influencing the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools.

1.8 Questions to be asked

- 1.4.4 What is the perceived self-confidence of learners in Pinetown district high schools?
- 1.4.5 How does self-confidence relate to academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners?
- 1.4.6 What factors influence the relationship between self-confidence and learners' academic performance in Pinetown district high schools?

1.9 Methodology

This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm combined with a mixed-methods approach to offer a holistic and in-depth perspective of the research problem. It utilises

a convergent parallel design, allowing the integration of qualitative and quantitative data. Purposive sampling is employed to ensure the selection of participants most relevant to the study. The chapter also details the data generation methods and tools, the data analysis processes, strategies to ensure trustworthiness, and the ethical considerations underpinning the research.

1.10 Overview of the study

The framework of this study includes the following six chapters:

Chapter One introduces the study, focusing on the relevance of educational psychology in understanding the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. It explores the historical context of the topic and its development, providing a foundation for the research's purpose. The study's motivation and significance are highlighted, emphasising the potential for educational improvements. Objectives and research questions are outlined, guiding the investigation into the interplay between self-confidence and academic achievement. The chapter wraps up with an overview of the subsequent chapters, setting the stage for the study's progression.

Chapter Two comprehensively reviews the literature relevant to self-confidence and academic performance. It discusses the topic's historical evolution, establishing a foundation for the study. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is introduced as the guiding theoretical framework, emphasising autonomy, competence, and relatedness as motivational drivers. Current research is critically analysed, identifying strengths, limitations, and gaps the study seeks to address. The chapter synthesises the literature to align the study's objectives with SDT, providing a strong theoretical basis for the research.

Chapter Three details the research methodologies, emphasising the interpretivist paradigm and a mixed methods approach. The convergent parallel design integrates qualitative and quantitative data for a holistic analysis. Data collection methods, including interviews and questionnaires, are discussed alongside ethical considerations like informed consent and confidentiality. Validity and rigour are addressed through methodological transparency and systematic analysis. The chapter

concludes by reflecting on research challenges and limitations, providing transparency in the research process.

Chapter Four presents the study's results, divided into quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative analysis reveals correlations between learners' self-confidence levels and academic performance, highlighting significant trends. Qualitative insights from teacher interviews explore contextual factors, such as teaching methods and interpersonal relationships, that influence self-confidence and achievement. The findings are synthesised to comprehensively understand the interplay between self-confidence and academic outcomes. This chapter establishes a foundation for discussing the implications of the conclusions of the next chapter.

Chapter Five discusses the study's findings, positioning them within the broader landscape of established literature and theoretical frameworks. It analyses quantitative results, highlighting significant correlations and possible causes, including socioeconomic and environmental factors. Qualitative findings provide insights into classroom dynamics, teacher feedback, and peer interactions that influence self-confidence. Integrating both data sets offers a nuanced understanding of the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. The chapter provides practice recommendations, addressing study limitations and suggesting future research directions.

Chapter Six synthesises the study's findings, summarising the objectives, methodologies, and key results. It discusses theoretical and practical implications and recommends ways for teachers and policymakers to enhance learners' self-confidence. Reflections on the research process address challenges and lessons learned, providing a critical evaluation of the study. The chapter concludes with thoughts on the importance of self-confidence in education and the study's contribution to the field. This closing section underscores the study's significance and potential to inform future research and interventions.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter serves as the foundation for the entire study, beginning with an introduction that outlines the background and context. The purpose of the study is

clearly defined, emphasising the motivation behind undertaking this research. The significance of the study is highlighted, illustrating its relevance and potential impact. A succinct problem statement articulates the specific issues the research aims to address. Clear objectives are laid out to guide the study, accompanied by well-formulated research questions. The location of the study is identified, offering context to the research setting. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive rundown, offering readers an overview of the study's structure and content. This summary encapsulates the key elements introduced in the chapter, setting the stage for the subsequent exploration of the research topic. The following chapter presents the literature review and outlines the theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the erstwhile chapter, the researcher established the groundwork for the study by introducing the background and context, defining the research purpose, and articulating the significance and potential impact of the study. The problem statement, objectives, and research questions guiding the investigation were presented. The study's location was also identified, providing essential context to the research setting. The chapter draws to a close with an overview that sets the stage for the detailed exploration of the following research topics. This foundation paves the way for the next chapter, where the researcher will delve deeper into the comprehensive literature review. The review starts by tracing the historical evolution of the subject, emphasising key milestones and developments that have shaped contemporary academic discourse. By identifying gaps, contradictions, and emerging trends in the literature, this chapter sets the stage for the study's contribution to the field. Central to this review is the introduction of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the primary theoretical framework guiding the research. The chapter delves into the essential psychological needs identified by SDT—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—and examines how these needs drive motivation and influence academic outcomes. The review further explores the concept of self-confidence within the SDT framework, analysing the role of social influences such as parental support, peer interactions, and teacher encouragement in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic performance.

2.1.1 The definition of self-confidence and academic performance.

Self-confidence and academic performance are crucial educational constructs with multifaceted definitions and intricate interconnections. Understanding their definitions and their nuanced relationship is essential for educational psychologists, teachers, and policymakers. Self-confidence has been defined in several ways throughout the literature. Self-confidence is a multifaceted construct often defined as an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish tasks and achieve goals in various domains of life, including academic pursuits (Bandura, 2012). According to the American Psychological Association (2020), self-confidence is believing in one's abilities, qualities, and judgment. It empowers individuals to tackle challenges, persevere

through setbacks, and pursue their goals with assertiveness and resilience. In addition, as people learn and make decisions, they gain specific feedback about their abilities and thus develop beliefs in those abilities, which are described as self-confidence (Pajares, 2012).

Self-confidence encompasses not its aspects, such as problem-solving skills and academic knowledge, but inductive components, such as motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety levels (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Moreover, self-confidence is not static but can fluctuate depending on situational factors, feedback, and personal experiences (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Self-confidence significantly predicts academic performance in various subject areas (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014). Self-confidence plays a crucial role in the academic performance of learners. Understanding how self-confidence is defined and measured is essential to explore its relationship with academic performance, especially among Pinetown district high schools.

Academic performance refers to learning and educational achievement outcomes, often measured by grades, standardised test scores, and other assessments (Hattie, 2012). It reflects learners' mastery of curriculum content, skills acquisition, and cognitive development within a particular educational context (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Academic performance is influenced by various factors, including individual characteristics, family background, school environment, teaching quality, and peer interactions (Reyes & Brackett, 2012). Furthermore, academic performance is not limited to traditional measures but also encompasses broader indicators of success, such as critical thinking abilities, problem-solving skills, creativity, and lifelong learning attitudes (Sternberg, 2017). Thus, a comprehensive understanding of academic performance extends beyond mere grades to encompass holistic educational outcomes that prepare learners for future endeavours (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015).

Karimi and Saadatmand (2014) demonstrated a significant correlation between educational motivation and self-confidence. The relationship between self-confidence and academic performance is complex and bidirectional, with each influencing the other in a dynamic interplay (Multon, 2011). Higher levels of self-confidence are associated with better academic performance, as confident learners tend to set higher

goals, exert more significant effort, persist in the face of challenges, and seek out learning opportunities (Chemers, 2011). Conversely, academic success can bolster learners' self-confidence, reinforce their beliefs in their abilities, and motivate further achievement (Guay, 2010). Self-confidence serves as a mediator between various psychosocial factors and academic performance outcomes. For example, highly self-confident learners are more resilient to academic setbacks, such as failure or criticism. They are better equipped to cope with stress and anxiety, enhancing their academic performance (Galla, 2014). However, the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance is not uniform across individuals and contexts. Cultural differences, socioeconomic status, gender norms, and educational experiences can moderate this relationship, highlighting the importance of considering diverse learner populations (Else-Quest, 2012).

While self-confidence is widely regarded as a positive psychological trait associated with academic success, excessive or inflated self-confidence commonly referred to as overconfidence, can introduce certain vulnerabilities into the learning process. Overconfident learners may overestimate their abilities, underestimate the difficulty of academic tasks, or dismiss the need for preparation and feedback, thereby impeding academic performance (Zajacova et al., 2017). This phenomenon can result in complacency, where learners adopt a false sense of security and invest less effort in studying or goal-setting, believing that success is assured regardless of input. In such cases, self-confidence no longer functions as a motivational resource but becomes a barrier to growth, masking skill deficits and limiting opportunities for improvement (Chen et al., 2019).

Research has shown that when self-perceptions are not grounded in accurate self-assessment, learners are less likely to seek help, revise learning strategies, or respond adaptively to failure (Zheng et al., 2022). This disconnect between perceived and actual competence is particularly detrimental in high-stakes academic environments where effort, metacognition, and resilience are critical for sustained success. Overconfident learners may also demonstrate reduced responsiveness to feedback, which weakens the feedback loop essential for effective learning and performance monitoring (Hovardas & Kyza, 2020). Cultural and educational contexts that overemphasise self-belief without equally promoting reflection and accountability

may inadvertently reinforce these tendencies. To mitigate these risks, educators must adopt balanced approaches that foster accurate self-appraisal alongside confidence-building. This includes teaching learners how to interpret performance data, reflect on mistakes, and engage in realistic goal setting strategies that support calibrated confidence rather than blind optimism (Peters & Kitsantas, 2016). Therefore, while self-confidence is undeniably valuable, it is most effective when accompanied by self-awareness, humility, and a growth-oriented mindset.

2.1.2 Historical perspectives on the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance.

Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance has a rich historical backdrop, marked by evolving theories and paradigms in educational psychology. Understanding the historical perspectives sheds light on the development of this field and provides insights into contemporary research and practice. In the early 20th century, educational psychology emerged as scholars began to examine the psychological factors influencing learning and academic achievement. Researchers such as Thorndike and Dewey laid the groundwork for understanding the role of motivation, cognition, and self-beliefs in educational outcomes (Dewey, 1913; Thorndike, 1910). However, explicit discussions on self-confidence and its relationship with academic performance were relatively limited during this period.

The mid-20th century saw the rise of behaviourism, which emphasised observable behaviours and external stimuli as determinants of learning (Skinner, 1953). While behaviourism dominated educational psychology for several decades, scholars like Albert Bandura challenged its principles by introducing Social Cognitive Theory and the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy, a foundational element of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organise and execute the actions required to achieve specific outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). In educational contexts, self-efficacy plays a critical role in shaping learners' motivation, emotional regulation, resilience, and ultimately, their academic success. Learners with high self-efficacy are more likely to embrace challenging tasks, exert sustained effort, and recover from setbacks attributes essential for academic perseverance (Zheng et al., 2022). their performance and respond to outcomes.

In the context of this study, which explores the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance, self-efficacy offers a nuanced understanding of learner behaviour. While self-confidence can be broadly defined as a generalised sense of self-belief, self-efficacy is task-specific, meaning it is directly tied to particular academic demands such as solving a mathematics problem, writing an essay, or preparing for exams (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). This distinction is crucial because a learner may feel confident in general but still lack efficacy in specific subjects or skills. Furthermore, research has shown that self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic achievement across age groups and educational contexts, often mediating the relationship between other psychological constructs (like motivation and engagement) and academic outcomes (Usher & Schunk, 2018). Importantly, the relevance of self-efficacy becomes even more pronounced in socioeconomically diverse settings such as South African public schools, where learners may face structural and emotional barriers that undermine their belief in their own academic abilities. Strengthening self-efficacy through targeted interventions such as goal setting, progress monitoring, and peer modelling can thus significantly enhance learner performance and persistence (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

In recent decades, research has delved deeper into the specific construct of self-confidence and its implications for academic performance. Scholars have employed advanced methodologies, including longitudinal studies, experimental designs, and neuroimaging techniques, to elucidate this relationship's mechanisms (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Contemporary perspectives emphasise the intricate interplay between cognitive and motivational factors in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic performance. The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and the expectancy-value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002) provide frameworks for understanding how intrinsic motivation, goal orientation, and perceived competence influence learning and achievement.

Furthermore, researchers have recognised the importance of cultural and contextual elements in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic outcomes. Studies have explored how cultural norms, societal expectations, and educational practices impact learners' beliefs in their abilities and subsequent performance (Else-Quest, 2012). This diversity awareness underscores the need for culturally responsive interventions and

support systems in education. Over the past decade, the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance has been a subject of significant interest. The historical perspectives within this timeframe offer insights into the evolving understanding of how self-confidence influences academic success. Stankov (2014) underscored that confidence is the strongest non-cognitive predictor of academic achievement. Karimi and Saadatmand (2014) demonstrated a significant correlation between educational motivation and self-confidence in learners, linking higher self-confidence to better academic achievement.

2.1.3 The development of self-confidence and academic performance across the lifespan.

Understanding the development of self-confidence and its relationship with academic performance across the lifespan is crucial for teachers, psychologists, and policymakers. Research indicates that these constructs undergo significant changes from childhood to adulthood, influenced by various internal and external factors. Stankov (2014) highlighted that confidence is an essential predictor of achievement, accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in academic performance. This finding underscores the importance of nurturing self-confidence from an early age. As individuals transition into adulthood, their self-confidence becomes more nuanced, influenced by a broader range of experiences, including higher education and professional endeavours.

During early childhood and adolescence, self-confidence takes shape and is heavily influenced by environmental factors, such as family support and school experiences. During early childhood, self-confidence emerges as children develop a sense of self and agency. Drawing from contemporary developmental psychology, researcher Santrock (2019) affirms Erikson's theory, highlighting that children aged 3 to 6 years engage in the initiative versus guilt stage, where they actively explore their capabilities and undertake new challenges. Positive experiences during this stage, such as supportive environments and caregiver encouragement, contribute to self-confidence development (García & Pintrich, 2014). Early academic experiences, such as success in preschool activities and positive teacher feedback, lay the foundation for academic self-concept and future academic performance (Rudasill, 2010).

In middle childhood (ages 6 to 12), self-confidence becomes more domain-specific, with children developing beliefs about their academic abilities, social skills, and physical competence (Harter, 2012). Recent studies indicate that academic self-concept undergoes a phase of increased stability during this period, shaped by academic experiences, peer interactions, and teacher feedback (Möller & Streblov, 2019; Jansen, 2017). Contemporary research underscores the predictive nature of children's academic self-concept on their future academic performance, underscoring the critical need for early interventions to cultivate self-beliefs (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Parker, 2020).

Adolescence is a critical period marked by significant changes in self-concept and academic motivation. Building on Erikson's theory, contemporary research affirms that adolescents navigate the identity versus role confusion stage, wherein they confront existential questions about self-identity while endeavouring to cultivate competence and purpose (Schwartz, 2011; Meeus, 2010). In line with current research, it is recognised that during this developmental stage, academic self-concept undergoes increasing differentiation as learners begin to form beliefs about their abilities within specific subjects and domains (Nagengast, 2018; Bruning, 2020). Contemporary studies emphasise the pivotal influence of social comparison processes and peer interactions on adolescents' self-confidence and academic aspirations (Wentzel, 2015). These dynamics underscore the necessity of factoring in social contexts to understand adolescent development. Research underscores that adolescence is marked by an increased sensitivity to social evaluation and peer influence, which can significantly impact academic performance and self-esteem (Crone & Dahl, 2012).

In adulthood, self-confidence continues to evolve as individuals navigate educational and vocational pathways. Research suggests that adult learners' self-confidence is influenced by past academic experiences, career trajectories, and personal beliefs about learning and intelligence (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016). Studies consistently highlight that adult learners exhibit more significant levels of self-efficacy and academic motivation when they perceive learning tasks as directly applicable to their personal and professional goals (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016).

2.2 Factors contributing to self-confidence development.

Self-confidence, particularly in the academic context, is influenced by many factors spanning individual, social, and environmental domains. Gaining insight into these elements is essential for teachers and policymakers seeking to promote positive self-beliefs and enhance academic performance among high school learners. Students who perceive themselves as competent are more likely to approach educational tasks with confidence and persistence (Schunk & Pajares, 2010).

Studies confirm that learners' self-confidence in their academic abilities is intricately influenced by various factors, including their experiences of success and failure, teacher feedback, and interactions with peers (Schunk, 2012). Contemporary research consistently underscores positive academic experiences, such as recognition for academic success or successfully overcoming academic hurdles, to bolster learners' self-confidence and inspire sustained effort and engagement (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Conversely, repeated failures or negative feedback can undermine self-confidence and lead to disengagement from academic pursuits (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016).

In the academic context, studies confirm that learners compare their academic performance, intelligence, and abilities with various reference points, including peers, siblings, and role models (Tiggemann & Slater, 2014). Contemporary research affirms that favourable social comparisons, wherein individuals perceive themselves as more competent than others, have been associated with increased self-confidence. In contrast, unfavourable comparisons often lead to feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-esteem (Gerber, 2018). Zareena (2019) highlights the crucial role of family support in strengthening the relationship between self-confidence and academic attainment. This finding underlines the importance of a supportive family environment in fostering self-confidence for academic success.

Recent research highlights the pivotal role of supportive relations. Contemporary research underscores that parental involvement, encouragement, and setting high expectations positively impact learners' beliefs in their academic abilities (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011). Similarly, recent studies confirm that teachers' feedback, praise, and faith in learners' potential significantly enhance their self-confidence and

academic motivation (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Conversely, contemporary research underscores parents' and teachers' lack of support or criticism can erode learners' self-confidence and impede their academic progress (Dee & West, 2011).

Research affirms that cultural and societal norms profoundly influence the development of self-confidence, shaping individuals' beliefs about success, intelligence, and personal worth (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). In collectivist societies, characterised by emphasising group cohesion and conformity, self-confidence is often influenced by familial expectations and societal norms (Na, 2010). Research underscores that stereotypes and societal biases rooted in gender, race, and socioeconomic status can significantly impact individuals' self-perceptions and academic aspirations (Cimpian, 2012). A study by Yuda (2022) found that self-confidence, academic stress, and coping strategies are interrelated and contribute to academic achievement in physical education classes. This underscores the importance of managing stress and developing effective coping strategies for enhancing self-confidence and academic performance. Rahimi (2019) investigated the factors affecting high school learners' self-confidence, noting that depression, fear of making mistakes, and external focus can negatively impact self-confidence. Conversely, positive teacher behaviours, such as humour and encouragement, can enhance it.

2.2.1 The relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in different academic subjects.

Stankov et al. (2014) found that self-confidence is a significant non-cognitive predictor of academic achievement, accounting for a notable portion of the variance in performance across subjects. Nurwanti and Sarniati (2020) reported a high correlation between learners' self-confidence and academic achievement in a speaking course, suggesting that self-confidence can be particularly influential in language-based subjects. Rahman and Arifin (2022) highlighted a positive relationship between self-confidence and mathematics achievement, indicating that self-confidence also plays a role in performance in more analytical subjects. Understanding the nuanced relationship between self-confidence and academic performance across various academic subjects is crucial for tailoring educational interventions and support systems to meet the diverse needs of learners. Research indicates that self-

confidence significantly shapes academic outcomes, but its impact may vary depending on the subject area.

For example, self-confidence may be crucial for academic performance in the Life Orientation learning area. This is because Life Orientation covers various topics, including health education, personal and social well-being, and career guidance (Mabusela, 2020). Learners who are more self-confident in navigating these different domains may be more likely to engage with the material and perform well academically. Furthermore, emphasising personal and social well-being in the curriculum means that self-confidence may be crucial for learners' overall well-being and satisfaction with their academic experiences.

Usta (2017) pointed out the direct relationship between self-confidence and motivation, which affects academic performance. This relationship underscores the importance of self-confidence in motivating learners to engage in and perform well across various academic disciplines. Yuda (2022) found that self-confidence, academic stress, and coping strategies are interconnected and influence academic achievement in physical education classes. This indicates that self-confidence plays a role not only in cognitive subjects but also in physical education. Physical education positively impacts the development of self-confidence and self-esteem, as found in a study of Grade VII learners at the University of Bohol-Victoriano D. Tirol Advanced Learning Center (Marquez & Platino, 2017). This underscores the role of PE in building self-confidence among learners. Raven and Pels (2021) reported that feeling competent in physical education promotes positive self-efficacy in adolescents.

Bessa (2021) found that the Sport Education (SE) model effectively improves high school learners' empowerment and self-confidence in physical education classes, in contrast to Traditional Teaching (TT) methods. This indicates the potential of specific educational models in enhancing self-confidence in PE. Physical education significantly enhances self-confidence and academic performance, mainly through developing body satisfaction, competence, and empowerment. Effective PE teaching methods and addressing psychological needs are key to boosting self-confidence and educational outcomes in learners. Mathematics is often perceived as challenging, and self-confidence plays a pivotal role in learners' ability to succeed in this domain. Studies have consistently found a positive relationship between mathematics self-

confidence and academic performance (Zeldin, 2015). Learners who believe in their mathematical abilities are more likely to engage in problem-solving, persist in facing difficulties, and achieve higher grades (Hackett & Betz, 2013).

In the realm of language arts, self-confidence also significantly influences academic performance. Research suggests that learners with higher self-confidence in reading, writing, and language skills tend to demonstrate better performance in these areas (Morgan & Fuchs, 2015). Self-confidence in language arts is associated with improved reading comprehension, writing fluency, and verbal expression (Stankov, 2010). Self-confidence in language skills positively predicts academic achievement, even after controlling for cognitive abilities and background factors (Baumert, 2012).

Self-confidence in science subjects, including biology, chemistry, and physics, is linked to academic success in these domains. Learners who express confidence in their scientific abilities are more likely to engage in inquiry-based learning, problem-solving, and scientific reasoning (Dweck, 2013). Research indicates that self-confidence in science predicts higher science achievement scores and performance on standardised tests (Multon, 2011). Interventions to enhance learners' science self-confidence have been shown to improve their academic outcomes and interest in STEM fields (Lent, 2018).

Self-confidence also influences academic performance in social science subjects such as history, geography, and sociology. Learners who believe in their ability to analyse historical events, understand geographical concepts, and apply sociological theories tend to perform better in these subjects (Pajares, 2014). Self-confidence in social sciences is associated with critical thinking skills, information processing, and the ability to draw connections between concepts (Duncan, 2016). Self-confidence influences learners' creativity, expression, and performance in the arts and humanities. Research suggests that self-confidence in artistic abilities, such as drawing, painting, music, and literature, is associated with higher levels of creative achievement and enjoyment (Sternberg, 2017). Learners who believe in their artistic potential are likelier to explore new techniques, experiment with different mediums, and produce high-quality work (Torrance & Goff, 2015).

2.2.2 The role of self-confidence in learners' choice of academic subjects and careers.

Contemporary research, exemplified by studies such as Wang and Degol (2013), reaffirms the positive correlation between self-confidence and learners' academic achievement and career planning. A notable portion of high expectations in career planning is attributed to self-confidence. Santos, Wang & Lewis (2018) emphasise the importance of self-confidence in one's chosen career for motivation and success, highlighting the role of self-efficacy in career decision-making. Selecting academic subjects and career paths is a critical decision that significantly influences individuals' future trajectories. Understanding the interplay between self-confidence and academic and career choices is essential for educational stakeholders to support learners effectively.

Self-confidence influences learners' choices of academic subjects, making learners more likely to select subjects where they feel competent and confident (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). For example, learners with strong mathematical self-efficacy are more likely to enrol in advanced math courses and pursue STEM-related careers (Pajares, 2014). Similarly, studies, such as those conducted by Guay (2010) and Wigfield (2016), highlight that self-confidence in language arts, science, and social sciences is crucial in influencing learners' decisions regarding related subjects and academic pathways. Conversely, research underscores low self-confidence and perceived barriers can deter learners from considering specific career paths, even if they possess the aptitude and interest (Byars-Winston, 2010).

Gender stereotypes and societal expectations also influence the role of self-confidence in academic and career choices. Research suggests that boys and girls may demonstrate differential levels of self-confidence in specific subjects and career domains, partly due to societal norms and cultural influences (Stoet & Geary, 2018). For example, boys may exhibit higher self-confidence in STEM subjects, while girls may demonstrate greater confidence in language arts and social sciences (Else-Quest, 2012). These gender differences in self-confidence can contribute to disparities in academic and career choices, perpetuating gender imbalances in specific fields. Research confirms that supportive environments encompass parental encouragement, teacher support, and practical career guidance are pivotal in

bolstering learners' self-confidence and facilitating informed academic and career choices (Wigfield, 2016; Trusty, 2004). These factors create a nurturing context that empowers learners to explore their interests and capabilities while making well-informed decisions about their academic and professional trajectories.

2.3 The relationship between self-confidence and academic test anxiety.

Academic test anxiety, characterised by apprehension and tension before or during examinations, is a common phenomenon among learners and can significantly impact academic performance. Understanding the relationship between self-confidence and test anxiety is crucial for teachers and psychologists in developing effective interventions to support learners in managing stress and achieving educational success. Duraku and Hoxha (2018) found that higher levels of self-esteem, closely related to self-confidence, are associated with higher learner success and lower test anxiety among university and high school learners. Raufelder and Ringeisen (2016) reported that academic self-efficacy fully mediates the association between academic self-concept (a component of self-confidence) and test anxiety.

Research suggests a negative correlation between self-confidence and academic test anxiety (Putwain, 2013). Research confirms that higher levels of self-confidence are indeed associated with lower levels of test anxiety (Putwain, 2013). Learners with high self-efficacy in academic tasks tend to approach tests confidently and optimistically, thereby reducing anxiety levels (Zeidner, 2014). Conversely, low self-confidence is often accompanied by heightened test anxiety, as learners may doubt their capabilities and worry about their performance (Zeidner, 2014). This negative relationship underscores the importance of fostering self-confidence as a protective factor against test anxiety. Doubts about their capabilities can exacerbate feelings of vulnerability, contributing to elevated levels of anxiety in academic contexts. Recognising these dynamics is crucial for developing targeted interventions to support learners' psychological well-being and academic achievement.

Contemporary research highlights that self-confidence significantly shapes learners' coping strategies to manage test anxiety (Putwain, 2013; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Learners with high self-confidence are more likely to use adaptive coping strategies, such as active problem-solving, seeking social support, and positive self-talk, to

alleviate anxiety and enhance performance (Zeidner & Matthews, 2016). In contrast, research supports the observation that learners with low self-confidence may indeed resort to maladaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, rumination, and self-handicapping, which can exacerbate test anxiety and undermine performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Putwain, 2013). Therefore, interventions to enhance self-confidence can equip learners with practical coping skills to manage test-related stressors.

2.4 The role of self-confidence in academic motivation and engagement.

González and Paoloni (2014) revealed that higher self-determination, a component of self-confidence, is associated with increased behavioural engagement and disaffection, predicting academic performance. As learners navigate the challenges of high school education, their beliefs about their abilities influence their willingness to persist in tasks, set challenging goals, and actively participate in learning activities. Understanding the relationship between self-confidence, academic motivation, and engagement is crucial for teachers and policymakers in designing interventions to enhance learner success.

Self-confidence is closely intertwined with learners' goal-setting behaviours, indicating that higher levels of self-confidence are positively linked to the establishment of ambitious and achievable goals (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Learners who believe in their abilities are likelier to set challenging academic goals and exert effort to attain them (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Research affirms that self-confident learners are better equipped to persist in facing setbacks and obstacles (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). At the core of self-confidence lies academic self-efficacy, which refers to learners' beliefs in their capabilities to succeed in academic tasks (Bandura, 2012). Academic self-efficacy influences learners' motivation and engagement by shaping their expectations of success and failure (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Learners with high academic self-efficacy approach learning tasks enthusiastically and persistently (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Conversely, those with low self-efficacy may display avoidance behaviours and disengagement, reflecting their uncertainty about their capacity to achieve success. Recognising the influence of academic self-efficacy on learning behaviours is essential for designing interventions that promote learner engagement and academic achievement.

The critical role of mastery experiences, which involve completing tasks and achieving desired outcomes, is developing self-confidence and academic motivation (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). When learners experience success in their educational pursuits, their confidence in their abilities grows, leading to increased motivation and engagement (Schunk, 2012). Positive social interactions and support systems contribute to self-confidence by affirming learners' abilities and fostering a sense of belonging (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Supportive relationships with teachers and peers enhance learners' motivation to engage in classroom activities and pursue academic goals (Wentzel, 2015; Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Conversely, negative social experiences, such as criticism or social comparison, may undermine learners' self-confidence and dampen their motivation to engage in learning.

2.4.1 The role of self-esteem in the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance.

Self-esteem, defined as individuals' overall evaluation of their worth and value, interacts closely with self-confidence to influence academic performance outcomes. Smith (2023) found that self-esteem moderates the relationship between sociodemographic variables and academic performance. This indicates that variations in self-esteem may influence sociodemographic factors impact learners' academic achievement, underscoring the need to consider both psychological factors and demographic backgrounds when analysing academic outcomes. Self-esteem interacts with self-confidence to shape learners' beliefs about their abilities and potential for success. While self-esteem reflects individuals' overall sense of worthiness, self-confidence pertains specifically to their belief in their capabilities to perform specific tasks (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Studies affirm that learners with high self-esteem are more inclined to demonstrate self-confidence in academic settings (Wigfield, 2015). Conversely, low self-esteem may undermine learners' self-confidence, leading to self-doubt and hesitancy in academic tasks (Harter, 2012).

Self-esteem is a protective buffer against the adverse effects of academic setbacks and challenges on learners' self-confidence and performance outcomes (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Orth (2010) suggests that learners with high self-esteem are better equipped to cope with academic failures and criticism. Positive self-esteem provides a foundation for learners to develop adaptive coping strategies in the face of academic

stressors (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Self-esteem mediates the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance outcomes, influencing how much learners' confidence translates into tangible achievements (Harter, 2012). Research suggests that self-esteem partially accounts for the variance in academic performance attributed to self-confidence, highlighting its mediating role in the relationship (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016).

2.4.2 The role of self-confidence in academic perseverance and resilience.

Akin and Radford (2018) noted that resilience and self-esteem contribute to learners' academic and social success, which leads to personal and professional success in adulthood. Academic perseverance and resilience are essential qualities for learners to successfully navigate the challenges of their educational journey. Self-confidence is crucial in fostering these qualities, empowering learners to overcome obstacles, persist in adversity, and achieve academic success. Self-confidence is a significant motivational factor that drives learners to persevere in their academic pursuits, even in the face of difficulties or setbacks (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Learners with high levels of self-confidence believe in their abilities to overcome challenges and achieve their goals, leading to increased motivation and perseverance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Conversely, low self-confidence may undermine learners' resilience, as they may doubt their capabilities and feel helpless in the face of academic obstacles (Schunk & Pajares, 2010).

Self-confidence is closely related to self-efficacy beliefs, which refer to individuals' beliefs in their capabilities to execute specific tasks (Bandura, 2012). When confronted with academic challenges, learners with high academic self-efficacy tend to exhibit perseverance and resilience (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Self-efficacy beliefs influence learners' goal-setting behaviours and persistence in learning tasks, further contributing to their academic resilience (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Self-confidence is indeed associated with developing a growth mindset, characterised by the belief that abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Learners with high self-confidence are more likely to adopt a growth mindset, viewing failures and setbacks as opportunities for learning and growth rather than insurmountable obstacles (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). This mindset fosters

resilience by encouraging learners to persist in the face of challenges, seek feedback, and embrace opportunities for improvement (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

2.5 The significance of self-confidence in academic success.

Yudho, Pratama, Julianti, Dimyati, and Iqbal (2022) found that self-confidence reinforcement by teachers significantly increases learners' cognitive abilities in collaborative learning, demonstrating the direct impact of self-confidence on learning outcomes. Kirmizi (2015) emphasised that self-efficacy, closely related to self-confidence, is the most important predictor of academic success, particularly among higher education language learners. The findings indicate that self-confidence is not only necessary for academic success but also acts as a significant facilitator in learning processes. For learners, especially high school learners, fostering self-confidence can lead to improved academic performance, better engagement in learning, and enhanced cognitive abilities.

Self-confidence is a key motivator for learners, driving them to set challenging academic goals and strive for excellence (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Learners with high levels of self-confidence believe in their abilities to succeed in academic tasks, leading to increased motivation and engagement (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Contemporary research validates the close relationship between self-confidence and academic self-efficacy, defined as learners' beliefs in their abilities to succeed in academic tasks (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). The significance of self-confidence in educational success is evident in learners' performance outcomes. Research indicates that learners with high levels of self-confidence tend to achieve better grades, standardised test scores, and overall academic performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Self-confidence positively influences learners' participation in class discussions, completion of assignments, and engagement in extracurricular activities, all of which contribute to their academic success (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Longitudinal studies have demonstrated the enduring effects of self-confidence on learners' academic performance trajectories. Research suggests that learners who develop and maintain high levels of self-confidence throughout their high school years are more likely to experience sustained academic success and pursue higher education opportunities (Multon, 2011).

2.6 The implications of self-confidence and academic performance for educational policy and practice.

Stankov, Morony, and Lee (2014) found that self-confidence accounts for a substantial part of the variance in academic achievement, underscoring its role as a significant non-cognitive predictor of academic success. This highlights the need for educational policies to focus on building learner self-confidence. Yudho, Pratama, Julianti, Dimiyati, and Iqbal (2022) demonstrated that self-confidence reinforcement by teachers significantly increased learners' cognitive abilities, indicating the importance of incorporating self-confidence-building strategies in teaching methodologies. Bickerstaff, Barragan, and Rucks-Ahidiana (2017) observed that learner confidence continually shifts due to interactions with peers and faculty, impacting motivation and behaviours associated with success. This suggests that educational practices should be adaptable to support fluctuating levels of self-confidence in learners. Reeve (2012) reported that Self-Determination Theory, which includes confidence in one's capacities, promotes learners' interest in learning and valuing education, leading to high-quality learning and enhanced personal growth. This underscores the importance of incorporating self-confidence enhancement in educational frameworks. Learners with high levels of self-confidence are more likely to pursue advanced coursework, participate in extracurricular activities, and engage in college preparatory programs (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Therefore, educational policies and practices promoting equity and access should prioritise interventions that enhance learners' self-confidence, particularly among historically marginalised groups (Reynolds & Crea, 2014).

Assessment and feedback practices significantly impact learners' self-confidence and academic performance (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; van der Kleij, 2015). Teachers should provide timely and constructive feedback that emphasises learners' strengths and areas for growth, promoting a positive sense of self-efficacy (Schunk & Pajares, 2010). Research underscores the importance of aligning assessment practices with learners' learning goals and incorporating opportunities for self-assessment and reflection (Panadero, 2017). The school climate and culture are critical in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic performance outcomes (Thapa, 2013). Schools should create a supportive and inclusive environment that values diversity,

fosters positive relationships, and promotes a sense of belonging among all learners (Fredricks, 2004). School-wide initiatives, such as peer mentoring programs, social-emotional learning curricula, and culturally responsive teaching practices, can help cultivate a positive school climate that supports learners' academic success (Reynolds & Crea, 2014).

Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding self-confidence and academic performance can influence their instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Therefore, professional development programs should provide teachers with training and resources to effectively support learners' social-emotional development, foster positive self-esteem, and promote a growth mindset (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Moreover, ongoing coaching and collaboration opportunities can help teachers implement evidence-based strategies and interventions that enhance learners' self-confidence and academic achievement (Reynolds & Crea, 2014).

2.7 Gender differences in self-confidence and learner's academic performance.

Understanding gender differences in self-confidence and academic performance is essential for addressing disparities and promoting equitable educational outcomes. Research has shown that gender can significantly influence learners' self-perceptions, academic behaviours, and achievement outcomes. Studies have consistently found gender disparities in self-confidence, with males often reporting higher self-confidence levels than females (Gentile, 2017). This difference in self-perception can impact various aspects of academic engagement, including participation in class discussions, willingness to take academic risks, and pursuit of challenging coursework (Gaspard, 2015). Furthermore, gender stereotypes and societal expectations may contribute to self-confidence, with males being socialised to exhibit confidence and assertiveness more than females (Else-Quest, 2012). Gender differences in self-confidence can also influence academic performance outcomes. Research suggests that males tend to outperform females in certain academic domains, such as mathematics and science, partially due to differences in self-perceived competence and confidence levels (Hyde, 2014). However, these differences are inconsistent across all subjects, and contextual factors, such as teaching practices and classroom environment, can moderate the relationship between gender, self-confidence, and academic performance (Pennington, 2016).

Sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping gender differences in self-confidence and academic performance. Cultural norms and expectations regarding gender roles may influence learners' perceptions of their abilities and potential (Eccles, 2016). For example, in patriarchal societies, females may face more significant pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, which can impact their confidence levels and academic aspirations (Stoet & Geary, 2018). Access to resources, support networks, and opportunities for skill development may vary based on gender, further contributing to disparities in self-confidence and academic achievement (Gentile, 2017).

Psychological factors, such as self-efficacy beliefs and mindset, also contribute to gender differences in self-confidence and academic performance. Research suggests that females tend to exhibit lower levels of self-efficacy in certain STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, which can affect their academic choices and performance outcomes (Stoet & Geary, 2018). Additionally, studies exploring mindset theories suggest that females may be more inclined to adopt a fixed mindset, perceiving abilities as innate and unchangeable (Yeager & Dweck, 2012; Gunderson, 2018). Understanding gender differences in self-confidence and academic performance has important implications for educational practice. Teachers should be cognisant of the potential impact of gender stereotypes and biases on learners' self-perceptions and academic outcomes (Gaspard, 2015). Strategies to promote self-confidence and academic success should be tailored to address male and female learners' unique needs and experiences (Pennington, 2016). This may involve providing opportunities for skill-building, fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment, and challenging gender stereotypes through curriculum and instruction (Eccles, 2016).

2.8 The effects of interventions designed to change self-confidence and academic performance.

Research indicated that psychosocial interventions could significantly reduce the number of learners receiving low grades and enhance self-esteem, confidence levels, and positive attitudes towards learning, thereby improving academic performance. A study showed that a self-development coaching program could have short-term improvements in depression and anxiety but did not significantly affect academic

performance (Aboalshamat, Hou & Strodl, 2015). This highlights such interventions nuanced and sometimes indirect impact on educational outcomes. Growth mindset interventions have been found to improve grades and increase enrolment in advanced mathematics courses among lower-achieving learners, indicating that changing learners' perceptions about their learning capabilities can positively affect academic performance. Interventions explicitly targeting reading self-efficacy have been shown to significantly improve reading comprehension, illustrating that targeted interventions can effectively enhance specific academic skills through boosted self-confidence (Milliner & Dimoski, 2024).

Various interventions have been developed to enhance learners' self-confidence levels. These interventions often target specific aspects of self-confidence, such as academic self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-concept. For example, social cognitive interventions, such as mastery experiences, social modelling, and verbal persuasion, have effectively enhanced learners' academic self-efficacy (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Additionally, mindfulness-based interventions and positive psychology approaches have been used to promote self-esteem and self-concept, improving learners' confidence levels (Galla, 2016).

Interventions designed to improve academic performance often focus on enhancing learners' study skills, metacognitive strategies, and motivation. For example, tutoring programs, peer mentoring initiatives, and academic coaching have provided learners with additional support and guidance in their educational pursuits (Levers, 2019). Interventions promoting a growth mindset and fostering a mastery-oriented learning environment have positively impacted learners' academic performance outcomes (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). These interventions emphasise the importance of effort, persistence, and resilience in achieving academic success.

Some interventions simultaneously target self-confidence and academic performance, recognising these constructs' interconnected nature. For instance, self-regulated learning interventions integrate strategies to enhance learners' self-confidence and educational skills, such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and strategic planning (Zimmerman, 2002). A study by Wilson and Narayan (2016) found that higher task self-efficacy and using learning strategies are associated with higher task performance. This suggests that self-regulated learning strategies are essential for

learners' metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural involvement in their learning process. These interventions empower learners to take control of their learning process, develop a sense of agency, and build confidence in their ability to succeed academically (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). Holistic interventions addressing learners' social-emotional well-being alongside academic development indeed have long-lasting effects on both self-confidence and academic performance (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Research on the effectiveness of interventions designed to change self-confidence and academic performance has yielded mixed findings. While some interventions have shown promising results in improving learners' self-confidence levels and educational outcomes, the magnitude of these effects may vary depending on factors such as intervention duration, intensity, and implementation fidelity (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Furthermore, individual differences in learners' responsiveness to interventions and contextual factors, such as school climate and socioeconomic status, may influence intervention outcomes (Durlak, 2011).

The findings from research on interventions to change self-confidence and academic performance have important implications for educational practice. Teachers and policymakers play a crucial role in supporting learner success by prioritising evidence-based interventions that have been shown to effectively improve learners' self-confidence and academic outcomes (Education Endowment Foundation, 2020). Interventions should be tailored to address the unique needs and characteristics of the learner population, considering factors such as gender, cultural background, and individual differences (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). Additionally, ongoing evaluation and refinement of interventions are essential to ensure their continued effectiveness and relevance in supporting learners' holistic development.

2.9 The impact of extracurricular activities on self-confidence and academic performance.

Research has shown that participation in extracurricular activities positively impacts grades in French and Mathematics and scores on non-cognitive skills tests, though not necessarily cognitive skills. This suggests that extracurricular activities can enhance specific academic skills, possibly through increased self-confidence

(Coulangeon, 2018). Involvement in extracurricular activities during middle school has been found to increase academic motivation, improve letter grades, and enhance competence beliefs. This effect is similar across gender and ethnicity, underlining the benefits of extracurricular activities in fostering academic motivation and a sense of competence (Im et al., 2016). Broader participation in extracurricular activities during the transition to high school can mitigate general and academic self-concept declines across the years. Participation in extracurricular activities is associated with better mental health and improved physical health in college learners, further indicating the positive effects on overall well-being, which may contribute to academic success. (Yao, Takata, Mack, & Roll, 2021).

Participation in extracurricular activities has been linked to increased self-confidence among learners. Recent studies affirm that involvement in extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and community service, significantly contributes to developing learners' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and leadership skills (Datu, 2018). The research underscores that through extracurricular participation, learners have opportunities to set and achieve goals, receive recognition for their accomplishments, and build positive relationships with peers and mentors, which can significantly bolster their confidence levels (Mahoney, 2014; Larson & Angus, 2011). Extracurricular activities can also impact learners' academic performance by fostering greater engagement and motivation. Activities aligned with learners' interests and passions can enhance their well-being and satisfaction with school (Schaefer, 2017).

Extracurricular involvement provides learners with valuable opportunities to apply academic knowledge in real-world contexts, reinforcing their learning and deepening their understanding of the subject matter (Shernoff, 2011). Engagement in extracurricular activities requires learners to balance their academic responsibilities with other commitments, promoting the development of time management and organisational skills. Studies confirm that learners who participate in extracurricular activities learn essential skills such as task prioritisation, effective schedule management, and meeting deadlines, which are crucial for academic success (Datu, 2016). Furthermore, activities with structured routines and responsibilities can help learners develop self-discipline and resilience, which are valuable traits for navigating academic challenges (Mahoney, 2014). Extracurricular activities contribute to learners'

social and emotional well-being, which, in turn, can impact their self-confidence and academic performance. Participation in clubs, teams, and other group activities allows learners to develop interpersonal skills, build friendships, and cultivate a sense of belonging and identity within the school community (Mahoney, 2014). Additionally, extracurricular involvement can protect against stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation, promoting greater psychological resilience and academic success (Mahoney, 2014).

Research on the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic performance outcomes has displayed assorted findings. While several studies have demonstrated positive associations between extracurricular participation and academic performance, evidence suggests negligible or negative effects (Mahoney, 2014). The impact of extracurricular activities on educational achievement may vary based on several factors, including the type and intensity of the activity, learners' level of engagement and commitment, and the availability of academic support and resources (Mahoney, 2014).

2.10 The role of technology in enhancing self-confidence and academic performance.

Technology has become increasingly integrated into educational settings, offering new opportunities for learners to engage with learning materials, collaborate with peers, and access resources. Through interactive and self-regulated learning, technology fosters learner satisfaction, academic performance, and functional performance. This demonstrates that technology integration can significantly enhance self-confidence and improve educational outcomes (Memon, 2022). Using technological resources in inverted classroom settings positively affects academic performance and attitudes, including value, self-confidence, enjoyment, and motivation (Romero & Angeles, 2023).

Personalised learning platforms leverage technology to tailor instruction to individual learners' needs, preferences, and learning styles. These platforms often use adaptive algorithms to deliver customised learning experiences, allowing learners to work at their own pace, receive targeted feedback, and engage with relevant and meaningful content (Pane, 2015). Research suggests that personalised learning can promote

greater learner engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy as learners experience success and progress at their own pace (Dynarski, 2013). Technology offers a wide range of digital tools and resources for skill development across various academic domains. For example, educational apps, online tutorials, and interactive simulations can allow learners to practice and reinforce key concepts and skills in mathematics, science, and language arts (Cheung & Slavin, 2013). By engaging in hands-on, interactive learning experiences, learners can build confidence in their abilities and develop mastery in challenging academic areas (Kebritchi, 2017).

Collaborative learning platforms enable learners to collaborate on group projects, share ideas, and collaborate on assignments in virtual environments. These platforms facilitate communication and collaboration among learners, promoting the development of teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills (Dillenbourg, 2014). Digital assessment tools, including online quizzes, automated grading systems, and instant feedback mechanisms, play a crucial role in providing learners with immediate information about their progress and areas for improvement (Means, 2013). Research suggests timely feedback can promote greater self-awareness and self-regulation as learners monitor their learning and adjust their strategies accordingly (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Technology enables learners to access a wealth of educational resources and information beyond the confines of the traditional classroom. Online libraries, digital archives, and open educational resources (OER) provide learners access to diverse learning materials, textbooks, and multimedia resources (Hilton, 2016). By leveraging technology to explore topics of interest, conduct research, and pursue independent study, learners can expand their knowledge and develop a sense of autonomy and confidence in their academic abilities (Jhangiani, 2019).

2.11 The impact of peer relationships on self-confidence and academic performance.

Peer relationships are crucial in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic performance. This underscores the importance of supportive peer relationships in enhancing self-confidence and educational engagement. Tetteh (2021) observed that peer pressure can lead to self-doubt and emotional development issues, affecting

learners' and teachers' academic performance. Understanding the dynamics of peer influence is crucial for managing its impact on learner self-confidence and educational outcomes.

Peer relationships provide opportunities for social comparison, influencing learners' self-perception and self-confidence. Contemporary research (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Brown, 2018) highlights the pervasive inclination among learners to engage in comparative assessments with their peers, encompassing evaluations of academic achievements, social status, and personal attributes. Favourable social comparisons, wherein learners perceive themselves as performing equivalently or superiorly to their peers, have been found to bolster self-assurance and drive (Jones & Lee, 2017; Wang, 2021). Conversely, unfavourable social comparisons may lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem, impacting academic performance (Schwartz, 2017).

Peer relationships can provide valuable support and encouragement, bolstering learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Indeed, peer support networks, including study groups, peer tutoring, and collaborative learning environments, provide invaluable avenues for learners to exchange ideas, seek help, and receive constructive feedback from their peers (Chiu, 2014; Li & Lerner, 2018). Positive peer interactions are instrumental in cultivating a sense of belonging and connectedness among learners, which fosters self-confidence and resilience (Davis & Smith, 2016).

Peer relationships can influence learners' academic engagement and participation in school-related activities. Scholarly investigations indicate a heightened propensity for learner engagement in learning and motivation toward academic attainment when they foster positive peer relationships (Chen, 2016; Kim & Park, 2023). Peer influence has been identified as a significant factor in shaping learners' attitudes toward school, study habits, and academic aspirations (Allen & Butler, 2014; Li & Lerner, 2018). For example, Learners tend to exhibit a greater propensity for active participation in class discussions, timely completion of assignments, and pursuit of excellence when they perceive academic success as esteemed and respected within their peer group (Jackson & Chen, 2019; Smith, 2022).

Peer relationships can also negatively affect learners' self-confidence and academic performance, particularly in peer conflict and social rejection cases. Scholarly investigations have indicated that peer victimisation, bullying, and social exclusion can significantly undermine learners' sense of self-worth and confidence (Espelage & Swearer, 2019). Learners grappling with peer rejection or social ostracism often encounter challenges in maintaining focus in class, participating in school activities, and attaining academic success (Hawker & Boulton, 2015). Additionally, peer conflict and negative peer interactions have been identified as contributors to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and disengagement from school, thereby exacerbating the impact on academic performance (Buchanan & Graham, 2018; Rivers & Smith, 2020).

Understanding the impact of peer relationships on self-confidence and academic performance has important implications for educational practice. Research by Wang and Degol (2017) underscores the significance of promoting inclusive environments where learners feel valued and appreciated by their peers, contributing to a conducive learning atmosphere that fosters both academic and socio-emotional development. Research conducted by Durlak (2015) supports the efficacy of such approaches in bolstering learners' self-confidence, enhancing academic motivation, and cultivating a supportive and inclusive school climate conducive to holistic development.

2.12 Factors that negatively affect self-confidence and academic performance - Bullying.

Bullying is a pervasive issue in schools worldwide, with detrimental effects on learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Bullying negatively impacts victims' social adjustment and school achievement, with about 48.4% of victims experiencing a negative academic self-concept (Tiliouine, 2015). Children who engage in bullying behaviour are more likely to struggle with academic engagement, lack motivation, experience lower self-esteem, and attain poorer academic results. This demonstrates the negative impact of bullying on both self-confidence and academic performance (Samara, 2021). Emotional intelligence and self-esteem negatively impact bullying activities, and there is an inverse correlation between academic performance and bullying behaviour.

Bullying can have profound psychological effects on victims, leading to feelings of fear, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Arseneault, 2010). Research by Modecki (2014) highlights the detrimental impact of bullying on learners' psychological well-being, emphasising the urgent need for comprehensive intervention strategies aimed at mitigating its adverse effects and promoting positive socio-emotional outcomes. The persistent nature of bullying can erode learners' sense of safety and security, making it difficult for them to focus on learning and academic achievement (Bradshaw, 2012). Bullying can disrupt learners' academic engagement and participation in school-related activities. Recent research by Espelage and Swearer (2018) underscores the pervasive impact of bullying on various facets of learners' educational experiences, emphasising the urgent need for targeted interventions to create safer school environments conducive to optimal academic engagement and socio-emotional well-being. Research suggests that bullying victims have a higher tendency to report lower levels of school connectedness and engagement, which can negatively impact their academic performance and achievement (Espelage, 2013). The stress and emotional distress resulting from bullying can impair learners' cognitive functioning and ability to learn effectively (Swearer, 2010).

The effects of bullying can extend beyond the immediate school environment, impacting learners' long-term educational outcomes and trajectories. Longitudinal studies have found that individuals who experience chronic bullying throughout childhood and adolescence are at increased risk for academic underachievement, school dropout, and disengagement from education (Ttofi, 2012). Bullying victims may also experience difficulties transitioning to higher education or entering the workforce, as they may lack the confidence and resilience needed to pursue their academic and career goals (Wolke, 2013). While bullying can significantly negatively affect learners' self-confidence and academic performance, certain mediating and protective factors may mitigate its effects. Studies by Holt (2016) emphasise the pivotal role of supportive social networks in mitigating the detrimental consequences of bullying, underscoring the importance of cultivating strong interpersonal connections within various spheres of learners' lives to promote positive outcomes and psychological well-being. Additionally, interventions focusing on building social-emotional skills, conflict resolution strategies, and positive coping mechanisms can empower learners

to navigate bullying situations effectively and maintain self-confidence (Bradshaw, 2015).

Addressing bullying in schools requires a comprehensive and multi-tiered approach that involves teachers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders. Effective prevention and intervention efforts should create a positive school climate, promote empathy and respect among learners, and implement evidence-based anti-bullying programs (Olweus, 2013). Providing targeted support and resources for bullying victims, such as counselling services, peer mentoring programs, and safe reporting mechanisms, is essential for mitigating the adverse effects of bullying on learners' self-confidence and academic performance (Bradshaw, 2019).

2.13 The impact of parental involvement on self-confidence and academic performance.

Parental involvement is positively associated with behavioural and cognitive engagement, which leads to academic competence and achievement. This highlights the importance of parental engagement in fostering self-confidence and academic success (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2016). Parental involvement also positively influences academic performance by increasing learners' self-concept and locus of control, underscoring its significant impact on academic performance and self-confidence (You & Nguyen, 2011).

Parental involvement in education encompasses a range of activities, including academic support and guidance. Studies conducted by Hill and Tyson (2017) reveal that learners whose parents are actively engaged in their educational journey, offering support with homework, providing resources, and monitoring academic progress tend to exhibit higher self-assurance and academic success. Studies by Fan and Williams (2017) highlight how encouragement and assistance from parents empower learners to tackle academic obstacles with confidence and resilience. Parental involvement contributes significantly to fostering a growth mindset and promoting academic success by providing a nurturing environment where learners feel supported and valued. Effective communication between parents and learners is essential for promoting self-confidence and academic success. Studies by Pomerantz (2018) highlight the importance of parent-child dialogues in shaping learners' perceptions of

their capabilities and potential. Furthermore, clear, and realistic expectations set by parents regarding academic performance can motivate learners to strive for excellence and develop confidence in their abilities (Jeynes, 2015).

Beyond academic support, parental involvement includes emotional support and encouragement, which nurture learners' self-confidence and resilience. Parental involvement enhances academic and emotional functioning in adolescents, influencing academic success and mental health both directly and indirectly through behavioural and emotional engagement (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Research indicates that learners who perceive their parents as warm, supportive, and responsive are more likely to develop positive self-esteem and self-efficacy beliefs (Ackerman, 2013). Studies by Skinner and Zimmer-Gembeck (2016) highlight the profound impact of parental warmth and affirmation on learners' self-perceptions and resilience in the face of academic challenges. By fostering an atmosphere of acceptance and belief in their children's abilities, such parental practices contribute significantly to learners' sense of worth and confidence, ultimately facilitating their ability to overcome obstacles and thrive academically. Active participation in school-related activities and events is another dimension of parental involvement that can positively impact learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Studies by Eccles and Harold (2016) highlight the positive influence of parental engagement in shaping children's attitudes towards learning and their sense of belonging within the school community. Additionally, Studies by Sui-Chu and Willms (2018) highlight the reciprocal nature of these interactions, where active parental engagement enhances communication and trust between all stakeholders.

The impact of parental involvement on self-confidence and academic performance may vary based on socioeconomic factors and cultural context. Studies by Lareau (2011) and Hill and Tyson (2017) illuminate how income, education level, and cultural background influence how parents interact with schools and support their children's learning. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that acknowledges and addresses the barriers marginalised communities face, including access to resources, cultural differences in communication styles, and systemic inequalities within educational systems. Studies by Epstein et al. (2019) and Hill and

Taylor (2018) shed light on how these factors intersect to create challenges for parents in actively participating in their children's education.

2.14 The role of cultural values and beliefs in shaping self-confidence and academic performance.

Cultural self-confidence education, embedded in learners' moral growth and academic progress, shapes their development by instilling correct cultural values and engaging them in meaningful activities. Cultural values and beliefs shape individuals' self-perception and identity, influencing how they view themselves about academic pursuits and achievements (Tovar-Murray, 2015). Studies by Stephens (2012) and Markus and Conner (2013) underscore how cultural beliefs and values shape individuals' perceptions of intelligence and competence, influencing their academic aspirations and behaviours. For example, in cultures prioritising collectivism and group harmony, learners may prioritise social relationships over individual achievement, leading to different perceptions of academic success and self-worth (Stephens, 2012). Cultural models of achievement and success vary across different cultural groups and can influence learners' academic motivation and performance. Studies by Chirkov (2018) and Li (2019) highlight how cultural emphasis on these values contributes to a positive academic mindset and a commitment to excellence. Conversely, cultural beliefs about intelligence as fixed or malleable can impact learners' beliefs about their capabilities and willingness to persist in facing academic challenges (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Cultural identity is crucial in shaping learners' academic engagement and sense of belonging in school. Studies by Phinney (2016) and Santos (2017) highlight the positive impact of cultural identity affirmation on learners' academic motivation and sense of belonging. Embracing and appreciating diverse cultural backgrounds can create an inclusive learning environment where all learners feel respected, recognised, and motivated to succeed academically. Schools that value and affirm learners' cultural identities are more likely to create inclusive learning environments where all learners feel respected, supported, and motivated to succeed (Gay, 2010).

Cultural norms regarding gender roles, family expectations, and societal pressures can influence learners' academic aspirations and performance. For example, in cultures where traditional gender roles dictate educational and career paths, learners may face unique challenges in pursuing academic success (Archer, 2012). Similarly, Studies by Sirin (2015) and Reardon (2018) illuminate how disparities in resources, such as access to tutoring, extracurricular activities, and educational materials, can exacerbate educational inequities. Culturally responsive teaching approaches that acknowledge and incorporate learners' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives can promote a positive sense of self and academic achievement (Gay, 2018). Studies by Mapp and Kuttner (2013) and Jeynes (2016) highlight the transformative impact of collaborative efforts in enhancing learner success by bridging the gap between home, school, and community.

2.15 The impact of teacher expectations and learner-teacher relationships on self-confidence and academic performance.

Good teacher-learner relationships enhance learners' self-confidence in learning, which positively impacts academic achievement. Teacher expectations have been shown to impact learners' academic performance significantly. Research suggests that teachers' beliefs about learners' abilities can influence their instructional practices, feedback, and support, ultimately shaping learners' self-confidence and academic achievement (Hattie, 2012). Studies by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Good (2015) underscore the powerful influence of teacher expectations on learner outcomes, emphasising the critical role of teachers in cultivating a supportive learning environment that fosters a belief in learners' potential.

Teachers can empower learners to excel academically and fulfil their aspirations by setting high standards and providing appropriate support. Teacher expectations may be influenced by stereotypes, biases, and preconceived notions about learners' capabilities based on race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status (Steele, 1997). A study by Spencer (2016) illuminates how the threat of confirming stereotypes can undermine cognitive functioning and diminish academic outcomes, particularly among marginalised groups. Studies by Delpit (2012) and Ladson-Billings (2014) underscore the need for teachers to reflect on their own biases and adopt pedagogical approaches that affirm diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. By

incorporating culturally relevant content, facilitating meaningful dialogue, and fostering inclusive classroom environments, teachers can promote social justice and empower learners from all backgrounds to thrive academically and socially.

The quality of the relationship between teachers and learners has significant implications for learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Positive teacher-learner relationships characterised by warmth, trust, and support have been associated with higher levels of learner engagement, motivation, and self-esteem (Roorda, 2011). A study by Rimm-Kaufman and Hamre (2010) highlights the profound impact of positive teacher-learner relationships on learners' socio-emotional well-being and academic achievement. Teachers' feedback and instructional practices can impact learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Yeager (2019) highlights the transformative impact of targeted interventions that promote a growth mindset and foster resilience in the face of challenges. Research by Dweck (2016) and Hong (2019) highlights the transformative impact of promoting beliefs in the potential for growth and learning. By emphasising the value of hard work and the understanding that abilities can be developed, teachers create an environment where learners are motivated to persevere through difficulties, ultimately fostering their academic performance and long-term success.

Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment requires intentional efforts to foster positive teacher-learner relationships, set high expectations, and address bias and stereotype threats. Studies by Sleeter (2018) and Howard (2020) highlight the transformative impact of such training in promoting inclusive learning environments where all learners feel valued and supported. Professional development initiatives are vital in advancing educational equity and fostering learner success by furnishing teachers with the mandatory knowledge and skills to recognise and address systemic inequities. Implementing restorative justice approaches and conflict resolution strategies can promote positive interactions and mutual respect between teachers and learners, contributing to a climate of trust and collaboration (Morrison, 2011).

2.16 The impact of self-confidence on learners' willingness to take risks in the classroom.

Higher levels of self-confidence are associated with a greater willingness to communicate in a second language both in-class and out-of-class settings, as found in a study by Lee and Lee (2019). This indicates that self-confidence can encourage learners to take risks in language learning environments. A survey by Bayat (2019) revealed no significant correlation between self-confidence and risk-taking among learners, suggesting that the relationship between these factors can be complex and influenced by other variables. Tikhonov and Jorgenson (2016) found that higher self-estimation of skills positively impacts the willingness to take risks, leading to better class performance among middle and bottom quantiles of college learners. This highlights the role of self-confidence in academic risk-taking.

Studies by Bandura (2012) and Pajares (2017) highlight how learners' perceptions of competence significantly influence their engagement in learning activities and willingness to tackle challenging tasks. By fostering a supportive environment that nurtures learners' self-efficacy beliefs through encouragement, positive feedback, and opportunities for success, teachers can empower learners to take academic risks, pursue learning opportunities, and achieve their full potential. Research by Zimmerman (2013) and Lent et al. (2018) highlights how learners with strong self-efficacy beliefs approach tasks confidently and persistently, demonstrating resilience in the face of obstacles. Conversely, Honicke and Broadbent (2016) highlight how low self-efficacy can lead to a fear of failure and a reluctance to engage in activities perceived as challenging or unfamiliar. Teachers can help learners with low self-efficacy build confidence, overcome avoidance tendencies, and develop a growth mindset conducive to academic achievement by providing targeted support, encouragement, and opportunities for success. Learners with a growth mindset tend to embrace challenges and view setbacks as opportunities for learning and growth, fostering a willingness to take risks. In contrast, learners with a fixed mindset may avoid challenges to protect their sense of competence, leading to a reluctance to take academic risks.

The classroom environment is critical in shaping learners' willingness to take academic risks. Hafen (2019) and Cohen and Lotan (2014) highlight how such environments foster a sense of belonging and reduce fear of judgment, empowering learners to take intellectual risks and engage in exploratory learning. Teachers who foster an atmosphere of acceptance and non-judgmental feedback enable learners to take risks without fear of ridicule or criticism (Klassen, 2012). By promoting the development of self-regulatory skills through targeted interventions and scaffolded support, teachers equip learners with the tools needed to overcome challenges, embrace learning opportunities, and thrive academically (Duckworth and Seligman, 2017). Conversely, learners with poor self-regulation may struggle to engage in academic risk-taking due to difficulties managing their emotions and maintaining focus (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2014). Studies by and Deci (2017) highlight how autonomy-supportive teaching practices foster intrinsic motivation and engagement, facilitating learners' willingness to step outside their comfort zones and explore new ideas.

2.17 The role of self-confidence in learners' ability to learn from their mistakes.

Self-confidence reinforcement by teachers significantly increases learners' cognitive abilities, suggesting that enhanced self-confidence can improve learners' ability to learn from their mistakes and succeed in the learning process (Yudho et al., 2022). The "Everyone is a Teacher Here" (EITH) learning model positively contributes to learners' self-confidence in learning, increasing their courage to argue, ask, and answer questions and their ability to elaborate on learning materials (Warsah et al., 2021). Studies by Honicke and Broadbent (2016) and Schunk and Pajares (2017) highlight how individuals' beliefs about their abilities shape their responses to challenges and setbacks. By cultivating a supportive classroom environment that fosters self-confidence through targeted interventions and positive reinforcement, teachers empower learners to embrace mistakes as integral parts of the learning process, fostering resilience and promoting academic growth. These individuals are more likely to approach academic challenges with a growth mindset, believing their abilities can improve through effort and perseverance (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). In contrast, Murdock and Miller (2018) and Dweck (2017) highlight how individuals' beliefs about their abilities influence their response to adversity and their willingness

to persist in the face of challenges. By providing targeted support, encouragement, and opportunities for success, teachers can help learners build self-confidence, embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, and develop resilience to navigate academic obstacles effectively.

Learners with high self-confidence are more likely to persist in complex tasks, even when they encounter obstacles or experience temporary failures (Duckworth, 2019). They view feedback as valuable information that can help them identify areas for improvement and refine their learning strategies (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2014). In contrast, Pajares and Urdan (2014) and Honicke and Broadbent (2016) highlight how self-doubt can undermine learners' willingness to engage with feedback, leading them to avoid situations where their abilities might be scrutinised. Teachers can help learners build self-confidence, develop resilience, and navigate academic obstacles effectively, fostering a growth mindset conducive to long-term academic success by providing targeted support, encouragement, and opportunities for success.

Zimmerman and Moylan (2019) and Winne and Hadwin (2013) highlight how self-confidence fosters a proactive approach to learning, where learners actively monitor their progress, identify mistakes, and implement corrective measures to improve their understanding and performance. By nurturing self-confidence through supportive feedback, encouragement, and growth opportunities, teachers empower learners to take ownership of their learning journey, develop metacognitive skills, and continuously improve. Fostering a growth mindset culture, where mistakes are seen as steppingstones for learning and progress, can empower learners to confidently tackle challenges and cultivate a constructive perspective on failure. Additionally, promoting a feedback-rich classroom environment and teaching self-regulated learning strategies can empower learners to become more effective learners who utilise mistakes as valuable learning opportunities.

2.18 The future of research on self-confidence and learners' academic performance.

Mimbarwati, Mulyono, and Suminar (2023) found that self-confidence positively affects learners' mathematical creative thinking abilities. This suggests future research avenues in exploring how self-confidence can be leveraged to enhance creative

problem-solving skills in various academic disciplines. Putwain and Sander (2016) studied how first-year undergraduate learners' confidence changes according to achievement goal profile, indicating a future research direction in understanding how self-confidence evolves during higher education and its impact on academic goals. These studies suggest a growing interest in exploring the multifaceted effect of self-confidence on educational outcomes. Future research is likely to explore the intersectionality of self-confidence with various demographic factors, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. Understanding how these intersecting identities influence learners' self-confidence and academic performance within the specific context of high schools is essential for developing targeted interventions and support systems (Sue, 2019). Longitudinal research can also shed light on the reciprocal relationship between self-confidence and academic performance, exploring how improvements in one domain influence the other over time (Marsh, 2018).

Researchers may explore the impact of various intervention approaches, such as social-emotional learning programs, growth mindset interventions, and culturally responsive teaching practices, on learners' self-confidence and academic outcomes (Durlak, 2011). Rigorous program evaluation studies are needed to assess the long-term effects of these interventions and identify best practices for implementation in Pinetown district high schools. Technology advancements offer new opportunities for evaluating and enhancing learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Future research may explore using digital tools, such as educational apps, virtual reality simulations, and online platforms, to promote self-confidence and facilitate personalised learning experiences (Kay & Greenhill, 2016). Additionally, innovative assessment methods, including real-time feedback systems and adaptive testing algorithms, have the potential to offer more accurate and timely measures of learners' self-confidence and academic progress.

Considering the growing recognition of the importance of equity and inclusion in education, future research will likely adopt culturally responsive approaches and prioritise equity-minded inquiry. As research on self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools continues to evolve, embracing interdisciplinary perspectives, leveraging technological advancements, and prioritising

equity and inclusion is essential. By addressing emerging trends and pursuing innovative research agendas, learners can advance the understanding of how self-confidence shapes learners' academic trajectories and inform evidence-based practices to support learner success.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In recent years, there has been a surge in focus on studying motivation and its impact on academic achievement. One theory that has gained significant attention in this area is SDT, a theoretical framework emphasising the importance of psychological needs in driving motivation and behaviour. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) asserts that individuals have three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This section aims to overview SDT and its role in fostering academic success. First, the section will define and introduce SDT, discussing its basic tenets and the nature of motivation and meaning within the framework. The study will then explore the reasons for choosing this theory and its potential applications in the context of academic achievement. Next, the researcher will delve into self-determination, examining the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in educational attainment. Specifically, the researcher will discuss autonomous and controlled motivation and their impacts on academic success. Additionally, the researcher will explore the relationship between psychological needs and mental health, highlighting the importance of fulfilling these needs in promoting well-being.

The study will then examine the role of self-confidence in academic performance, exploring the factors that contribute to self-confidence and its impact on academic outcomes. In doing so, the researcher will consider the influence of social factors such as parents, peers, and teachers in fostering self-confidence and academic success. Moving forward, the researcher will investigate the impact of academic achievement on self-determination, examining how success or failure in the classroom affects learners' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Additionally, the researcher will explore the relationship between self-confidence, self-esteem, and academic performance, comparing the effects of different types of self-belief on academic achievement.

2.2.1 Self-Determination Theory introduction and definition

SDT is a widely studied and applied psychological theory focusing on human motivation and personality development. SDT posits that individuals possess innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which, when satisfied, contribute to optimal psychological functioning and positive behavioural outcomes (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Edward Deci and Richard Ryan introduced the theory in the 1980s to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the nature of human motivation and well-being. Deci and Ryan's theory draws on empirical evidence from diverse fields, such as psychology, neuroscience, and social sciences, to thoroughly explain human motivation and behaviour (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). Deci and Ryan argue that when these needs are met, individuals experience greater well-being and are likelier to engage in behaviours promoting health and happiness. Conversely, when these needs are not met, individuals are more likely to experience adverse outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Vansteenkiste, Ryan & Deci, 2020). One key feature of SDT is the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation. Research shows autonomous motivation is associated with greater engagement, persistence, task performance, satisfaction, and well-being. In contrast, controlled motivation is related to adverse outcomes such as burnout, disengagement, and decreased well-being (Vansteenkiste, Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Critical comparisons between South African educational contexts and international findings reveal both convergences and divergences in how self-confidence relates to academic performance, with important implications for this study. Internationally, numerous studies have demonstrated that self-confidence often operationalised through academic self-efficacy is a significant predictor of academic engagement, resilience, and achievement (Zheng et al., 2022; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). In well-resourced educational systems such as those in Finland, Canada, or Singapore, learners benefit from environments that foster autonomy, provide consistent feedback, and offer emotional and academic support conditions that are strongly associated with the development of competence and self-confidence (Howard et al., 2021). These settings often implement structured learner-centred strategies that enhance intrinsic motivation, reinforcing the predictive validity of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

By contrast, South African public schools, particularly in provinces like KwaZulu-Natal, face challenges that are deeply rooted in structural inequalities. Studies conducted by Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2022) and Naidoo et al. (2019) illustrate how overcrowded classrooms, limited teacher support, and socioeconomic adversity erode learners' academic self-belief. Whereas autonomy and competence may flourish in supportive environments, South African learners often contend with external pressures such as poverty, family instability, and linguistic barriers that undermine these psychological needs. Furthermore, while international models of self-confidence typically assume a baseline of systemic support, the South African reality necessitates an expanded interpretation, one that includes resilience, community support, and context-specific coping strategies as components of confidence (Sayed & Ahmed, 2018).

2.2.2 *Nature of motivation and meaning*

Motivation is a crucial psychological construct that profoundly influences human behaviour, encompassing the drive to pursue goals, make decisions, and engage in various activities (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). It refers to the driving force that compels individuals to initiate and sustain actions to achieve their goals. SDT is a contemporary theoretical framework that seeks to explain human motivation and behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT posits two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Intrinsic motivation is defined by an individual's innate desire to participate in an activity driven by personal interest and enjoyment because they find it inherently enjoyable, interesting, or satisfying. In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to the external factors that influence an individual's behaviour, such as rewards or punishments (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

SDT suggests that meaning can also arise from engaging in activities that align with one's values and interests. Engagement in personally meaningful activities is strongly associated with intrinsic motivation and the experience of a sense of purpose in life (Baumeister, 2019). Understanding self-realisation, personal growth, and connection to something larger than oneself characterises Eudaimonia's well-being. Research has shown that pursuing personally meaningful activities has been consistently linked to higher levels of well-being, life satisfaction, and psychological health (Steger, 2012). Motivation and meaning are closely related in SDT because they both arise from

satisfying the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

2.2.2.1 Intrinsic motivation in fostering academic success

Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drive that originates from within an individual to engage in an activity purely for its inherent enjoyment or interest, without the influence of external rewards or pressures (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). In the academic context, intrinsic motivation is essential for fostering academic success. Learners who exhibit inherent motivation tend to experience greater enjoyment in learning, demonstrate higher levels of engagement, exhibit deeper involvement with course material, persist longer in their academic pursuits, and achieve superior academic outcomes compared to those who are extrinsically motivated or lack motivation altogether (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018).

Intrinsic motivation is crucial in fostering academic success, mainly through increased engagement with learning material. Intrinsically motivated learners tend to approach academic tasks with enthusiasm and a genuine desire to learn, leading to deeper engagement with the material (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Furthermore, intrinsically motivated learners are more inclined to seek out challenging tasks, pursue challenging tasks and persevere through obstacles, promoting the mastery of the material. These factors, in turn, can contribute to better academic outcomes, including improved grades and higher levels of achievement (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018).

Another way intrinsic motivation can foster academic performance is through increased self-regulation. Learners who exhibit inherent motivation are more inclined to take ownership of their learning process and engage in self-directed study (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018). They are also more likely to set goals and monitor their progress towards those goals, which can help them to develop the skills needed for lifelong learning. By contrast, learners lacking intrinsic motivation may encounter challenges in self-regulation, resulting in procrastination, suboptimal time management, and diminished engagement with academic tasks (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018).

One approach is to create a supportive learning environment that encourages autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Learners who perceive support in these domains tend to cultivate intrinsic motivation towards their educational pursuits (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018). Another strategy involves providing learners opportunities to explore and pursue their interests and passions within the academic setting (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018). When learners can explore subjects that align with their genuine interests, they are more inclined to experience intrinsic motivation and engage in deep learning (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This approach is efficient when combined with providing feedback and support from teachers, which can help learners develop a sense of competence and mastery over the material.

2.2.2.2 Extrinsic motivation in fostering academic success

Extrinsic motivation can be a powerful tool in fostering academic success. External rewards such as grades, praise, or tangible rewards can motivate learners to work hard and achieve their educational goals. Research indicates that extrinsic motivation can positively affect academic achievement in the short term (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018). One study found that extrinsic motivation, such as the promise of a reward, improved learners' performance on a math test compared to those who were not given an incentive (Gneezy, Meier, & Rey-Biel, 2011). A study found that learners who received praise for their efforts were more inclined to engage in academic activities such as studying and reading (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018). Extrinsic motivation can also help learners overcome obstacles and challenges. When faced with a difficult task, extrinsically motivated learners may be more likely to persevere and work harder to achieve their goals (Reeve, 2012).

However, the long-term effects of extrinsic motivation on academic performance are more complex. Although external rewards can produce short-term behavioural improvements, they often fail to sustain long-term engagement and intrinsic motivation. Studies have demonstrated that extrinsic rewards have the potential to diminish intrinsic motivation, which originates from within the individual. When learners are motivated by external rewards, they may become less intrinsically interested in learning and more focused on obtaining the rewards (Cheon, Reeve & Ntoumanis, 2018). In addition, extrinsic motivation may not be effective for all learners. For

example, learners with a strong intrinsic motivation to learn may not be as responsive to external rewards as less-motivated learners (Reeve, 2012).

2.2.3 The two types of motivation in Self-Determination Theory.

SDT is a widely researched theory that explains human motivation and behaviour. It distinguishes between two types of motivation: autonomous and controlled. Autonomous motivation arises when individuals participate in an activity because they perceive it as interesting, valuable, or personally fulfilling. Controlled motivation, on the other hand, occurs when individuals engage in an activity due to external pressures or rewards, such as avoiding punishment or gaining social approval (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation has important implications for various domains of life, including education, work, and health (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In educational settings, for instance, autonomous motivation is associated with better academic performance, greater creativity, and higher levels of well-being. In contrast, controlled motivation is linked with lower educational achievement and more negative emotions (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

2.2.3.1 Autonomous motivation in Self-Determination Theory and how it relates to academic performance.

SDT posits that individuals are inherently motivated to grow and develop and that satisfying basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness can foster autonomous motivation. Autonomous motivation is a type of intrinsic motivation characterised by a sense of choice and personal endorsement of the activity, and it is related to positive outcomes such as higher academic performance (Deci & Ryan, 2017). Autonomous motivation and academic performance studies have consistently found a positive relationship between autonomous motivation and academic performance. For example, a survey by Ratelle, Guay, Vallerand, Larose and Senécal (2019) confirmed that autonomous motivation was positively associated with academic achievement among college learners. Similarly, a study by Howard, Gagné, Morin and Forest (2020) revealed that autonomous motivation significantly predicted academic achievement among high school learners.

Autonomous motivation may lead to better academic performance because it fosters a deeper engagement with educational tasks. Autonomously motivated individuals are more likely to engage in the activity for its inherent enjoyment and personal satisfaction than for external rewards or pressures (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). An investigation by Jang et al. (2010) found that autonomous motivation encourages learners to engage in deeper processing of academic material, resulting in a better understanding and, consequently, improved academic performance. Furthermore, autonomous motivation may lead to a more positive emotional experience during academic tasks, further facilitating learning and performance. A recent study by Ryan, Deci and Grolnick (2020) found that autonomously motivated individuals tend to experience more positive affect and less negative emotions, such as anxiety or boredom, during the activity. Deci and Ryan (2014) revealed that individuals who experience positive emotional states because of autonomous motivation tend to develop a more favourable attitude toward activities, leading to increased persistence and improved performance.

Finally, autonomous motivation may improve academic performance because it fosters greater self-efficacy. When individuals are autonomously motivated, they have a sense of personal control over the activity. They are more likely to attribute their successes and failures to their abilities and efforts (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Zimmerman and Schunk (2020) demonstrated that individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy exhibit greater confidence and persistence in academic tasks. This increased perseverance often leads to improved performance outcomes.

2.2.3.2 Controlled motivation in Self-Determination Theory and how it relates to academic performance.

SDT is a prominent theory of human motivation and personality that addresses why individuals initiate and maintain behaviours. According to SDT, there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Controlled, extrinsic motivation involves seeking external rewards or avoiding punishments (Deci & Ryan, 2019). However, research has shown that controlled motivation is associated with adverse outcomes, including lower academic achievement and decreased engagement in learning (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). This is because controlled motivation focuses on the external reward or consequence rather than the intrinsic value of the task or activity. In contrast,

autonomous motivation is linked to favourable outcomes such as higher academic achievement, increased engagement in learning activities, and greater resilience in overcoming obstacles (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012).

One of the key reasons for the detrimental effects linked to controlled motivation is its tendency to undermine individuals' sense of autonomy and competence (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). When individuals feel that they are being forced to do something rather than engage in an activity because they want to, they may feel pressure or coercion, which can undermine their motivation to engage in the task. In addition, when individuals are motivated by external rewards, they may prioritise achieving the reward over engaging authentically with the task, decreasing their intrinsic interest in the activity. Another reason why controlled motivation can undermine academic performance is because it can lead individuals to focus on short-term outcomes, such as grades or rewards, rather than the long-term goals of learning and mastery (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). For example, learners motivated to get a good grade may focus on short-term goals, such as memorising information for a test, rather than on long-term goals, such as developing a deep understanding of the material or developing critical thinking skills. This short-term focus may lead to lower academic performance in the long run. In addition, teachers can promote controlled motivation using extrinsic rewards such as grades or praise or punitive measures such as detention or failure (Vansteenkiste et al., 2014). These external incentives can influence learners' behaviour and drive them to pursue academic tasks to attain rewards or avoid punishments.

2.2.4 The concept of Self-Determination and its theoretical underpinnings.

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) is the foundation of SDT, which posits that extrinsic rewards and external controls can undermine intrinsic motivation. At the same time, autonomy-supportive behaviours can enhance intrinsic motivation. CET suggests that intrinsic motivation is fostered by fulfilling basic psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Meeting these needs is crucial for an individual's personal growth and well-being. While Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has garnered considerable acclaim for its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being, it has not been without criticism. One prominent critique concerns the universalist assumption embedded within SDT that

the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are innate and apply equally across all cultural contexts. Critics argue that this may reflect a Western bias, particularly in the prioritisation of autonomy, which is often less central in collectivist cultures where interdependence and social harmony are more highly valued (Jang et al., 2016). In such settings, learners may derive motivation not from personal volition but from fulfilling family or community expectations, challenging SDT's claim that autonomy is a universal psychological need (Chirkov, 2020).

Another critique relates to measurement limitations. Although SDT provides a rich conceptual framework, operationalising constructs like autonomy or relatedness in empirical studies can be methodologically complex. Some researchers argue that existing SDT scales often rely heavily on self-report measures, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias and may not fully capture the dynamic and relational nature of motivation in classroom settings (Howard et al., 2021). The theory's broad scope, while theoretically elegant, can sometimes lead to overgeneralisation, where nuanced motivational states are reduced to simple dichotomies such as intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, potentially overlooking the fluid and situational aspects of learner behaviour (Sheldon et al., 2017).

Additionally, SDT has been critiqued for its limited engagement with structural and systemic influences on learner motivation. While the theory emphasises internal psychological needs, it tends to underplay how external factors such as poverty, inequality, school infrastructure, and policy constraints shape motivation, particularly in under-resourced contexts like many South African public schools (Sayed & Ahmed, 2018). As a result, interventions based solely on SDT principles may not be sufficient in addressing deeper socio-economic barriers to learner confidence and performance. Despite these critiques, SDT remains a powerful framework when applied reflexively, with sensitivity to cultural and contextual variations. Its integration with complementary theories such as social cognitive theory or sociocultural perspectives can enhance its relevance in diverse educational environments.

Incorporating the core constructs of SDT (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) into the methodological design of the study significantly enhanced its conceptual depth and empirical integrity. These constructs served not only as theoretical lenses but also as operational guides for the development of data collection tools and the

interpretation of findings. Autonomy supportive elements were embedded in the research process by offering learners choices in how they responded to survey items and, where possible, in selecting interview times, thus modelling the very construct under investigation. This approach aligned with Reeve's (2016) assertion that autonomy enhancing environments increase participant engagement and the authenticity of data. Competence, regarded as a core proxy for self-confidence, was captured through instruments that measured academic belief, persistence, and task mastery, thereby strengthening the construct validity and aligning closely with the theoretical underpinnings of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Relatedness, reflecting the quality of interpersonal connections between learners, teachers, and peers, was addressed through interview questions that explored participants' perceptions of social support and belonging. This helped to produce a more holistic account of the factors influencing self-confidence and academic performance. Literature has shown that students who feel connected to their learning environments are more likely to exhibit motivation and resilience (Howard et al., 2021).

2.2.4.1 Autonomy in Self-Determination Theory

Autonomy refers to the desire to experience self-endorsement and psychological freedom (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Autonomy is a central concept in SDT, and research has shown that it plays a vital role in various domains, including education. In academic performance, autonomy can be defined as the degree to which learners feel they have choice and control over their learning (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Studies have consistently found a positive relationship between autonomy and academic performance. For example, a study by Jang et al. (2010) demonstrated that learners who perceived more excellent autonomy support from their teachers were more likely to engage in deep learning strategies, leading to better academic outcomes. Similarly, a study by Jang, Reeve, and Deci (2016) demonstrated that learners who perceived more excellent autonomy support from their teachers were more intrinsically motivated and achieved higher academic performance.

There are several ways in which autonomy can facilitate academic performance. Firstly, a study by Jang, Reeve, and Deci (2010) found that teacher autonomy support positively predicts learners' intrinsic motivation, defined as engaging in an activity for its inherent enjoyment rather than external rewards. A recent study by Ntoumanis and

Standage (2020) found that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted academic performance, as it was associated with adopting deep learning strategies and increased persistence in the face of educational challenges.

Secondly, autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for learning, leading to greater engagement and effort. Learners who feel they have choice and control over their learning are more likely to take an active role in the learning process, seeking out information and resources and taking responsibility for their progress (Reeve, 2013). This sense of ownership and responsibility is positively associated with academic performance (Vansteenkiste, Lens, Elliot, Soenens, & Mouratidis, 2014). Finally, autonomy supports the development of self-regulated learning skills, which are essential for academic success. A study by Panadero, Jonsson, and Botella (2017) demonstrated that self-regulated learners can set specific and challenging goals, monitor their progress, and adapt their learning strategies based on feedback and reflection. Autonomy is key in developing self-regulated learning skills, allowing learners to actively plan and manage their learning (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

Despite the clear benefits of autonomy for academic performance, there are also potential pitfalls to be aware of. Firstly, it is essential to distinguish between autonomy and independence. Autonomy refers to the degree to which learners feel that they have choice and control over their learning, but this does not necessarily mean that they should be left entirely alone to figure things out on their own (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Teachers still have an essential role in providing guidance and support, particularly for struggling learners who lack the skills to manage their learning effectively.

Autonomy is not always a straightforward concept, and different types of autonomy can affect academic performance differently. For example, a distinction is made between autonomous regulation, characterised by volition and self-endorsement, and controlled regulation, which entails pressure or coercion (Vansteenkiste, 2020). Self-determined autonomy is associated with positive outcomes, including greater intrinsic motivation, while controlled autonomy is associated with adverse outcomes, including decreased intrinsic motivation and increased anxiety and stress (Vansteenkiste, 2014). Therefore, teachers must create a supportive and positive environment that fosters self-determined autonomy rather than controlled autonomy.

Autonomy, the experience of acting with volition and personal endorsement, also reinforces self-confidence by fostering a sense of ownership over one's learning journey. Learners who are granted opportunities to make meaningful choices such as setting personal academic goals or choosing project topics are more likely to feel in control of their outcomes, which nurtures confidence in their ability to navigate academic challenges independently (Reeve, 2016). Without autonomy, learners may feel coerced or passive, undermining their intrinsic motivation and belief in their own decision-making capacities.

2.2.4.2 Competence in Self-Determination Theory

Competence refers to feeling adequate and capable of mastering challenges and achieving desired outcomes (Vansteenkiste, 2020). In academic performance, competence refers to a learner's ability to master the material and perform well in school. SDT suggests that learners who feel confident in their academic skills are more likely to be motivated to learn and achieve. Competence is essential to academic performance, as it can impact a learner's motivation, engagement, and academic achievement (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Research has demonstrated that learners with a strong sense of competence are more inclined to set ambitious goals, exhibit persistence in the face of challenges, and experience a heightened sense of achievement upon successful task completion (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Learners who perceive themselves as competent in their academic abilities are more inclined to exhibit self-regulated learning behaviours, such as goal setting, planning, and monitoring progress, contributing to more extraordinary academic achievement (Vansteenkiste, 2020).

Empirical evidence consistently supports a positive association between perceived competence and academic performance across various educational contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Furthermore, research has shown that interventions designed to enhance learners' sense of competence can improve academic performance. For example, a recent study by Yeager (2019) demonstrated that middle school learners who were taught that intelligence is malleable rather than fixed, showed significant improvements in academic achievement over the academic year.

Competence directly correlates with self-confidence, as it reflects the learner's sense of mastery and effectiveness in academic tasks. When learners successfully meet challenges and receive constructive feedback, they begin to internalise the belief that they are capable, which strengthens their academic self-belief (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). This sense of efficacy is particularly important in adolescence, where emerging identity and self-worth are heavily influenced by perceived academic competence (Zheng et al., 2022).

2.2.4.3 *Relatedness in Self-Determination Theory*

SDT is a widely researched motivation and human behaviour theory. The need for relatedness is often overlooked in academic settings, where the focus is mostly on academic achievement. However, research suggests that relatedness plays a crucial role in educational success. Relatedness encompasses the fundamental human need for interpersonal connection, belongingness, and social support (Vansteenkiste, 2020). In SDT, relatedness is considered one of the three basic psychological needs individuals must fulfil to achieve intrinsic motivation, well-being, and optimal functioning. A study conducted by Wang and Eccles (2012) found that learners who perceive a strong sense of belongingness and connectedness with their teachers and peers demonstrate higher levels of engagement in academic tasks and achieve better educational outcomes. A recent study by Vansteenkiste et al. (2020) revealed that learners who perceive strong support and positive relationships from their teachers are more inclined to experience autonomous motivation, which, in turn, predicts better academic achievement. Another recent study by Lee, Chen, and Chen (2021) corroborated that learners who report high relatedness satisfaction also demonstrate heightened intrinsic motivation and attain superior academic performance.

Relatedness, the need to feel connected and valued by others, contributes to self-confidence by reinforcing learners' sense of belonging within the academic environment. Supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and family members create a psychological safety net, encouraging learners to take intellectual risks, express themselves authentically, and recover from academic setbacks (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When learners feel socially affirmed, their self-worth is validated, which in turn enhances their confidence. Therefore, self-confidence does not emerge in isolation but is constructed through the dynamic fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and

relatedness. In this way, SDT offers not only a theoretical foundation but also a practical blueprint for fostering self-confidence through holistic, learner-centred education.

2.2.5 *The reason for choosing this theory and its relevance.*

This study adopted Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as its theoretical framework due to the theory's robust explanatory power in understanding learner motivation, self-confidence, and academic outcomes. Developed by Deci and Ryan, SDT has emerged as one of the most influential frameworks in contemporary educational psychology, offering a comprehensive view of how internal psychological needs shape human behaviour, learning, and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). SDT posits that optimal functioning and motivation are driven by the fulfilment of three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Within this model, self-confidence is understood as an expression of perceived competence - the belief in one's ability to effectively perform academic tasks. When learners perceive themselves as competent, they are more likely to approach learning with confidence, perseverance, and increased effort (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). These psychological needs are not isolated constructs but interrelated forces that, when satisfied, promote enhanced learner engagement and performance.

The relevance of SDT to this study lies in its direct alignment with the research focus: exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in the Pinetown district. In this context, confidence is not only a psychological asset but also a critical academic enabler. Empirical evidence supports this assertion. For example, Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2014) demonstrated a strong positive relationship between self-efficacy - a construct conceptually similar to self-confidence - and academic achievement among high school learners. Similarly, Zimmerman and Schunk (2011) found that learners with higher academic confidence set more ambitious goals and exhibited greater persistence, even after accounting for prior achievement. However, SDT's strength as a framework extends beyond its emphasis on competence. It also incorporates autonomy - the sense of volition and ownership in learning and relatedness, or the feeling of connectedness with teachers and peers (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In South African classrooms, particularly in under-

resourced schools, these additional dimensions are crucial. Learners may struggle with confidence not due to a lack of ability, but because of constrained autonomy or weak relational support (Sayed & Ahmed, 2018). Therefore, SDT provides a nuanced lens for examining not just internal learner traits, but also the social and institutional environments that facilitate or hinder confidence and academic performance.

For example, when teachers offer choices in learning tasks such as selecting between project topics or assessment formats, they foster autonomy, which in turn enhances learners' motivation and self-perception (Reeve, 2013). Likewise, fostering a sense of relatedness through group work, peer mentorship, and inclusive classroom climates contributes to learners' sense of belonging, further reinforcing confidence (Johnson & Smith, 2014; Thomaes, Sedikides, & Hoogsteder, 2015). SDT thus provides a holistic foundation for examining both internal learner beliefs and the external dynamics that influence them. Lastly, SDT's focus on developmentally appropriate motivation strategies offers educators a roadmap for improving both learner confidence and performance. Providing learners with challenging yet achievable goals, supportive feedback, and scaffolding resources cultivates a sense of mastery, which is crucial for building sustainable self-confidence (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2023).

2.2.6 Psychological needs and mental health

Psychological needs and mental health significantly contribute to the SDT, elucidating human motivation and personality development (Ng et al., 2012). According to the SDT, three psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, significantly influence the individual's mental health and well-being. These needs drive the individual's motivation to pursue their goals and satisfying them leads to greater life satisfaction and positive mental health outcomes (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013).

Learners with greater autonomy in their learning process tend to have higher academic motivation and performance (Nielsen & Daniels, 2017). The sense of autonomy in the learning process is positively associated with better mental health outcomes, such as reduced stress and anxiety levels (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Learners with higher levels of competence tend to have higher academic motivation, better academic performance, and positive mental health outcomes (Raufelder, 2016). Learners with a growth mindset, characterised by the belief that their abilities can be developed

through effort and persistence, tend to exhibit higher levels of competence and academic performance (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Learners with higher levels of relatedness tend to have higher academic motivation, better academic performance, and positive mental health outcomes (Linnenbrink-Garcia & Pekrun, 2011). Social support from peers and teachers is positively associated with better mental health outcomes, such as reduced stress and anxiety levels (Hamm, 2019).

The satisfaction of the three psychological needs proposed by the Self-Determination Theory promotes positive mental health outcomes, including higher levels of well-being, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). On the other hand, the frustration of these needs leads to adverse mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Van den Broeck, 2016). Thus, it is essential to consider these psychological needs in the academic context to promote positive mental health outcomes in learners.

2.2.7 The influence of social factors on self-determination and academic performance: Examining the role of parents, peers, and teachers in fostering self-confidence and academic success.

SDT focuses on the role of social factors in fostering self-confidence and academic success. Parents, peers, and teachers are important social agents influencing learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Parents play a crucial role in fostering self-confidence and academic success in their children. According to SDT, parents can help foster self-confidence in their children by providing a supportive and nurturing environment, encouraging autonomy, and providing opportunities for choice and decision-making. Research indicates that parental support is positively associated with greater self-determination and academic success among children (Silinskas, 2020). Parents who are supportive and provide autonomy support are more likely to have self-determined children and have higher academic achievement (Chen et al., 2015).

Peers also play a crucial role in fostering self-confidence and academic success. Positive peer relationships can significantly influence self-confidence, as supportive interactions with classmates contribute to feelings of competence and relatedness (Rueger & Malecki, 2011). According to SDT, peers can influence an individual's

motivation and behaviour by providing social support, feedback, and validation. Research suggests that peer support fosters feelings of competence and connection among individuals, enhancing their motivation and self-determination (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Studies have shown that peer support is associated with greater self-confidence and academic performance in learners. Peers who offer support and positive feedback are likelier to have friends who exhibit self-determination and achieve higher academic success (Silinskas, 2020).

Teachers play a critical role in fostering self-confidence and academic performance in learners. According to SDT, teachers can influence learners' motivation and behaviour by providing autonomy support, creating a mastery-oriented classroom environment, and providing opportunities for choice and decision-making. Teachers who provide autonomy support are more likely to have learners who demonstrate self-determination and attain higher levels of academic achievement (Jang, 2016). Studies have shown that teacher autonomy support is associated with learners' greater self-determination and academic success (Vansteenkiste et al., 2012).

2.2.8 The impact of academic achievement on self-determination: How success or failure in the classroom affects learners' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Academic achievement is an essential aspect of a learner's life that significantly affects their prospects and career opportunities. Success or failure in the classroom can significantly impact learners' sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, critical components of self-determination. Achieving success in the classroom can enhance learners' sense of autonomy by equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to make well-informed choices. When learners experience success in the classroom, they gain confidence in their abilities, which can lead to increased autonomy. On the other hand, failure in the classroom can negatively impact learners' sense of autonomy. When learners experience failure, they may become disengaged and lose confidence in their abilities, decreasing their sense of autonomy. Learners who do not feel competent in their abilities may struggle to make decisions and rely on others to make them (Vansteenkiste, 2012).

Success in the classroom can positively impact learners' sense of competence by providing them with a sense of accomplishment and mastery over the subject matter. When learners experience success in the classroom, they gain confidence in their abilities, which can lead to an increased sense of competence. On the other hand, failure in the classroom can negatively impact learners' sense of competence. When learners experience failure, they may become disengaged and lose confidence in their abilities, decreasing their sense of competence. Learners who do not feel competent in their abilities may struggle to complete tasks and avoid challenging situations (Vansteenkiste, 2012).

Success in the classroom can positively impact learners' sense of relatedness by offering opportunities for learners to engage and collaborate with their peers. When learners experience success in the classroom, they may feel a sense of connection and belonging with their peers, leading to an increased sense of relatedness. On the other hand, failure in the classroom can negatively impact learners' sense of relatedness. When learners experience failure, they may become isolated and disconnected from their peers, leading to a decreased sense of relatedness. Learners who do not feel connected to their peers may struggle to form relationships and feel lonely and unsupported (Vansteenkiste, 2012).

2.2.9 The impact of cultural factors on self-determination and academic performance: An exploration of how cultural values and beliefs influence learners' motivation and achievement.

Culture is a significant determinant of academic performance. An increasing amount of research highlights the significant role cultural values play in influencing learners' academic achievements. For instance, several studies have shown that collectivist cultural values, which emphasise group harmony, cooperation, and interdependence, are positively associated with academic performance (Huang, 2012). Collectivist cultural values promote a sense of belongingness and a strong social support system that enhances learners' motivation and engagement in academic activities (Nguyen & Williams, 2019). In contrast, individualist cultural values, which emphasise individualism, autonomy, and independence, negatively impact academic performance (Kusurkar et al., 2011). Individualist cultural values may lead to a lack of

social support and a weak sense of belongingness, reducing learners' motivation and engagement in academic activities.

Self-determination involves making choices and decisions that align with one's interests and aspirations. Cultural values influence self-determination by shaping individuals' beliefs about their autonomy and independence. In collectivist cultures, individuals may place greater emphasis on the needs and goals of the group over their autonomy and independence, potentially constraining their sense of individual agency (Gelfand, 2020). Consequently, learners from collectivist cultures may exhibit lower levels of self-determination than those from individualist cultures. On the other hand, learners from individualist cultures may have higher levels of self-determination, as autonomy and independence are highly valued in these cultures. However, this may not always translate into academic success, as learners' self-determination depends on their motivation and engagement in academic activities.

Cultural beliefs, such as beliefs about intelligence and ability, also significantly determine learners' academic performance. For instance, the belief in fixed intelligence, where individuals perceive intelligence as innate and unchangeable, has been linked to lower academic performance and achievement (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Learners who hold this belief may be less likely to engage in effortful learning activities, as they believe their abilities are fixed and cannot be improved through effort. In contrast, the belief that intelligence can be developed through effort and practice has positively impacted academic performance (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Learners who hold this belief are more inclined to participate in effortful learning activities and may be more resilient in academic challenges.

Cultural beliefs also influence self-determination by shaping individuals' beliefs about their abilities and the role of effort in achieving their goals. For instance, the conviction that success hinges primarily on external factors like luck or fate can erode individuals' sense of autonomy and personal agency, thereby constraining their self-determination (Maltby, 2010). In contrast, the belief that success is primarily determined by effort and hard work may enhance individuals' sense of control and self-determination (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a thorough literature review, laying the foundation for the study by examining the existing research relevant to the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. The review begins by tracing the historical development of the subject, highlighting significant milestones and key moments that have shaped current academic discourse. Through this exploration, the chapter identifies gaps, contradictions, and trends within the literature, setting the stage for the study's contribution to the field. The SDT is central to this literature review and is introduced as the research's primary theoretical framework. The chapter delves into the core tenets of SDT, explaining its emphasis on the essential psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness and how these factors drive motivation and influence academic outcomes. The theory's relevance is further examined by discussing the impacts of autonomous versus controlled motivation on learners' academic performance and mental health. Finally, the implications of SDT for educational policy and practice are considered, offering insights for teachers and policymakers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

In the previous chapter, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to establish a theoretical foundation for the study. The chapter explored the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance, focusing on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the primary framework guiding the research. Key aspects such as the historical development of the topic, gaps in existing literature, and the role of self-confidence within the SDT context were thoroughly examined. The review also discussed the practical applications of SDT principles in education and the impact of cultural factors on learner motivation and achievement. This groundwork sets the stage for the following chapter: the overview of the research methodology employed in the study. The study aims to investigate the intricate dynamics between learners' self-confidence and their academic performance, recognising the complexity inherent in this relationship. To address this, the research adopts a comprehensive methodological framework that integrates qualitative and quantitative paradigms, allowing for a nuanced exploration of measurable and experiential aspects of self-confidence and academic performance.

The interpretivist paradigm guides the study, focusing on learners' and teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions. This paradigm is complemented by a mixed methods approach, which provides a robust foundation for exploring the multifaceted research question from multiple angles. This chapter will delve into the specific components of the research methodology, including the sampling method for research participants, ethical considerations and access to participants, data generation procedures, and the tools used for both thematic and statistical analysis. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the concepts of validity and rigour in research, emphasising the importance of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. These elements are essential for establishing the trustworthiness and robustness of the study's findings. This chapter lays the groundwork for a holistic understanding of the research topic and the reliability of its conclusions by providing a detailed examination of the research methodology and the principles of validity and rigour.

3.1 Research paradigm: Interpretivist paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm, pivotal to this study, was grounded in the belief that reality is subjective and socially constructed. This perspective was essential when exploring the nuanced relationship between self-confidence and academic performance, as it acknowledged the diverse interpretations and meanings that individuals attributed to their educational experiences. The interpretivist approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and social phenomena, critical in academic research where individual perceptions significantly influence outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The paradigm aligned seamlessly with the study's objectives of uncovering how self-confidence intersected with academic performance. It allowed exploring individual learner and teacher experiences in Pinetown district high schools. It offered insights into how self-confidence was perceived, experienced, and influenced by various educational and social factors. By adopting this paradigm, the study recognised that learners' self-confidence and academic performance were not just outcomes of individual traits but were also shaped by the educational environment and broader societal influences. A key principle of the interpretivist paradigm was reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness of how their beliefs, values, and biases may influence their research (Creswell, 2013). Researchers using this paradigm seek to understand how these factors shape individuals' experiences and how individuals, in turn, shape the context in which they live (Creswell, 2013).

The interpretivist paradigm had several implications for research methodology. First, researchers using this paradigm often employ qualitative research methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnography (Creswell, 2013). These methods allowed researchers to explore the subjective experiences and perspectives of research participants and to understand the meaning and significance that individuals attached to their experiences and actions. Second, researchers using the interpretivist paradigm often adopt an inductive approach to data analysis (Bryman & Cramer, 2012). Inductive analysis involves starting with the data and allowing patterns and themes to emerge through coding and categorisation. This approach allowed researchers to remain open to the multiple meanings and interpretations individuals may have attached to their experiences and actions. Finally, the interpretivist paradigm emphasises the importance of the researcher's presence and engagement in the

research process (Creswell, 2013). Researchers adopting this paradigm typically focused on building rapport and fostering trust with participants, encouraging the open sharing of personal experiences and viewpoints. Methodologically, the interpretivist paradigm guided the selection of research tools and techniques that captured the richness and complexity of human experiences. It necessitated using methods that allowed for in-depth exploration, such as interviews and open-ended survey questions, enabling researchers to gather nuanced data that reflected the participants' subjective realities (Mueller, 2019).

3.2 Research approach: Mixed methods approach

A research approach refers to the method chosen by the researcher to gather, analyse, and interpret data for the study. There are three primary research approaches: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The mixed methods approach was employed in this study. This study's mixed methods approach proved pivotal in combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of research problems than either method alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The foundational principle is rooted in the belief that combining diverse methods can compensate for the limitations of each method, thereby enhancing the overall rigour and validity of the research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2019). In this study, the mixed methods approach integrated quantitative data, such as academic performance metrics and structured self-confidence assessments, with qualitative insights from interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses. This combination allowed for a more nuanced exploration of the topic, where quantitative data offered measurable evidence of relationships and trends, and qualitative data provided a deeper understanding and context.

Quantitative methods enabled the study to quantify the impact of self-confidence on academic performance. In contrast, qualitative methods explore learners' and teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions, uncovering the 'why' and 'how' behind the observed patterns (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The mixed methods approach was particularly effective in addressing the research objectives of this study. It allowed for examining how self-confidence correlated with academic performance and offered insights into the experiences and attitudes that shaped this relationship. Adopting a

mixed methods approach enriched the research by enabling a comprehensive analysis that combined statistical rigour with detailed, contextual understanding.

Focusing on enhanced reporting strategies, mixed methods research became more prevalent, and researchers increasingly focused on developing robust reporting strategies to communicate findings effectively. The need for clear and transparent reporting is recognised to ensure that the complexity of mixed methods studies is comprehensible to a broader audience, including practitioners, policymakers, and fellow researchers (O'Cathain, 2019). Reporting guidelines, such as the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) and the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT), have been adapted to accommodate mixed methods studies, emphasising transparency and rigour in reporting (Booth, Hannes, Harden, Noyes, Harris & Tong, 2014). As mixed methods research became more popular, there was a heightened emphasis on methodological rigour. Researchers are actively developing frameworks and guidelines to address the unique challenges of combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2018). Strategies for ensuring the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of mixed methods research findings continually evolve, reflecting a commitment to maintaining high-quality standards in this interdisciplinary approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.3 Research design/: Convergent parallel design

In mixed methods research, the convergent parallel design played a crucial role. This design involves the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data, followed by a parallel analysis and eventual data merging for a comprehensive understanding (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The convergent design in research served as a robust methodology to investigate multifaceted phenomena, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the interrelation between variables. In the context of this research, the convergent design proved instrumental in unveiling the nuanced dynamics between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools. This section expounds on the key aspects of convergent design and elucidate its application in the current study.

For this study, the convergent parallel design entailed conducting structured questionnaires with quantitative scales to measure self-confidence and academic performance, alongside conducting qualitative interviews with teachers. This design ensured that both data forms were collected during the same research phase, allowing for a more time-efficient and cohesive approach. Quantitative data was subjected to analysis in the analysis phase, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. These separate analyses permitted a thorough exploration of each data type's nuances. Following analysis, the findings were integrated, juxtaposing the numerical data with narrative data to gain multi-dimensional insights into how self-confidence impacted academic performance.

This design is particularly advantageous for educational research as it allows for data triangulation, enhancing the findings' reliability and validity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By analysing the quantitative and qualitative data in parallel, the study drew more robust conclusions, as the strengths of one method compensated for the limitations of the other. To capture the intricacies of self-confidence, a combination of established psychological scales, like the Likert scale and open-ended interviews were employed. Academic performance metrics included Grade Point Average (GPA) scores and teacher evaluations, ensuring a comprehensive assessment.

Triangulation, a hallmark of convergent design, involves comparing and contrasting results from various data sources. This enhances the credibility and reliability of the study, providing a more comprehensive portrayal of the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Breaking down the convergent design into sequential stages provided a clearer understanding of its application. The convergent design emphasised the quantitative aspect, utilising statistical tools to derive meaningful insights. Complementing the quantitative emphasis, the qualitative component delved into learners' subjective experiences. By conducting in-depth interviews and open-ended questions, the researcher captured the nuanced aspects of self-confidence, exploring the emotional and social dimensions not captured by quantitative measures alone.

Concluding the convergent design exploration involved drawing practical implications for educational stakeholders. Recommendations for interventions and support mechanisms based on the research findings contributed to fostering self-confidence

and improving academic outcomes in Pinetown district high schools. The convergent parallel design aligned with the study's interpretivist paradigm by enabling a holistic view of the learners' and teachers' experiences and perceptions while providing quantitative measures that lent objectivity to these subjective accounts. It ensured that the research captured the depth and breadth of the phenomena under investigation.

3.4 Sampling methods: Purposive sampling

Sampling techniques can be divided into probability or random sampling and non-probability or non-random sampling (Taherdoost, 2016). Non-probability sampling is a sampling procedure that will not bid a basis for any opinion of probability that elements in the universe will have a chance to be included in the study sample (Etikan & Bala, 2017). There were various sampling methods under the non-probability. Nevertheless, purposive sampling was the researcher's sampling method for this study. The researcher sought the consent of experts or known experts in the study and began collecting information directly from individuals or groups of respondents. This process also included assembling a sample of participants whose expertise or lived experiences provided valuable insights into specific aspects of the study. The reason for using expert sampling is to have a better way of constructing the views of individuals who are experts in a definite area (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Purposive sampling, or purposeful or judgmental sampling, is a non-random sampling technique widely employed in qualitative research to select participants based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method contrasts with random sampling, as researchers intentionally choose participants with qualities deemed essential for the study, thus enhancing the likelihood of obtaining rich and meaningful data (Palinkas, 2015). In exploring self-confidence and academic performance, purposive sampling was appropriate as it included individuals with direct experience and insights into the educational environment of Pinetown district high schools.

There are two types of purposive sampling: maximum variation and homogeneous. Maximum variation sampling involves selecting participants representing a broad spectrum of characteristics related to the research topic (Palinkas, 2015). This approach ensured diversity and comprehensiveness in the data collected, allowing

researchers to explore the range of experiences, opinions, or behaviours within the studied phenomenon. Contrary to maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling involves choosing participants with common characteristics, traits, or experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method was valuable when researchers aimed to gain a detailed understanding of a specific subgroup within the larger population.

There were different steps in purposive sampling. The first step in purposive sampling is defining clear and specific inclusion criteria based on the research objectives (Palinkas, 2015). This involves identifying the characteristics that potential participants had to possess to contribute meaningfully to the study. Once the inclusion criteria are established, researchers identify and select participants who meet these criteria (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This process involved careful consideration of the characteristics deemed essential for the study.

The advantages of purposive sampling include targeted information, which facilitates the collection of targeted and relevant information by focusing on participants with specific attributes related to the research objectives (Palinkas, 2015). This enhanced the study's precision and depth. Purposive sampling is often more resource-efficient than random sampling as it allows researchers to concentrate on a specific subset of the population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This was particularly advantageous when resources such as time and budget were limited.

Participants were purposively selected based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. The sample included both learners and educators to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. Learners were drawn from Grades 8 to 12, aged between 13 and 18 years, and included both male and female participants. They represented diverse socio-economic backgrounds and academic disciplines, and all were enrolled in government schools, ensuring consistency in curriculum exposure and policy context. Educators were also selected from the same schools and comprised both male and female teachers with experience teaching Grades 8 to 12 across various academic subjects. Their inclusion was critical in offering professional insights into learner behaviour, confidence, and performance from a pedagogical perspective. This

combined sample allowed for the collection of rich, multifaceted data reflective of the educational realities within the Pinetown district.

The sample size selection was strategically established by the principle of saturation, where sampling continued until no new themes or information emerged from the data (Guest et al., 2020). This approach ensured that the sample was large enough to capture a comprehensive understanding of the research topic but was also manageable for in-depth analysis. Purposive sampling was integral to this study as it allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who could provide detailed and relevant information about self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools. This methodological choice ensured that the research findings were grounded in the experiences and perspectives of those most closely associated with the study's focus.

3.5 Research participants

The research participants in this study primarily consisted of high school learners within the Pinetown district, encompassing a diverse range of genders and ages from grades 8 to 12. The targeted age group for the study was 13 to 18 years old, corresponding to learners in the senior/FET (Further Education and Training) phase. Participants were selected from two schools within the Pinetown district to ensure a representative sample. Including learners across these grades was imperative to comprehensively understand experiences and perspectives relevant to the senior educational phase.

In addition to high school learners, teachers within the same schools were integral participants in the study. Their insights and experiences contributed valuable perspectives on the dynamics of English language expression within the classroom setting. Both learners and teachers communicate in English, aligning with the language of instruction in the participating schools, including participants from diverse backgrounds within the Pinetown district, which aimed to enrich the study's findings and ensure that the research outcomes reflected the broader high school educational context. Consent was sought from both learners and teachers, emphasising ethical considerations throughout the data collection process. By engaging with this range of participants, the study aspired to unravel intricate nuances surrounding English

language expression in high school settings, fostering a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter within the Pinetown district.

3.6 Procedure for data generation

The researcher first acquired permission from the Department of Education to commence this research. The researcher then acquired permission from the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee to get access to learners from Phoenix's surrounding schools to participate in the study. When the Department of Education approved, the researcher requested a meeting with each school to confirm that the school gave the researcher access and time to ask their learners to participate. During the meeting with the school, the researcher asked the principal to speak directly to the teachers and acquired their permission to participate in the study.

Thereafter, another meeting with the school followed to discuss the study details and methods with the teachers and learners. Posters were put up to recruit the learners about the study. With the help of the school, information sheets and permission letters for parents to sign were given to learners to reach their parents as they were expected to be under the age of 18 years. Learners were given seven days to return the forms. Thereafter, learners were contacted and invited to participate in the study. When parents responded by confirming the acceptance of the invitation and granting permission from learners, the data generation commenced.

The researcher ensured that learners participating in the study were mindful of the procedures and felt comfortable. When participants were comfortable with the researcher, socialising and communicating with them became more manageable, as communication is vital in every aspect of life. As guided by the literature, learners completed a questionnaire about academics and self-confidence. In addition, the researcher asked the school for permission to examine learners' term reports to supplement information about learners' academic performance.

3.7 Data generation tools: Questionnaires for learners (General Self-Confidence Questionnaire) and interviews for teachers

The selection of appropriate data generation tools is pivotal in ensuring the robustness and reliability of research findings. This study adopted a mixed methods approach to

unravel the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools. Grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, the study utilises a convergent design, merging qualitative and quantitative data. This section delves into the intricacies of the data generation tools employed, primarily emphasising questionnaires for learners and interviews with teachers.

The Likert scale was designed for learners to capture their perceived level of self-confidence and its impact on academic performance. The questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended questions and those based on a Likert scale. Closed-ended questions gathered demographic information, academic background, and self-reported confidence levels. Meanwhile, Likert-scale items were strategically crafted to gauge the perceived correlation between self-confidence and academic outcomes. This method ensures quantitative data richness and statistical rigour in the analysis phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The design of the questionnaires ensured clarity and ease of understanding for high school learners. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained, with anonymous responses encouraging honesty and reducing response bias.

In-depth teacher interviews complement the quantitative arm and garnered qualitative insights. These face-to-face interviews allowed teachers to articulate nuanced perspectives on the observed relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. Probing questions delved into pedagogical experiences, the role of self-esteem in learners, and strategies employed to foster a positive learning environment. The open-ended nature of interviews promotes the exploration of unforeseen themes, enriching the qualitative dataset (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The advantage of face-to-face interviews was that they enabled the researcher to build rapport with participants, fostering a more comfortable and open environment for discussion. This led to participants sharing more detailed and honest responses than they might in other types of data collection methods. In addition, face-to-face interviews allow researchers to clarify any misunderstandings or confusion about questions or topics, leading to more accurate data (Seidman, 2019). Another benefit of face-to-face interviews is that they allow researchers to observe non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, which can provide valuable insights into a participant's thoughts and feelings (Cope, 2014). These non-verbal cues can be critical

when studying sensitive topics, as they can reveal information that a participant may not feel comfortable expressing verbally (Kvale, 2008)

Integrating questionnaires and interviews was crucial in comprehensively understanding the study's focus. While questionnaires provided measurable, generalisable data, interviews offered contextual depth and subjective insights. This combination enabled a nuanced exploration of how self-confidence influenced academic performance, capturing both the learners' self-perceptions and teachers' professional observations. The themes emerging from teacher interviews were carefully interwoven with quantitative patterns during the analysis phase, contributing to a holistic understanding of the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance.

3.8 Ethical issues and access to participants

Research design and methodology are crucial aspects of any research process, as is access to participants who provide the data for the study. Ethical considerations must be considered while conducting research. This section explores ethical issues and access to participants in research design and methodology, mainly focusing on informed consent, assurance of confidentiality, and anonymity.

3.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent in research is a process by which research participants are informed about the study, its purpose, risks, benefits, and any other relevant information and then voluntarily agree to participate (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). The purpose of informed consent is to ensure that participants have the information they need to make an informed decision about whether to participate in a study and that participants' autonomy and rights are respected (American Psychological Association, 2017). Informed consent typically involves a written agreement that the participant signs, which outlines the information provided and the participant's agreement to participate. Participants must understand the information provided and the implications of their decision to participate or not participate in the study (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). Without informed consent, the participants' autonomy is compromised, leading to ethical issues in the research process (Polit & Beck, 2012). Furthermore, informed consent protects researchers from the legal implications of conducting research

without the participants' consent. Ethical guidelines stipulate that researchers must obtain informed consent from participants before conducting any research and that the process must be documented (World Medical Association, 2013).

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to protecting participants' identity and data from unauthorised disclosure (Wiles, 2013). In other words, confidentiality in research refers to the degree of certainty or assurance that a researcher has in the validity and reliability of their findings, and participants give their full assent without pressure. Participants expect their personal information, including their names and identifying details, not to be shared with third parties. Therefore, researchers must ensure that participants' data is kept confidential and access to it is limited to only those who need it for archival purposes (American Psychological Association, 2017). Confidentiality also helped to establish trust between researchers and participants. Participants are more likely to participate in research if they trust that their personal information is protected (Smith, 2015). Researchers are responsible for ensuring that the data collected from participants is kept confidential and that the confidentiality agreement is outlined in the informed consent form (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018).

3.8.3 Anonymity

Anonymity in research refers to hiding the participants' identity in a study to protect their privacy and confidentiality (Smith, 2019). This means the participants' names, addresses, and other identifying information were not included in the data collected or reported. Instead, participants were assigned a unique identifier or code, which was used to track their responses and data. The use of anonymity in research is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it helps reduce the risk of social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses that they think are more socially acceptable than their actual opinions (Smith, 2019). Secondly, it also reduces the risk of potential harm to participants, such as discrimination or retaliation, which may arise if their identity is revealed (Smith, 2019). The researcher took the necessary steps to safeguard participant anonymity and ensure their data remained confidential.

The respondents' consent to utilise a recording device was set up beforehand. They gave their full assent without pressure being taped on a recording device. The respondents were likewise guaranteed that their data would be treated as profoundly secret and would not be revealed to anyone not associated with the research. They were likewise mindful that their names would not spread or be made known to anyone and would remain mysterious throughout the review. The research depended on respondents' information during interviews for discoveries and ends. To ensure anonymity in this study, the researcher used pseudonyms instead of participants' real names to protect their identity.

3.9 Research analysis: Thematic and statistical analysis

3.9.1 Thematic analysis for qualitative data

The qualitative data from teacher interviews was analysed using thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This flexible method is conducive to interpreting rich, detailed narratives, making it suitable for exploring the complex relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. The process involved several steps. Firstly, familiarisation with the data involves in-depth reading of interview transcripts to understand the content. Secondly, initial codes were generated, where data segments were coded systematically across the entire data set. Thirdly, searching for themes involved the organisation of these codes into potential themes and sub-themes. The next step involved reviewing themes to ensure they accurately represent the data set. Thereafter, defining, and naming themes involved a more refined and specific definition of each theme. Lastly, the report was produced, and the final analysis was compiled, with compelling extracts of data presented to support the identified themes.

Thematic analysis is a complex and iterative process that requires attention to detail and a rigorous approach to data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Some key strategies for conducting thematic analysis include reflexivity, which involves acknowledging and reflecting on the researcher's biases and assumptions that may influence the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Maintaining an open and curious mindset and being aware of one's position concerning the data was important. Rigour also involves using a systematic and rigorous data analysis approach to ensure robust and defensible findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This involved using a structured approach to and

analysis, such as the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Lastly, triangulation involves using multiple sources of data or multiple coders to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This involved using multiple data collection methods or having multiple coders code the same data to ensure inter-coder reliability.

3.9.2 Statistical analysis for quantitative data

The data analysis section of this research employed various statistical tools to unravel the intricate relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among Pinetown district high school learners. For the quantitative data gathered through questionnaires, statistical analysis was conducted. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the data, including central tendency and variability measures. Inferential statistics tested hypotheses and examined relationships between variables, such as the correlation between self-confidence levels and academic performance.

Descriptive statistics were the initial step in comprehending the central tendencies and distribution of the collected data. Measures such as mean, median, and mode were calculated to provide a snapshot of the self-confidence levels and academic performance of the Pinetown district high schools. This laid the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the essential characteristics of the variables under investigation (Smith, 2016). Correlation analysis explored the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to evaluate the magnitude and direction of the linear association between the two variables. This analysis aided in establishing whether a significant correlation exists and the nature of this association - positive, negative, or neutral (Jones & Brown, 2018).

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to investigate potential differences in academic performance and self-confidence among different groups, such as gender, grade levels, and socioeconomic backgrounds. A hierarchical regression analysis was employed to delve deeper into the predictive capacity of self-confidence. This method allows for the systematic introduction of variables in different blocks, aiding in understanding the incremental variance explained by self-confidence after accounting for other relevant factors, such as socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and

previous academic achievement (Fisher, 2014). In adopting these advanced statistical techniques, the research aimed to provide a nuanced and comprehensive exploration of the intricate relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools. The amalgamation of traditional and cutting-edge methods ensured a robust analysis, contributing to a more profound understanding of the factors influencing educational outcomes.

3.9.3 Integration of thematic and statistical findings

The final phase of the research involved integrating the findings from the thematic and statistical analyses. This integration enabled a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, providing statistical relationships between self-confidence and academic performance and a deeper insight into how learners and teachers experienced and perceived these phenomena. Thematic and statistical analysis were critical in providing a holistic understanding of the impact of self-confidence on academic performance. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.650 ($p < .001$) confirmed a strong, positive relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. This aligns with teacher perspectives. For instance, Teacher Lisa remarked, “Confident learners persist longer with tasks and ask more questions,” a behaviour mirrored in learners who scored above 70% on both the confidence and academic metrics. A notable theme was the role of constructive feedback. Teachers reported that providing balanced feedback significantly impacted learner resilience and willingness to retry difficult tasks. Quantitative responses supported this, as learners reporting high feedback satisfaction had, on average, 15% higher academic scores. Another cross-cutting theme was the impact of socioeconomic status. Learners from better-resourced schools displayed higher confidence levels (Mean = 4.1) than those from under-resourced schools (Mean = 3.2), echoing Sayed and Ahmed’s (2018) findings on contextual inequalities. Integrating these analyses contributed significantly to educational research, offering practical implications and insights for teachers and policymakers.

3.10 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in research refers to the extent to which the study's methods, findings, and interpretations can be considered credible, reliable, and valid. It involves

demonstrating transparency, rigour, coherence, and adherence to ethical principles throughout the research process, enhancing confidence in the study's results and conclusions among researchers and stakeholders (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Trustworthiness is a fundamental aspect of research that ensures the credibility and reliability of study findings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2018). Regardless of the research methodology employed, trustworthiness plays a vital role in establishing the integrity of the research outcomes (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). In mixed methods research, trustworthiness is essential for integrating qualitative and quantitative data to comprehensively understand the research topic (Graneheim & Lundman, 2018). The researcher enhanced the validity and applicability of the findings by ensuring that both types of data were gathered, analysed, and interpreted rigorously. This subtopic explores the concept of trustworthiness in research, its importance, and the methods used to establish trustworthiness.

Trustworthiness in research is crucial not only for ensuring the credibility and reliability of study findings but also for upholding the integrity of the scientific process. It plays a pivotal role in building confidence among stakeholders, including researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and the public, regarding the validity and applicability of research outcomes (Polit & Beck, 2017). Trustworthiness contributes to the ethical conduct of research by promoting transparency and accountability in the research process (Shenton, 2004). By adhering to rigorous methodological standards and ensuring that research findings are based on sound evidence, researchers uphold ethical principles and maintain the trust of research participants and the broader community.

Techniques such as member checking and triangulation help to establish the credibility and dependability of the findings by validating them against multiple data sources or participant perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2017). Trustworthiness is upheld through rigorous data collection and analysis methods and transparency in reporting findings (Polit & Beck, 2017). By adhering to established research protocols and standards, researchers can improve the reliability and objectivity of their results. These research studies often involve small sample sizes rich in detail and context-specific data, which requires a researcher to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher's bias, subjectivity, and preconceived notions

can influence the interpretation of the data and the study's conclusions. Therefore, establishing trustworthiness is vital to ensure the research findings are credible, valid, and reliable (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Pilot testing was conducted for both the survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interview schedule prior to the main data collection phase. Feedback from participants was used to refine ambiguous items, rephrase complex language, and adjust the layout for improved readability an essential step when working with adolescent populations in diverse school settings (Dikko, 2016). For the quantitative component, the pilot helped establish the internal consistency of the General Self-Confidence Questionnaire, yielding a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.99, which indicated excellent reliability. This indicated that the scale items were measuring the construct of self-confidence consistently across participants. Such high internal reliability is particularly important in educational research, where construct validity depends on the alignment between theoretical concepts and their operational measures (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). In the qualitative phase, the pilot interviews ensured that the guiding questions elicited rich, relevant data aligned with the research objectives. Pilot testing also allowed the researcher to refine probing strategies and establish an appropriate interview flow, which enhanced the quality and depth of data collected during the main study (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Conducting a pilot helped address potential ethical and procedural concerns, such as the suitability of consent forms and data collection duration, ensuring both learner and educator participants were comfortable and informed.

3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility in research pertains to the believability and trustworthiness of the study findings, ensuring they accurately represent the phenomenon being studied (Shenton, 2018). Similarly, Kyngäs, Kääriäinen and Elo (2020) defined credibility as confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. It is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the research process and establishing confidence in the results among researchers. Credibility is critical in research because it is the foundation for building trust in the findings. Without credibility, the findings of research are not considered valid or trustworthy. In the context of the study, credibility holds significant importance. As the researcher employed a mixed methods approach, the researcher aimed to integrate qualitative

and quantitative data to understand the phenomenon comprehensively. Ensuring credibility was essential to uphold the rigour and validity of the findings, thereby contributing to advancing knowledge in this field. In research, credibility is established by demonstrating that the findings are consistent with the experiences and perspectives of participants and that the researcher's interpretations are grounded in the data (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, credibility is important for ensuring that the research findings are respected and valued by the participants and the wider community (Shenton, 2004).

To ensure credibility in this study, participant data were collected, well-defined, and accurate. Several strategies were implemented to mitigate these challenges and enhance the credibility of the research. Firstly, methodological triangulation was employed, whereby a data collection method (questionnaire) was used to cross-validate findings and ensure convergence of results (Denzin, 2017). This approach increased the robustness of the study and reduced the impact of individual biases. Secondly, member checking validated the accuracy and interpretation of findings with participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By seeking feedback from learners and teachers, the researcher ensured that the perspectives were accurately represented and interpreted in the analysis. Lastly, data collection and analysis are transparent through detailed documentation and reflexivity (Tracy, 2010). By clearly documenting the steps taken in data collection, coding, and interpretation, the researcher enhanced the suitability of the study and allowed for independent verification by peers or other researchers.

3.10.2 Dependability

Mixed methods research has recently gained popularity, with researchers utilising its techniques to study diverse phenomena. The dependability of research is vital as it enhances the credibility of the study's findings. Dependability in research, which refers to the stability and consistency of findings over time and across different conditions (Bryman, 2016). This concept is fundamental in the study as it ensures that the findings accurately reflect the proper relationship between the variables without being influenced by external factors or errors in the research process. One of the key challenges in ensuring dependability in research is the potential for bias or error in data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For instance, researchers

could inadvertently introduce bias through the selection of participants, the design of questionnaire instruments, or the interpretation of results. Additionally, external factors such as changes in the educational system or socioeconomic conditions impacted the reliability of the findings over time.

Several strategies were employed to enhance dependability in research. Firstly, it is essential to use rigorous research methods and standardised procedures to minimise bias and ensure consistency across different stages of the study (Bryman, 2016). For example, in this study, using validated measures of self-confidence and academic performance and employing standardised protocols for data collection and analysis helped improve the reliability of the findings. Secondly, employing a mixed methods approach enhanced dependability by triangulating findings from different sources or methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Using quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher corroborated their findings and offered a deeper and more thorough understanding of how self-confidence influences academic performance.

Furthermore, establishing precise data analysis and interpretation criteria enhances dependability (Anney, 2014). The researcher ensured their findings were replicable and consistent by documenting and transparently reporting the steps taken in data analysis. One technique was establishing a clear and concise research design that outlines the research objectives, research questions, and the data collection and analysis processes (Creswell, 2013). Another technique that the researcher used to enhance the dependability of research was to establish a systematic data collection process. The data collection process was well-documented and transparent, outlining the data collection tools, procedures, and techniques (Patton, 2014). The systematic data collection process ensured that the data collected was relevant to the research question and that the data was consistent over time, enhancing the dependability of the research findings.

3.10.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the participants shape the findings of a study and the context rather than the researcher's biases, motivations, or perspectives (Shenton, 2014). In this study, confirmability was crucial for ensuring the integrity and reliability of the findings. It was essential to minimise the influence of researcher bias

or preconceived notions on the results to maintain the validity of the study's conclusions. Given the subjective nature of self-confidence and academic performance, confirmability became particularly important in ensuring that the data collected and analysed accurately reflect the insights and viewpoints of the participants.

Strategies were employed to enhance confirmability in this study. Firstly, employing a mixed methods approach for this study enhanced confirmability by triangulating findings from different data sources (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Triangulation involved using multiple data sources to confirm the research findings. This method helped ensure the data interpretations were accurate and valid (Denzin, 2017). Using quantitative measures of academic performance and qualitative insights into self-confidence, the study provided a deeper and more thorough insight into the connection between these variables, reducing the risk of bias inherent in any single method.

Secondly, employing rigorous data collection and analysis techniques enhanced conformability. This includes documenting the research process, including sampling methods, data collection procedures, and analytic techniques, to allow for transparency and replicability (Morse, 2015). An audit trail involves maintaining a record of all the data collected and the decisions made during the research process. This method helps ensure that the data interpretations can be replicated by other researchers (Patton, 2015). Lastly, maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process is essential for enhancing confirmability. Reflexivity involves critically reflecting on one's biases, assumptions, and experiences that might have influenced the research process (Finlay, 2002). By continuously interrogating and challenging their perspectives, the researcher minimised the impact of their biases on the study's findings, thereby enhancing its confirmability.

3.10.4 Transferability

Transferability, also known as external validity or generalisability, refers to the extent to which the findings of a qualitative research study conducted in a specific context or with participants can be applied or transferred to other settings or populations. It involves assessing the relevance and applicability of study findings beyond the immediate research context (Nowell, 2017). Transferability is particularly relevant in

research because studies are often context-specific and involve a small sample size (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Transferability is important in the study as high school environments vary in demographics, socioeconomic status, teaching methodologies, and cultural factors, influencing the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. Therefore, ensuring the transferability of the findings beyond the specific high schools in the Pinetown district was crucial for making meaningful and actionable conclusions that could broadly inform educational policies and practices. However, achieving transferability in research posed challenges. One challenge is the uniqueness of each research setting, which limits the direct applicability of findings to other contexts.

Several strategies were employed to enhance transferability in research. Firstly, the researcher provided rich and detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and methodologies to allow readers to assess the applicability of findings to their contexts (Nowell, 2017). Triangulation, which involves using multiple data sources or methods to corroborate findings, strengthens transferability by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Using multiple data sources or methods, the researcher increased the robustness of their findings and addressed potential biases in the research process. Additionally, engaging with participants from diverse backgrounds and settings enhanced the transferability of findings by capturing a broader range of perspectives and experiences.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in the study. Recognising the complexity of this relationship, the study integrates qualitative and quantitative research paradigms within a mixed methods approach. The interpretivist paradigm was selected to delve into the subjective experiences and perceptions of lowing for a nuanced exploration of self-confidence and its impact on academic performance. The chapter began by outlining the methodological framework, including the rationale behind an interpretivist paradigm and a mixed methods approach. Detailed discussions followed on the sampling method for selecting research participants, the ethical considerations involved, and

the procedures for gaining access to participants. Further, the chapter elaborated on the tools and techniques employed for data generation, including thematic and statistical analysis methods. The chapter also addressed the concepts of validity and rigour, emphasising the importance of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability in establishing the trustworthiness of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4. Introduction

The former chapter detailed the research methodology, providing an overview of the approaches and techniques used to gather and analyse data for this study. This current chapter presents the results, focusing on the findings related to the relationship between perceived self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in the Pinetown district. Due to the mixed-method nature of this study, a quantitative analysis of results was presented first and then followed by the presentation of findings from the qualitative data. The study initially aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- Explore the perceived self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners.
- Determine how learners' perceived self-confidence relates to academic performance and
- Determine the factors influencing self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools.

To measure learners' levels of self-confidence, this study employed the General Self-Confidence Questionnaire (GSCQ), a validated instrument adapted from the academic self-efficacy and confidence scales used in educational psychology research (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014). The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 25 items designed to assess participants' self-confidence levels in achieving the above objectives. Items were scored using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The tool was selected for its strong alignment with the theoretical underpinnings of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), particularly the construct of competence, which forms a core component of learner motivation and is closely related to self-confidence (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The questionnaire assessed multiple dimensions of self-confidence, including learners' beliefs about their ability to succeed in academic tasks, manage time, and stay motivated, which were directly relevant to the study's objectives.

The choice of this particular instrument was further justified by its robust psychometric properties. A reliability analysis conducted during the pilot phase revealed an exceptionally high Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.99, indicating excellent internal consistency among the items. This suggests that the questionnaire items were highly correlated and measured the underlying construct of self-confidence reliably and consistently across respondents. High reliability is essential in educational research to ensure that results are both valid and replicable (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Additionally, previous studies have demonstrated the tool's predictive validity in relation to academic performance across diverse school settings (Honicke & Broadbent, 2016). Given the socio-educational diversity of the Pinetown District, the GSCQ provided a suitable and context-sensitive measure for capturing learners' confidence in their academic abilities.

All statistical analyses of quantitative data were regulated using **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences** (Version 28). Pearson's correlation was performed to explore the relationship between self-confidence (as measured by the General Self-Confidence Questionnaire) and academic performance, focusing on survey scores and overall average percentages. Additionally, an independent-sample *t*-test was used to compare self-confidence scores between males and females. At the same time, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined differences in self-confidence across grade levels (Grades 8-12).

4.1 Demographic characteristics of learner participants

The study involved 94 learner participants (28 males, 65 females, and 1 participant of an undisclosed gender). The participants ranged in age from 13 to 18, with a minimum age of 13 and a maximum age of 18. The mean age was **15.07 years (SD=12.40)**.

Table 1: Demographics characteristics of learners

Category	Subcategory	Count	Percentage (%)
Age	13-14 years old	41	43.62
	15-16 years old	32	34.04
	17-18 years old	21	22.34
Gender	Male	28	29.79
	Female	65	69.15
	Prefer not to say	1	1.06
Grades	Grade 8	24	25.53
	Grade 9	28	29.79
	Grade 10	9	9.57
	Grade 11	23	24.47
	Grade 12	10	10.64

4.2 Self-confidence of learners

The total scores were derived from the **General Self-Confidence Questionnaire**, administered to participants as part of the study. The General Self-Confidence Questionnaire, consisting of 25 items, is a validated tool widely accepted for public use. As such, its original validity, as established by its creators, is typically reported rather than retested. In this instance, the analysis revealed a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.99, indicating excellent internal consistency. This result confirms that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for measuring self-confidence. This questionnaire consisted of 25 statements, with responses rated on a scale from 1 (No) to 5 (Too Much), resulting in a possible total score range of 25 to 125. These scores reflect the participants' perceived self-confidence levels, with 25 representing the lowest and 125 the highest. To analyse the data, the scores were categorised into three levels: low (≤ 50), moderate (51–99), and high (≥ 100). A low score indicates significant self-doubt and uncertainty, moderate scores reflect an average or balanced self-confidence level and high scores represent a strong sense of self-assurance. Among the 94 participants who completed the questionnaire, 1 (1.06%) individual scored in the low self-confidence category, 69 fell within the moderate range (73.40%), and 24 (25.53%) exhibited high self-confidence.

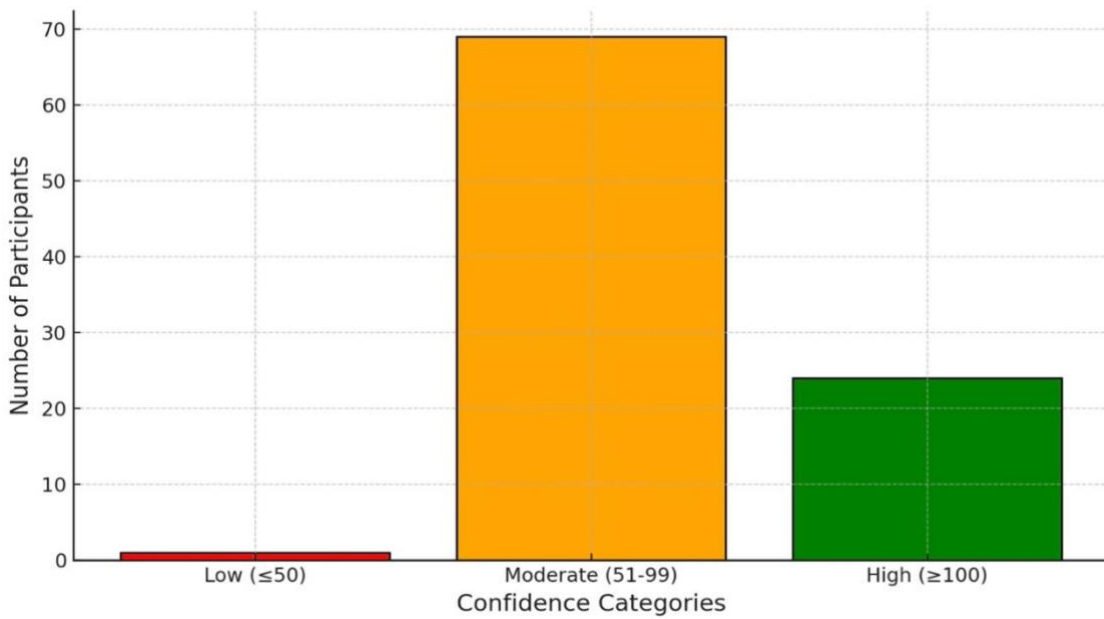


Figure 1: Distribution of self-confidence levels

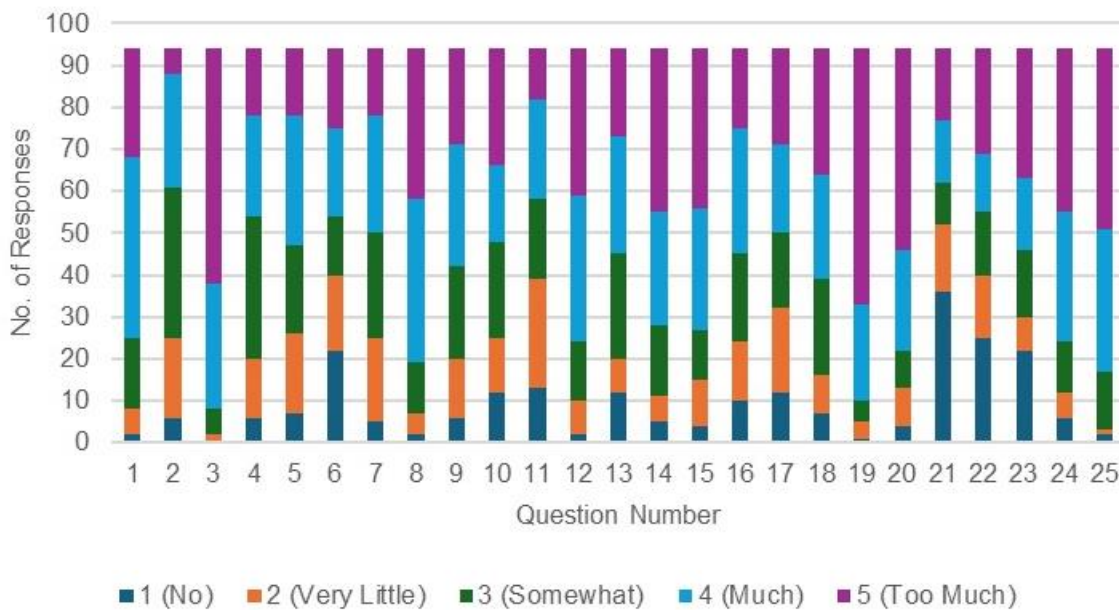


Figure 2: Distribution of responses for each question on the General Self-Confidence Questionnaire

Figure 2 (above) illustrates the distribution of responses for each question on the General Self-Confidence Questionnaire, showcasing how participants rated their agreement or disagreement with the statements provided. The Likert scale categories, such as "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree," are

represented, allowing for a clear comparison of response patterns across all questions. This helps to identify trends, dominant opinions, or variations in perceptions among the respondents.

4.3 Gender comparison

The study compared self-confidence scores between males and females using an independent-sample t-test to see if gender influences self-confidence levels. Males ($N = 28$) had an average score of 88.18 with a standard deviation of 13.10 and a standard error of 2.13, while females ($N = 65$) scored slightly higher, with an average of 90.82, a standard deviation of 11.82, and a standard error of 1.58. The t-test result ($t = -1.026$, $df = 92$, $p = 0.307$) showed no significant difference between the groups, meaning gender does not have a notable impact on self-confidence in this study. One participant who did not disclose their gender was excluded from the analysis due to insufficient data. A one-way ANOVA was also used to compare self-confidence scores across grade levels (Grades 8 to 12) to identify significant differences based on grade. These statistical tests provided a detailed understanding of variations in self-confidence by gender and grade level.

4.4 Grade level comparison

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare self-confidence scores across different grade levels. The analysis displayed a significant difference in self-confidence scores between the grade levels, with an F-value of 2.67 and a p-value of 0.037. This means that grade level does have a statistically significant impact on self-confidence in this study. Table 4 of mean survey scores by grade level shows that higher-graders generally had higher self-confidence scores. The mean survey scores increased from Grade 8 to Grade 12, with Grade 12 learners having the highest average score. The one-way ANOVA results further confirmed the difference, showing that the group variation was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that grade level is an essential factor influencing self-confidence scores.

Table 2: ANOVA - Mean survey scores by grade level

Grade	N	Mean Survey Score	Standard Deviation
8	20	71.35	9.92
9	25	83.80	5.73
10	12	91.75	10.31
11	24	94.92	9.38
12	13	98.46	9.85

Table 3: One-way ANOVA for grade levels

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	1574.239	4	393.560	24.36	< .001
Within Groups	13669.521	89	153.586		
Total	15243.760	93			

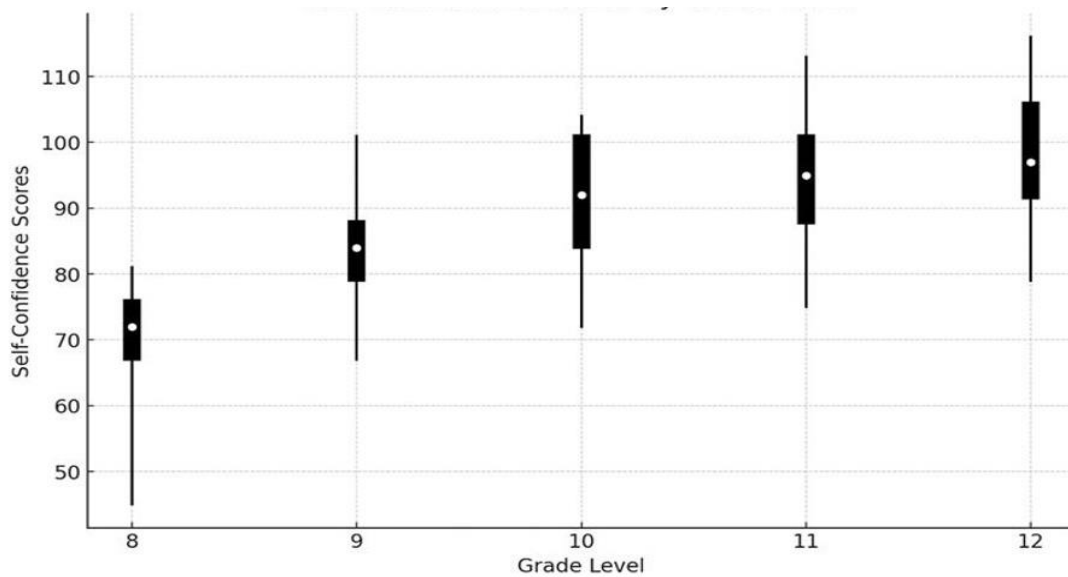


Figure 3: Box plot of self-confidence scores by grade level

4.5 Results of the academic performance

The academic performance of the 94 participants was assessed using their term three school report cards. When the data was generated, the Term 3 report card was the only one available, which explains its specific focus in this analysis. Table 4 (below) categorises the learners' percentages into seven levels of the school's grading system. The table shows the aggregate for all subjects, which displays that most learners' scores fall within the 50-69% range, with a total of 23 learners each in both the 60-69% and 50-59% ranges, indicating a significant portion of average to above-average performance. Fewer learners achieved scores in the extreme ranges, with only two scoring in the 20-29% range and another 2 in the 90-100% range. This distribution reflects a broad spread of academic performance across the learners.

Table 4: Distribution of learner aggregates by score range

Range (%)	Aggregates	Count
0 - 29	25, 25	2
30 - 39	31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 37, 37, 38	9
40 - 49	40, 41, 43, 46, 46, 47, 48	7
50 - 59	50, 51, 51, 51, 52, 52, 52, 52, 53, 53, 53, 54, 54, 55, 55, 55, 56, 56, 57, 57, 57, 59, 59	23
60 - 69	61, 62, 62, 62, 64, 64, 64, 64, 65, 65, 65, 65, 66, 66, 66, 66, 67, 67, 67, 67, 68, 68, 69	23
70 - 79	71, 71, 72, 72, 73, 73, 73, 74, 77, 77, 78, 78, 79	13
80 - 100	80, 81, 81, 82, 82, 83, 84, 84, 84, 85, 85, 87, 88, 88, 91, 93	16

Figure 4 (below) was generated to display the total number of learners who passed and failed, providing a clear overview of their academic outcomes. A pass indicates achieving the minimum required grade or standard to move on to the next grade. On the other hand, failing indicates not meeting the minimum required grade or standard, which may result in repeating the grade. This visual representation highlights the overall performance distribution within the group, offering insights into the learners' achievements.

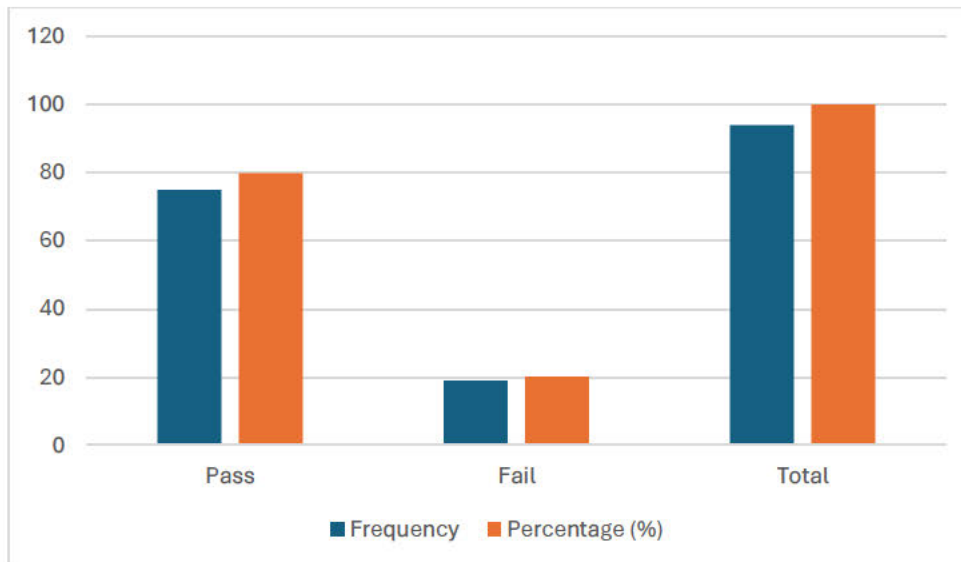


Figure 4: Frequency distribution of report cards/remarks (Pass/Fail and the total number of report cards)

4.6 Relationship between self-confidence and academic performance

A Pearson correlation analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between self-confidence and academic performance, with a correlation coefficient of 0.650. This indicates that higher self-confidence is associated with improved academic performance. The relationship is statistically significant, as evidenced by a p-value of less than 0.001, implying that the probability of this connection arising by random chance is exceedingly minimal. The significance is confirmed at a very high confidence level. The very high confidence level corresponds to a **99% or higher** confidence level in statistical analysis. This means we are 99% confident (or more) that the observed relationship between self-confidence and academic performance is not due to chance. The p-value of less than 0.001 reinforces this by indicating a less than 0.1% probability of the result occurring randomly.

Table 5: Pearson correlation analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation coefficient (r)	p-value	Significance level
Self-confidence	Academic performance	0.650	< 0.001	Highly significant

4.7 Regression analysis

The regression analysis results indicate a significant relationship between questionnaire scale scores and the academic outcome variable, such as self-confidence or academic performance (pass or fail). The intercept value 20.500 represents the predicted outcome when the questionnaire score is zero. Additionally, the coefficient for the questionnaire score, 0.450, suggests that each one-unit increase in the score corresponds to an increase of 0.450 units in the outcome variable. The intercept and the questionnaire score coefficients are statistically significant, with t-values of 3.940 and 23.789, respectively, and p-values of less than 0.001. These findings highlight a strong and meaningful connection between the questionnaire scores and the analysed outcome.

Following quantitative data analysis, qualitative data involving teachers was also analysed. Ten teacher participants from the Pinetown district participated in the study. The Pinetown district comprises both public and private schools located in urban areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Teachers' involvement in the study is to provide critical insights and support in understanding how self-confidence impacts student achievement. Teachers are uniquely positioned to observe and influence learners' behaviour, attitudes, and performance in the classroom. Their role includes identifying learners' confidence levels, implementing strategies to foster self-assurance, and assessing its effects on academic outcomes. Teachers help ensure that the study reflects the realities of the educational environment while offering practical recommendations to enhance student success. Additionally, their feedback and expertise contribute to refining interventions, making the study's findings more applicable and sustainable within the school context.

The demographic characteristics of the teacher participants were as follows: The participants ranged in age from 23 to 62, with an equal gender distribution of 50% male and 50% female. These teachers taught in grades 8 to 12, and their teaching experience varied significantly, ranging from 2 to 40 years. This diversity in age, gender, and expertise provided a broad perspective for the study.

Table 6: Demographic characteristics of participants (The names are pseudonyms)

Participant	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Teaching Experience (in years)	Subjects taught	Grades taught
Max	Male	32	B-Sc	8-10	Technical drawing	10-12
Ben	Male	62	B-Ed	35-40	Mathematics	9-12
Jay	Male	28	B-Ed	3-5	Tourism, Consumer studies	10-12
David	Male	35	B-Ed	5-10	Life Orientation	8-12
John	Male	51	B-Ed	10-15	Natural and Physical sciences	9-12
Mia	Female	34	B-Ed	5-10	EMS, Accounting, IsiZulu	8-12
Kim	Female	36	B-Ed	5-10	Afrikaans	8-12
Zoe	Female	24	B-Ed	2-3	Social sciences, Tourism	8-11
Lisa	Female	31	B-Ed	8-10	Natural and Life Sciences	9-12
Ava	Female	36	B-Ed	8-10	Mathematics	8-12

The role of self-confidence in learners' academic performance, as perceived by teachers, was evaluated through thematic analysis. This method involved identifying and organising data into themes, which were then grouped into sub-themes to capture key patterns and insights. This structured approach ensures that the findings clearly and systematically reflect teachers' perspectives.

According to the teachers, self-confidence is a crucial trait that empowers learners to approach academic tasks positively, take risks, and persevere through challenges. It is described as a sense of self-assurance and belief in one's abilities, which directly influences motivation, resilience, and engagement in the learning process. Teachers emphasised that self-confidence fosters a growth mindset, allowing learners to view challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than obstacles. John explained, *"Self-confidence helps learners develop a sense of competence and self-efficacy, enabling them to believe in their ability to succeed, which directly influences their motivation and academic efforts."* Kim noted, *"Learners with high self-confidence often exhibit resilience in the face of setbacks, using failures as learning opportunities and bouncing back stronger."* Overall, self-confidence is foundational to academic success, enabling learners to navigate academic demands with determination and optimism. According to the participants, self-confidence is fundamental for academic performance as it empowers learners to approach learning with a positive mindset, take risks, and persevere through challenges.

Theme 1: The role of self-confidence

Subtheme 1: Self-confidence as a driver of participation

Self-confidence encourages learners to actively engage in academic activities, including classroom volunteering, tackling challenges, and assuming leadership roles. Confident learners are more likely to take the initiative and embrace opportunities for learning and growth. As John noted, *"Learning with high self-confidence often volunteer to answer questions in class and participate actively in discussions without fear of making mistakes."* This willingness to engage reduces the fear of failure, creating a cycle where participation further enhances confidence. Self-confidence fosters an open mindset, enabling learners to view mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than setbacks. Teachers and peers also play a role in reinforcing this confidence by providing support and encouragement during such engagements.

Subtheme 2: Positive reinforcement through success

Confident learners often experience a reinforcing cycle where successful academic engagements bolster their belief in their abilities. Success builds their sense of

competence and motivates them to take on new challenges. Lisa emphasised, *"Confident learners tend to set ambitious academic goals and are persistent in their efforts to achieve them."* This demonstrates how success, nurtured by self-confidence, promotes resilience and motivation in learners. Over time, repeated positive outcomes solidify their belief in their capacity to achieve, fostering a growth-oriented mindset. Additionally, recognition and acknowledgement from teachers and peers further strengthen this cycle, making learners more determined and focused on achieving their objectives.

Theme 2: Barriers to developing self-confidence

Subtheme 1: Academic pressure and fear of failure

High academic expectations and the fear of making mistakes can significantly reduce self-confidence. Learners who face constant pressure to excel may develop anxiety and a fear of taking risks, which hinders their willingness to participate or attempt new tasks. Kim noted, *"Negative experiences in the past, such as failing a test or being criticised by a teacher or peer, can undermine learners' self-confidence and make them hesitant to take risks in the future."* This highlights how a culture of excessive pressure or criticism can long-term affect learners' confidence. Teachers and institutions must foster a supportive environment where mistakes are treated as valuable learning experiences rather than failures.

Subtheme 2: Lack of family support and role models

The absence of family encouragement or exposure to positive role models can hinder confidence-building. Learners who lack emotional and moral support from their families may feel isolated and less motivated to pursue their academic goals. Ava shared, *"Lack of family support or exposure to positive role models can significantly impact a student's ability to build confidence."* Furthermore, without role models to emulate, learners may struggle to visualise success or develop the belief that they can achieve their aspirations. The presence of supportive family members and mentors who emphasise perseverance and self-belief is critical in nurturing confidence in learners.

Theme 3: Influence of external factors on self-confidence

Subtheme 1: Family support

Family plays a crucial role in boosting learners' confidence. A supportive family environment gives learners a sense of security, encouragement, and motivation to excel academically. Jay explained, *"Family support can provide learners with a sense of security and encouragement, significantly boosting their self-confidence and motivation to succeed academically."* Parents and guardians who actively engage in their children's learning journey, celebrate their achievements, and guide them through challenges help build self-confidence. Creating an open and communicative household also allows learners to express their concerns without fear of judgment.

Subtheme 2: Peer relationships

Positive peer interactions create a sense of belonging and validation that encourages participation and confidence. Learners who feel accepted and valued by their peers have a greater tendency to participate actively in academic and extracurricular activities. David remarked, *"Positive peer relationships create a supportive network where learners feel accepted and valued, encouraging them to engage more in their studies."* Conversely, negative peer interactions, such as bullying or exclusion, can severely damage a student's self-esteem and hinder their ability to participate effectively. Schools that foster collaborative and inclusive environments help strengthen these positive peer relationships, enhancing learner confidence.

Theme 4: Strategies for building self-confidence

Subtheme 1: Constructive feedback

Providing feedback highlighting strengths while encouraging improvement helps learners see challenges as growth opportunities. Constructive feedback allows learners to focus on their potential and areas for improvement without feeling discouraged. Mia observed, *"Constructive feedback helps learners recognise their strengths and motivates them to improve."* By acknowledging learners' efforts and achievements, teachers can inspire them to take on new challenges positively. This

approach also encourages learners to develop resilience as they learn to view constructive criticism as a personal and academic growth tool.

Subtheme 2: Inclusive classroom environments

Encouraging a growth mindset through classroom discussions and activities fosters confidence. Inclusive environments where learners feel respected and valued help reduce anxiety and promote participation. Max noted, *"Emphasizing effort and learning from mistakes has positively impacted learners' self-confidence."* This approach normalises effort and celebrates progress, helping learners understand that perseverance achieves success. Teachers can further enhance inclusivity by employing diverse teaching strategies that cater to varying learning styles and ensuring every student feels seen and heard in the classroom.

Theme 5: The role of self-confidence in specific subjects and activities

Subtheme 1: Confidence in language arts

Learners with high confidence in language arts participate actively in discussions and excel in writing, reading, and public speaking tasks. Confidence in language arts enables learners to articulate their thoughts clearly and engage in meaningful interactions with peers and teachers. Ben and Zoe stated, *"In language arts, learners with high self-confidence are more likely to participate actively and excel in their reading and writing abilities."* Furthermore, these learners are more likely to seek feedback on their work, which helps them refine their skills and achieve better outcomes. Creating a supportive atmosphere where learners feel comfortable expressing themselves is essential in cultivating this confidence.

Subtheme 2: Confidence in Performing Arts

Confidence is essential for creativity, self-expression, and public performance in performing arts. Learners with high self-confidence in this area are more willing to take risks, try new approaches, and showcase their talents. Lisa remarked, *"In performing arts, self-confidence enables learners to express themselves creatively and perform in front of an audience."* Confidence in performing arts also helps learners manage stage fright and develop resilience to handle constructive criticism. Schools can

support this by providing frequent performance opportunities and fostering an encouraging environment where learners feel safe to experiment and grow their talents.

4.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter analyses the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in the Pinetown district. Quantitative results show most learners exhibit moderate self-confidence, with higher grades correlating with increased confidence. A strong positive relationship ($r = 0.650$) between self-confidence and academic performance is evident, while gender differences are insignificant. Qualitative findings from teacher input highlight self-confidence as essential for scholarly engagement and resilience. Key themes include the impact of participation, barriers like academic pressure and lack of family support, and the role of external factors like peer relationships. Strategies such as constructive feedback and inclusive classrooms are recommended to boost learner confidence. The findings reinforce the critical link between self-confidence and academic success.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5. Introduction

The previous chapter presented this study's findings, comprehensively analysing the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in the Pinetown district. The data revealed significant trends, including the positive correlation between self-confidence and educational achievement, the critical role of teacher feedback and reinforcement, and the influence of social, familial, and institutional factors on learners' confidence levels.

This chapter synthesises those findings, exploring their implications in the context of existing literature and addressing the research questions steering this study:

1. What is the perceived self-confidence of learners in Pinetown district high schools?
2. How does self-confidence relate to academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners?
3. What factors influence the relationship between self-confidence and learners' academic performance in Pinetown district high schools?

5.1 The relationship between self-confidence and academic performance with classroom engagement

The study found a strong correlation between self-confidence and academic performance among learners in the Pinetown district. Quantitative data demonstrated that higher-confident learners consistently achieved better grades and participated more actively in classroom activities. Teachers supported this observation, noting that confident learners displayed extraordinary perseverance, willingly engaged in challenging tasks, and sought support when faced with difficulties. These findings resonate with Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2014), who emphasised that self-confidence is a critical predictor of academic success. Confident learners set higher goals, maintain focus, and show resilience in the face of setbacks. Similarly, Chemers (2011) highlighted that confidence strengthens students' persistence, enabling them to overcome barriers to success. For example, learners in mathematics classes who demonstrated confidence were observed to tackle complex problems more frequently

than their less confident peers, resulting in higher performance. Conversely, learners with low confidence often disengage from academic tasks.

Teachers noted that such learners hesitated to participate in class, fearing failure or judgment. This aligns with Honicke and Broadbent (2016), who found that low confidence is associated with avoidance behaviours, such as reluctance to attempt new or challenging tasks. Such behaviours were evident among learners in this study who, despite having the potential to succeed, underperformed due to a lack of belief in their abilities. Interestingly, some confident learners in the Pinetown district underperformed academically. This inconsistency suggests the presence of external mediating factors, such as limited access to resources, socioeconomic challenges, or varying teaching quality. Stankov (2014) argued that while confidence is crucial, its impact is often moderated by contextual factors, such as school infrastructure and socioeconomic conditions. In contrast to the findings of Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2014), who found a strong link between confidence and achievement in other regions, this study's inconsistencies may stem from the unique socioeconomic and educational landscape in South Africa, where resource limitations may counteract the positive effects of confidence in specific learners.

5.2 The role of positive reinforcement and teacher feedback

Teachers play a transformative role in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic engagement. The study revealed that learners who received consistent positive reinforcement and constructive teacher feedback showed improved self-confidence and educational outcomes. Teachers noted that recognising learners' efforts, providing specific guidance, and celebrating their achievements motivated learners to strive for success. These findings align with Cheung and Pomerantz (2011), who highlighted the importance of teacher affirmation in fostering students' belief in their abilities. For instance, a learner who received praise for their progress in science was more likely to take on additional challenges in the subject, thereby improving their performance.

On the other hand, negative feedback or lack of recognition had detrimental effects on learners' confidence. Teachers observed that harsh criticism led to withdrawal from classroom participation, a trend corroborated by Dee and West (2011), who noted that

negative teacher-student interactions erode students' confidence and engagement. However, Schunk and Pajares (2010) argued that even neutral feedback can positively impact when delivered in a supportive tone, emphasising the importance of communication skills in educational settings. For example, a teacher providing neutral yet constructive feedback on a learner's essay helped the student feel encouraged to improve without feeling discouraged. These findings were consistent with existing literature, but inconsistencies were observed when compared to the work of Dee and West (2011), where negative feedback was seen to lower confidence uniformly. The difference may arise from the cultural context of this study, where learners in South Africa might respond differently to input due to varying classroom norms and teacher-student relationships.

5.3 Family and home environment

The study featured the significant role of family environments in shaping learners' self-confidence and academic performance. Learners from supportive households, where parents actively participated in their education, demonstrated higher confidence levels and better academic outcomes. Parents who monitored their children's progress, offered guidance, and celebrated their achievements played a crucial role in fostering resilience and motivation. Zareena (2019) found similar results, emphasising that parental involvement is a key determinant of academic success. For instance, learners whose parents attended parent-teacher meetings and provided study resources reported feeling more confident in their abilities. Conversely, learners from unsupportive or stressful home environments struggled with self-confidence and academic engagement.

Teachers noted that these learners often faced challenges such as lack of encouragement, financial constraints, or familial conflict, which hindered their performance. Rahimi (2019) linked such family dysfunction to reduced academic motivation, highlighting the importance of school-based support systems, such as counselling services, to address these gaps. The findings were consistent with Rahimi's (2019) work, though some inconsistencies arose due to the specific socioeconomic challenges faced by learners in the Pinetown district. It is hypothesised that learners from under-resourced families in South Africa may face unique pressures that exacerbate challenges to their academic engagement, such as a lack of access

to educational resources, which may not have been as prevalent in Rahimi's (2019) study, which was conducted in a different cultural and economic context.

5.4 Subject-specific variations and gender differences

The relationship between self-confidence and academic performance varied across subjects. The study found that self-confidence was crucial in mathematics and science, where learners needed to believe in their analytical and problem-solving abilities. Rahman and Arifin (2022) emphasised that confidence in these disciplines drives persistence and engagement, enabling learners to overcome challenges and achieve success. Gender differences in self-confidence were also evident. Male learners often exhibited higher confidence in STEM subjects, while female learners demonstrated greater confidence in language-based disciplines.

These findings align with Stoet and Geary (2018), who attributed these patterns to societal expectations and cultural norms. For example, societal stereotypes associating males with STEM success and females with language proficiency may shape learners' confidence levels in these areas. However, Else-Quest (2012) argued that such gender differences may stem more from external influences, such as teacher biases, than from inherent abilities, suggesting further investigation and interventions to address these disparities. This study's inconsistencies with Else-Quest's (2012) findings could be due to differences in societal norms in South Africa compared to other contexts. Gendered expectations may be more pronounced in certain regions, impacting learners' confidence in ways not reflected in different educational systems.

5.5 Extracurricular activities and holistic development

Participation in extracurricular activities emerged as a key contributor to learners' self-confidence and academic performance. The study highlighted how sports, cultural clubs, and leadership roles provided learners with opportunities to build resilience, hone skills, and gain recognition, positively influencing their academic outcomes. For example, a learner serving as the debate club president mentioned that this role enhanced their public speaking skills and improved their confidence in presenting ideas in academic settings such as oral presentations. These findings align with those of Modecki, Blomfield Neira, and Barber (2018), who argue that extracurricular

involvement enhances self-concept by fostering a sense of competence and social connectedness. By providing learners with a platform to excel outside the classroom, such activities contribute to their overall development, promoting leadership, time management, and collaborative skills. For instance, learners who participated in team sports developed critical thinking and teamwork abilities that translated into improved classroom participation and problem-solving skills.

However, not all effects of extracurricular activities were universally positive. Mahoney (2014) cautioned that overcommitment to extracurricular engagements could detract from academic focus, leading to burnout or poor academic performance. In this study, some learners involved in multiple activities expressed difficulty balancing their commitments, resulting in lower grades in certain subjects. This observation underscores the need for balanced involvement and time management to optimise the benefits of extracurricular participation. The accessibility of extracurricular activities varied among learners due to socioeconomic disparities. Learners from under-resourced schools or low-income families often lacked access to structured extracurricular programs, limiting their opportunities for holistic development. This aligns with the findings of Eccles and Barber (1999), who emphasised that equitable access to extracurricular activities is essential to ensure all learners benefit from these opportunities. Schools in the Pinetown district could address this gap by developing low-cost or inclusive programs to ensure broader participation. These findings revealed some inconsistencies with Mahoney's (2014) findings. While he observed a generally negative impact of over-involvement in extracurricular activities, the effects in the Pinetown district may differ due to the level of access and the cultural value placed on extracurricular engagement in South African schools. This suggests a need for further exploration into the local context of extracurricular activities.

5.6 Inconsistencies and contextual considerations

While the study's findings aligned with much of the existing literature, certain inconsistencies and contextual nuances emerged, highlighting the complexity of the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. One notable inconsistency was in gender differences regarding self-confidence. While the study found clear patterns of male learners exhibiting higher confidence in STEM subjects and female learners showing greater confidence in language-based disciplines, Else-

Quest (2012) reported minimal gender differences in self-confidence levels. These discrepancies could be attributed to cultural and societal factors specific to the Pinetown district. For instance, societal expectations and stereotypes that associate males with mathematical and scientific success and females with linguistic strengths may have amplified these differences. This suggests the need for localised research to explore how cultural norms and school practices influence gendered confidence patterns.

Another inconsistency involved the impact of overconfidence. While the study observed that most highly confident learners performed well academically, a small subset of confident learners underperformed. This aligns with Stankov et al. (2014), who noted that overconfidence can lead to complacency and poor academic outcomes when not supported by actual competence. This study often linked such cases to external factors, such as a lack of rigorous academic support, insufficient resources, or ineffective teaching methods. For example, a learner with high confidence in mathematics but lacked access to tutoring or quality learning materials struggled to meet performance expectations.

These inconsistencies highlight the value of understanding the interplay between individual traits and contextual factors. Factors such as socioeconomic status, teacher quality, school infrastructure, and cultural expectations mediate the impact of self-confidence on academic outcomes. For instance, a confident learner in a well-resourced school with strong teacher support is more likely to translate their confidence into academic success than a learner in an under-resourced environment. The findings also suggest the need for targeted interventions to address contextual disparities. Schools in the Pinetown district could implement mentorship programs, provide equitable access to resources, and offer teacher training to ensure that all learners, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the support they need to succeed. Additionally, fostering a growth mindset among learners, as proposed by Dweck (2006), could help mitigate the risks of overconfidence by encouraging learners to focus on effort and skill development rather than relying solely on self-belief.

5.7 Limitations

Researching the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners presented various limitations that require attention. According to Smith (2019), a limitation is a restriction or constraint that defines the boundaries or extent of something. Limitations and problems are generally inherent in most research projects. For this project, the following issues/limitations were encountered:

- Conducting interviews required participants to disclose some information, which was sometimes personal. However, some participants found it challenging to do so. To ensure that participants were comfortable sharing information, the researcher only asked questions that served the purpose of the study and did not ask any personal questions that were irrelevant to the study. Additionally, the researcher assured participants of partial confidentiality, stating that information shared with the researcher would not be disclosed to individuals not involved in the study.
- Researcher bias - Teachers may have had biases that influenced their responses or behaviour during the study. For example, suppose a teacher believed self-confidence was essential for academic success. In that case, they might have inadvertently provided more positive feedback or support to learners who exhibited higher levels of self-confidence. To mitigate bias, the researcher strictly adhered to the prescribed methods to ensure all aspects aligned with the study's objectives.
- Limitation of participant availability - The research targeted learners in grades 8-12 in Pinetown district high schools, but the sample size was limited by the number of learners who agreed to participate. Some learners declined to participate due to a lack of interest or academic workload. Additionally, participation required parental consent, and some learners could not provide this, reducing the sample size. While the researcher preferred a greater effort number of participants to strengthen the study's validity and make the findings more robust, these limitations meant that the sample was smaller and may not have fully represented the entire population of Pinetown district high school

learners. Consequently, the results were not generalisable to other regions or subjects.

- Self-report data collection method - Measuring self-confidence was inherently subjective and using a self-report scale introduced potential bias. Participants may have provided socially desirable responses rather than truthful ones, influenced by desirability bias. Additionally, some learners lacked awareness of their self-confidence levels, so their reactions did not accurately reflect their true feelings. As a result, the research findings may not have fully captured the participants' genuine self-confidence levels or their relationship to academic performance.
- The lack of control over extraneous variables - The research focused on the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance. However, learners' educational performance was influenced by several elements, such as socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and teacher effectiveness. Therefore, it was challenging to isolate the effect of self-confidence on academic performance, and extraneous variables may have influenced the research results.
- Variation in teaching style - The variation in teaching styles among teachers made it challenging to control for the effects of the teacher's approach on learners' academic performance. This limitation also made it difficult to isolate the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in specific learning areas.
- Limited generalizability - The findings from a study conducted in one Pinetown district high school were not generalised to other high schools or educational contexts. This limitation reduced the external validity of the study's results.

The limitations discussed in the above study were considered when researching the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners. To overcome these limitations, the researcher employed rigorous research methods and regarded them as alternative data collection methods. Additionally, the researcher ensured that the study design was ethical, and that the data analysis was accurate to ensure that the research results were reliable and valid. The research has provided valuable insights into the topic under study.

5.8 Recommendations

The findings suggest a need for further research to explore the areas not fully covered in this study. Teachers play a pivotal role in nurturing self-confidence in learners. Creating a supportive classroom environment is essential, where learners feel valued and safe to express themselves without fear of judgment. Positive reinforcement and constructive feedback can significantly boost confidence by highlighting learners' efforts and achievements. Teachers should adopt differentiated teaching methods to cater to their learners' diverse needs and abilities. This approach ensures that each student can experience success at their level, fostering a belief in their capabilities. Encouraging learners to set realistic, incremental goals and celebrating their accomplishments can help them build a sense of competence and motivation. Incorporating growth mindset principles into teaching practices is another effective strategy. Emphasising that intelligence and abilities can prosper through effort and perseverance helps learners see challenges as opportunities for growth. Additionally, teachers can establish mentorship and peer-support programs where learners collaborate and learn from one another, creating a collaborative and confidence-boosting environment.

Policymakers and education departments should recognise SC as a critical factor in academic performance and develop policies that promote its inclusion in teaching practices and curriculum design. Allocating school resources for psychological support services, such as school counsellors and SC-focused workshops, is essential for addressing learners' emotional and mental well-being. Monitoring and evaluating SC levels among learners and assessing the effectiveness of interventions can guide improvements and adjustments in educational strategies. Policymakers should also implement equity programs to reduce disparities in SC among learners from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring equal access to supportive resources. Public campaigns can further raise awareness among stakeholders, emphasising the importance of SC in education and encouraging collaborative efforts to address this critical aspect.

Parents profoundly impact their children's self-confidence and can contribute significantly to their academic success. Creating a supportive home environment where children feel valued and encouraged is critical. Parents should avoid overly

critical or comparative remarks that may undermine their child's self-esteem. Modelling confidence in daily interactions and decision-making can give children positive examples to emulate. Encouraging autonomy by allowing children to make decisions and take accountability for their actions helps build their sense of independence and capability. Offering consistent praise for effort, rather than solely focusing on outcomes, reinforces the importance of perseverance and process in achieving success. Lastly, parents should actively communicate with their children, discussing school experiences, challenges, and achievements to provide emotional support and guidance that fosters self-confidence.

By working together across these domains, stakeholders can create an ecosystem that enhances SC in learners and supports their overall academic and personal development. This study has significantly donated to the existing literature on the topic. Despite its limitations, the findings have provided a valuable foundation for future research in the field. Hopefully, this research will be helpful for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

5.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter synthesises the study's findings on self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in the Pinetown district. A strong positive correlation was observed, with confident learners achieving higher grades and participating more actively, though external factors like socioeconomic conditions moderated this relationship. Teachers significantly influenced self-confidence through positive reinforcement, while unsupportive environments hindered it. Family support, gender differences in confidence across subjects, and the benefits of extracurricular activities were also highlighted. The chapter notes some inconsistencies with existing literature, particularly regarding overconfidence and sociocultural factors, emphasising the need for targeted interventions to foster self-confidence and improve academic outcomes.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6. Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the study's results, highlighting key findings, addressing its limitations, and offering recommendations for future research and practical applications. Building on these insights, this final chapter concludes the study by synthesising its main components, exploring theoretical and practical implications, and reflecting on the research process. Additionally, it presents final thoughts to encapsulate the study's significance and proposes directions for further investigation.

6.1 Summary of the study

This research delved into the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in high schools in the Pinetown district. It aimed to understand how self-confidence influences learners' academic performance, focusing on key factors such as gender, socioeconomic background, and teaching practices. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative interviews, was employed to gather comprehensive data.

Key findings revealed a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and academic performance. Self-confident learners consistently achieved elevated academic outcomes, demonstrating greater resilience and problem-solving skills in their studies. Gender differences were noted, with female learners often reporting lower self-confidence despite achieving comparable or higher academic results, highlighting the need for targeted interventions. Socioeconomic background emerged as another influential factor, with learners from supportive and resource-rich environments displaying higher levels of self-confidence and better academic performance. Additionally, the study found that effective teaching practices, such as encouragement and constructive feedback, played a critical role in fostering self-confidence and academic success.

6.2 Implications for theory and practice

The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of the interplay between psychological and educational factors. By reinforcing the positive correlation between

self-confidence and academic performance, the findings validate existing theories emphasising self-efficacy as a determinant of academic success. This research also highlights the multifaceted nature of self-confidence, which is shaped not only by individual traits but also by environmental and contextual factors. The real-world applications of this study are far-reaching for teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Teachers can design and implement targeted interventions to build self-confidence among learners, such as mentorship programs, peer-support groups, and workshops focusing on self-awareness and self-empowerment. Classroom strategies like providing constructive feedback, celebrating small achievements, and promoting a growth mindset can help cultivate a supportive learning environment. For policymakers, the findings underscore the importance of addressing systemic barriers such as resource inequities and cultural biases that hinder learners' self-confidence and academic progress. Schools could also benefit from professional development programs that equip teachers with tools to nurture self-confidence in diverse student populations.

6.3 Reflections on the research process

The research process was enlightening and challenging, providing numerous opportunities for growth and learning. One of the significant challenges was coordinating with schools in the Pinetown district to gain access to learners and staff while ensuring ethical considerations were upheld. Obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality were paramount, especially given the sensitive nature of self-confidence as a research topic. The mixed-methods approach, while enriching, required careful planning to integrate quantitative and qualitative data effectively. The quantitative surveys provided broad insights into patterns and trends, while qualitative interviews offered depth and context to these findings. Balancing these methodologies to ensure coherence was a complex but rewarding process.

Another challenge was addressing potential biases in self-reported data, as some learners might have overestimated or underestimated their self-confidence levels. Reflecting on these limitations, it became evident that future studies could benefit from longitudinal designs to track changes over time and incorporate additional measures, such as teacher evaluations or peer assessments, to validate findings. Despite these challenges, the research process fostered a more profound mindset of the intricacies

of educational research and the importance of adaptability and persistence in achieving research objectives.

6.4 Final thoughts

This study underscores the pivotal role of self-confidence in shaping academic outcomes and highlights the need for holistic educational practices that address both psychological and academic needs. The findings emphasise that self-confidence is not merely an individual trait but a construct influenced by social, environmental, and institutional factors. By fostering self-confidence, teachers can empower learners to overcome challenges, achieve their academic potential, and develop essential life skills. While the findings are specific to the Pinetown district, they resonate with broader educational contexts, offering insights that can inform global practices. This study calls for a collective effort from teachers, parents, and policymakers to create nurturing environments that promote self-belief and resilience. Future research could explore longitudinal studies to examine how interventions targeting self-confidence impact academic trajectories over time and investigate how cultural and systemic factors influence the development of self-confidence in learners from diverse backgrounds.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the study's findings and implications. It summarises the research objectives, methodology, and key outcomes and then discusses the theoretical and practical contributions. Reflections on the research process highlight the challenges and learning experiences encountered. The chapter concludes with thoughts on the study's significance and suggestions for future research directions. Together, these sections emphasise the importance of addressing self-confidence as a critical factor in improving academic performance in high school students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Permission to conduct research



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Email: Phindile.duma@kzndoe.gov.za
Tel: 033 392 1063

Enquiries: Phindile Duma

Ref.:2/4/8/220

Ms NJ Sampson

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

PHOENIX

4068

Dear Ms Sampson

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: “**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONFIDENCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN KWAZULU-NATAL HIGH SCHOOLS**”, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 30 April 2024 to 31 March 2027.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

PINETOWN DISTRICT

[REDACTED]
Mr GN Ngcobo

Head of Department: Education

Date: 04 May 2024

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix 2: Ethics approval



23 September 2024

Nicolene Jade Sampson (217028998)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear NJ Sampson,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007523/2024

Project title: Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 19 August 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 23 September 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair) /nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 3: Permission letter for principals



Dear [Principal's Name],

Re: Request for Permission to Conduct Research at Phoenix Technical/Eastbury Secondary School.

I am a Master's student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, conducting research for my dissertation. My study, *"Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools,"* aims to examine the relationship between self-confidence and learners' academic performance, focusing on both the learner and teacher perspectives.

I request your permission to conduct this research at your school. Both learners and teachers will participate. Learners' participation will be voluntary, but parental consent will be required. Teachers' involvement will also be voluntary, but all ethical protocols, including anonymity and confidentiality, will be strictly observed.

Data collection will take place through questionnaires (for learners) and interviews (for educators) during times that will not interfere with regular academic activities. The University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethics Committee has approved the study, and I am committed to adhering to all ethical guidelines and ensuring minimal disruption to the school. I am attaching the relevant documents for your review, including the approval from the Ethics Committee. Should you grant permission for me to proceed, please sign below as confirmation.

Approval of Research Conduct at Phoenix Technical Secondary School

I, the principal of Phoenix Technical Secondary School, grant Nicolene Jade Sampson permission to conduct the research mentioned above at our school. I understand that the study will involve teachers and learners and that all ethical guidelines will be followed.

Principal's name: _____

Principal's signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your positive response and am happy to provide any further information or clarification.

Kind regards,
Nicolene Jade Sampson
Master's Student
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Appendix 4: Information sheet for educators



INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher: Nicolene Jade Sampson

Contact information: [REDACTED]

Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Education

Supervisor: Dipolelo Rossly Malema

Dear educator,

You are invited to participate in a study entitled

“Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners.”

Purpose of the study: This research aims to explore the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in KwaZulu-Natal. By understanding this relationship, we strive to identify key factors that can enhance students' academic achievements and overall well-being.

Why you were chosen: As an educator, your insights and experiences are invaluable to this study. Your interaction with learners gives you a perspective on their self-confidence and academic performance, making your participation crucial to the success of this research. Suppose you agree to participate in the study. In that case, a face-to-face interview will be conducted, and you will be kindly requested to answer a few questions about the learners according to your personal views and experiences (an estimated time of 15-20 minutes). No foreseeable risks are associated with answering the questions for research purposes only.

Confidentiality and anonymity: All information collected during the study will be kept confidential. Your identity and personal information will not be disclosed in any reports or publications from this research. Data will be anonymised, and any identifying details will be removed. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. If you choose to cancel, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise.

Potential benefits: While your participation may not directly benefit you, it will contribute to a better understanding of how self-confidence affects academic performance. This research could inform future educational strategies and interventions to improve student outcomes.

How results will be used: The findings of this research will be used to complete the Master's dissertation and may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences. Summarised results will be shared with participants upon request.

Contact information for questions or concerns: If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please get in touch with me using the information provided above. Thank you for considering participation. Your contribution is highly valued and appreciated.

The UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC/00007523/2024) has ethically reviewed and approved this study.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher (██████████) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee; contact details are as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus - Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Sincerely,

Nicolene Jade Sampson

Appendix 5: Assent form for educators



ASSENT FORM

Full name (Capital letters) _____

If the participant is unable to read and write:

Thumbprint of participant:

DECLARATION BY WITNESS

I declare that I have witnessed the researcher's careful explanation of the research and that the participant has had the opportunity to ask questions about the research. I confirm that the participant has freely given their assent.

I, the undersigned, declare that I have no current or potential conflict of interest deriving from my role as a witness in this research.

Witness's signature _____

Full name (Capital letters) _____

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER/RESEARCH ASSISTANT

I have carefully explained the research, and I have made sure, to the best of my ability, that they have understood that the following procedures will be carried out:

I confirm that the participant had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and that I answered all of them correctly to the best of my ability.

I confirm the participant was not coerced into giving assent and was obtained freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this assent document has been given to the participant.

Researcher's signature _____

Full name (capital letters) _____

Date ___/___/___

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

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Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 6: Information sheet for parents/guardians



INFORMATION SHEET

Dear parent/guardian

I am Nicolene Jade Sampson, a Master's student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal education department. My supervisor is Dipolelo Rossly Malema, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal School of Education. We invite you to participate in a study entitled **“Exploring the Relationship between Self-confidence and Academic Performance in Pinetown District High School Learners.”**

Your child/ward has been selected using a purposive sampling strategy from the population of learners in Phoenix, Kwazulu-Natal, enrolled at a high school. Hence, I invite you to allow your child/ward to participate in this questionnaire. Your child/ward will be kindly requested to answer the questionnaire as honestly and frankly as possible and according to their views and experience. No foreseeable risks are associated with answering the questionnaire for research purposes only.

Purpose of the study: This research aims to explore the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school learners in KwaZulu-Natal. By understanding this relationship, we strive to identify key factors that can enhance students' academic achievements and overall well-being.

Confidentiality and anonymity: All information collected during the study will be kept confidential. Your child's identity and personal information will not be disclosed in any reports or publications from this research. Data will be anonymised, and any identifying details will be removed. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. The individual is free to withdraw from the study without any negative consequences. If the child chooses to cancel, any data they have provided will be destroyed unless they indicate otherwise.

Potential benefits: While there may not be direct benefits to the participant, your child/ward's participation will contribute to a better understanding of how self-confidence affects academic performance. This research could inform future educational strategies and interventions to improve student outcomes.

How results will be used: The findings of this research will be used to complete the Master's dissertation and may be published in academic journals or presented at conferences. Summarised results will be shared with participants upon request.

Contact information for questions or concerns: If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please get in touch with me at (██████████). Thank you for considering participation. Your contribution is highly valued and appreciated.

The UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC/00007523/2024) has ethically reviewed and approved this study.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher (██████████) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee; contact details are as follows:

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Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Sincerely,

Nicolene Jade Sampson

Master's Student

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Appendix 7: Informed consent from parents/guardians



INFORMED CONSENT FROM PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear parent/guardian

I am Nicolene Jade Sampson, a Master’s student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal education department. My supervisor is Dipolelo Rossly Malema, a lecturer at the University of KwaZulu Natal School of Education. We invite you to participate in a study entitled **“Exploring the Relationship between Self-confidence and Academic Performance in Pinetown District High School Learners.”**

A purposive sampling strategy has been used to select your child/ward from the population of students in Phoenix, Kwazulu-Natal, enrolled at a high school. Hence, I invite you to allow your child/ward to participate in this questionnaire.

This research explores the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance among high school students in KwaZulu-Natal. By understanding this relationship, we strive to identify key factors that can enhance students' academic achievements and overall well-being.

Please complete the following section of the Informed Consent to allow the researcher to hand out a questionnaire to your child/ward:

I _____ (Parent/guardian) of
_____ (Learner) in _____ (Grade) have been
informed about the study “Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic
performance in Pinetown district high School learners.” by Nicolene Jade Sampson.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been allowed to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my child/ward's participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time without prejudice.

I have been informed that the project's results may be published, but my child/ward's anonymity will be preserved. If I permit my child to participate in the study, I will receive a copy of the signed consent form.

If I have any further questions, concerns, or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at the UKZN Edgewood campus, School of Education, at 031 260 3414.

The UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC/00007523/2024) has ethically reviewed and approved this study.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact the researcher (██████████) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee; contact details are as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus - Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Parent/guardian signature

Appendix 8: Assent form for learners



ASSENT FORM

“Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high school learners.”

1. I have been invited to participate in this research.
2. I understood what the researcher explained and what this research is for. If I had any doubts, I could ask the researcher; their answers were clear and comprehensive.
3. By participating in this research, I will participate in a questionnaire (A questionnaire is answering a set of questions on a sheet of paper).
4. I have understood that information about me will be kept secret and stored at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, and I can ask questions about my information and the global results of the study.
5. I understand that I can request access to, modify, or erase my data and that, as an adult, I can consent to or deny the further use of my data.
6. I have been informed that I can leave the research any time I want without prejudice.
7. I agree to be part of this research.

Child's full name (Capital letters) _____

Researcher's signature _____

Full name (Capital letters) _____

If the participant is unable to read and write:

Thumbprint of participant:



DECLARATION BY WITNESS

I declare that I have witnessed the researcher's careful explanation of the research and that the participant has had the opportunity to ask questions about the research. I confirm that the participant has freely given their assent.

I, the undersigned, declare that I have no current or potential conflict of interest deriving from my role as a witness in this research.

Witness's signature _____

Full name (Capital letters) _____

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER/RESEARCH ASSISTANT

I have carefully explained the research, and I have made sure, to the best of my ability, that they have understood that the following procedures will be carried out:

I confirm that the participant had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and that I answered all of them correctly to the best of my ability.

I confirm the participant was not coerced into giving assent and was obtained freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this assent document has been given to the participant.

Researcher's signature _____

Full name (capital letters) _____

Date ___ / ___ / ___

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

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Appendix 9: Interview questions for educators

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

1. How do you perceive the role of self-confidence in students' academic performance?
2. In your experience, what indicators or behaviours suggest a student possesses high self-confidence?
3. Conversely, what signs might indicate that a student lacks self-confidence?
4. Can you share any strategies or interventions you've observed or implemented that have positively impacted students' self-confidence and academic performance?
5. Have you noticed any specific academic challenges or barriers students face in developing or maintaining self-confidence?
6. How do you believe external factors, such as family support or peer relationships, influence students' self-confidence and academic performance?
7. From your perspective, what role does the school environment play in fostering or hindering students' self-confidence?
8. Are there any particular academic subjects or activities where you've observed self-confidence's powerful influence on performance?
9. Have you encountered instances where a student's self-confidence has significantly improved or declined over time? If so, what factors do you believe contributed to these changes?
10. What additional support or resources could be beneficial in promoting students' self-confidence and academic success in high schools?

Appendix 10: Learner questionnaire

LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE

“Exploring the relationship between self-confidence and academic performance in Pinetown district high schools.”

This questionnaire is anonymous, and your responses will be kept confidential.

General Instructions

- Please read each statement carefully.
- Indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement by choosing the appropriate response on a five-point Likert scale:

1: No

2: Very Little

3: Somewhat

4: Much

5: Too Much

Demographic information (Tick under the correct box)

13-14 years old	15-16 years old	17-18 years old

Male	Female	Prefer not to say

Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12

		1 (No)	2 (Very Little)	3 (Somewhat)	4 (Much)	5 (Too Much)
1	I feel confident in my ability to learn new things.					
2	I am confident that I can understand difficult concepts.					
3	I believe I can achieve high grades if I work hard.					
4	I feel self-assured when I am given a challenging assignment.					
5	I am confident in my ability to answer questions in class.					
6	I feel comfortable speaking in front of the class.					
7	I have confidence in my ability to manage my time effectively.					
8	I feel confident in setting and achieving my academic goals.					
9	I am confident in my ability to balance schoolwork and other activities.					
10	I have the self-confidence to participate in extracurricular activities.					
11	I feel confident in my abilities in Mathematics.					
12	I feel confident in my abilities in English.					
13	I feel confident in my abilities in Physical Education.					
14	The use of technology (e.g., computers, tablets) enhances my self-confidence in learning.					

15	I feel confident using online resources to improve my academic performance.					
16	My peers positively influence my academic self-confidence.					
17	I feel self-assured when working in group projects with my classmates.					
18	I am confident that I can seek help from my peers when needed.					
19	Positive feedback from teachers boosts my self-confidence.					
20	My family's support enhances my self-confidence and academic performance.					
21	Negative comments from others affect my self-confidence.					
22	Comparing myself to others negatively impacts my self-confidence.					
23	Stress and anxiety lower my academic performance.					
24	I feel more confident in my academic abilities when I receive recognition for my work.					
25	I am confident that I can overcome challenges in my academic journey.					

Thank you for your time and participation. Your responses are valuable and will contribute significantly to this research.

Appendix 11: Recruiting poster

Research Participants Needed



A MASTERS CANDIDATE IS CONDUCTING A RESEARCH
“EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-CONFIDENCE
AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PINETOWN DISTRICT HIGH
SCHOOLS” AND WOULD LOVE YOUR PARTICIPATION!

WHO DO WE NEED?

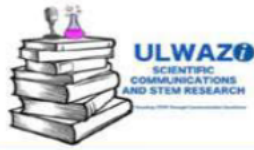
- ✓ Participants who are 13-18 years old
- ✓ Participants who can understand and speak English
- ✓ Participants with a good mental health

If you fulfil the above requirements, contact Nicolene Jade Sampson – 071 335 4726

Dates and times for participation will be provided.



Appendix 12: Editors certificate



founder@kolisayolasinyanya.com
www.ulwazistemresearch.com

Dr Kolisa Yola Sinyanya
Cape Town, South Africa
www.kolisayolasinyanya.com

01 February 2025

TO:

The University of KwaZulu-Natal

**PROOF OF PROOFREADING AND EDITING SERVICES FOR NICOLENE JADE
SAMPSON'S MASTER'S THESIS**

Dear colleagues,

I am writing on behalf of **Ulwazi Scientific Communications and STEM Research** to confirm that we provided comprehensive proofreading and editing services for **Nicolene Jade Sampson** in the completion of her **Master's thesis in Educational Psychology** titled:

"Exploring the Relationship Between Self-Confidence and Academic Performance in Pinetown District High Schools."

Our services included:

Grammar, spelling, numbering and punctuation corrections

Sentence structure and clarity improvements

Academic tone and coherence adjustments

Formatting and citation consistency as per academic standards

We certify that the final version of the thesis submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal reflects the highest standards of academic writing. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further details or verification.

Sincerely,

Dr Kolisa Yola Sinyanya
Founder & Director
Ulwazi Scientific Communications and STEM Research
founder@kolisayolasinyanya.com
ulwazistemresearch.com
founder@kolisayolasinyanya.com

Appendix 13: Turnitin certificate

Final Draft .docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

7 %

SIMILARITY INDEX

4 %

INTERNET SOURCES

4 %

PUBLICATIONS

2 %

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Parfait M. Eloundou-Enyegue. "Addressing Global Challenges – Exploring Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Sustainable Solutions in a Changing World", Routledge, 2024 Publication	1 %
2	Ebrahim Mohammadpour, Yahya Maroofi. "The Disparity between Performance-Based and Self-Reported Measures of TPACK: Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development", Computers in Human Behavior Reports, 2024 Publication	<1 %
3	lettersinhighenergyphysics.com Internet Source	<1 %
4	zorgle.co.uk Internet Source	<1 %
5	pure.uvt.nl Internet Source	<1 %
6	"Trends and Prospects in Metacognition Research", Springer Science and Business	<1 %