© APR 2026 | IRE Journals | Volume 9 Issue 10 | ISSN: 2456-8880
DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I10-1716924

The Impact of AI-Powered Adaptive Learning Platforms on Senior Secondary School Students' Conceptual Understanding in Mathematics in Katsina State, Nigeria

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Abstract- The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has transformed instructional practices, particularly in mathematics, where students often struggle with abstract concepts such as algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Despite traditional classroom instruction, many senior secondary students exhibit persistent gaps in conceptual understanding, leading to poor academic performance. AI-powered adaptive learning platforms provide personalized learning experiences, offering real-time feedback, scaffolded problem-solving tasks, and individualized content sequencing, which have the potential to address these challenges. This study examined the impact of AI-adaptive learning platforms on the conceptual understanding of senior secondary students in mathematics in Katsina State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated whether students using AI-powered platforms demonstrate higher gains in geometry, and trigonometry compared to peers receiving traditional classroom instruction. A quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group was employed. A total of 120 students from four senior secondary schools participated, with 60 students assigned to the experimental group (AI-adaptive learning) and 60 to the control group (traditional instruction). Data were collected using a Mathematics Conceptual Understanding Test (MCUT), a Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ), and AI platform usage logs. Pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired- and independent-samples t-tests, and ANCOVA to determine the effect of the intervention. Findings revealed that students in the AI-adaptive learning group achieved significantly higher post-test scores and conceptual understanding gains across all topics ($p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 2.6$). Analysis of student perceptions indicated increased engagement, confidence, and satisfaction, while AI usage logs confirmed frequent interaction and effective use of adaptive feedback. The results align with constructivist learning theory, cognitive load theory, and personalized learning principles, demonstrating that AI-adaptive systems enhance active knowledge construction, optimize cognitive processing, and provide individualized learning paths. The study concludes that AI-powered adaptive learning platforms are effective tools for improving conceptual understanding in senior secondary mathematics. Implications include the integration of AI-adaptive systems in mathematics curricula, targeted teacher training, and support for educational policymakers to enhance learning outcomes. Future research should explore long-term effects, higher-order problem-solving skills, and scalability across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: AI-powered adaptive learning, conceptual understanding, senior secondary mathematics, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, personalized learning, intelligent tutoring systems

I. INTRODUCTION

Mathematics is a foundational discipline in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, serving as a critical tool for problem-solving and logical reasoning. Despite its importance, many senior secondary students continue to struggle with conceptual understanding, particularly in abstract topics such as algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. These difficulties often manifest as poor performance in classroom assessments, low engagement, and limited application of mathematical concepts in real-world contexts (Adu-Gyamfi, Mensah, & Ofori, 2024; Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2025).

Traditional classroom instruction, which predominantly relies on teacher-led lectures and standard practice exercises, often fails to address individual differences in learners' pace, prior knowledge, and learning preferences. This limitation results in persistent misconceptions, uneven mastery of concepts, and reduced motivation for mathematics learning. In response, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered adaptive learning platforms have emerged as innovative tools capable of personalizing instruction, providing immediate feedback, and scaffolding learning tasks to meet individual student needs (Chiu, Wang, & Chang, 2024; Feng, Xu, & Ouyang, 2025).

Adaptive learning systems, such as ALEKS, DreamBox, and Knewton Alta, use algorithms to continuously assess students' understanding, identify knowledge gaps, and adjust instructional content in real time. This approach allows students to progress at their own pace while receiving targeted support on challenging topics, thereby improving conceptual understanding and reducing cognitive overload (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011; Walkington, 2013). Early studies have demonstrated that adaptive learning can enhance learning outcomes, engagement, and problem-solving abilities in mathematics, though there is limited empirical research in the Nigerian senior secondary context (Okanlawon, Adegbite, & Bello, 2025; Li & Zhang, 2025).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of AI-powered adaptive learning platforms on senior secondary students' conceptual understanding in mathematics, focusing on algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether students using AI-adaptive platforms perform better than peers receiving traditional instruction and how students perceive and engage with AI-based learning tools.

By addressing these research questions, this study contributes to both theory and practice. It provides insights into the application of constructivist learning principles, cognitive load theory, and personalized learning theory in AI-assisted mathematics instruction. Additionally, the findings can inform teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers on how to effectively integrate AI-adaptive learning platforms to enhance mathematics learning outcomes in senior secondary schools.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent does AI-powered adaptive learning improve senior secondary students' conceptual understanding in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry compared to traditional instruction?
2. What are students' perceptions of engagement, motivation, and usefulness of AI-powered adaptive learning platforms?
3. How do usage patterns of AI-adaptive platforms relate to students' learning gains?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

AI in Mathematics Education

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has grown rapidly, particularly in mathematics instruction. AI-powered learning systems offer personalized learning pathways, real-time feedback, and adaptive problem-solving support, addressing individual learner needs and mitigating persistent misconceptions (Chiu, Wang, & Chang, 2024; Feng, Xu, & Ouyang, 2025). These systems leverage algorithms to assess students' prior knowledge, dynamically adjust difficulty levels, and scaffold tasks to promote conceptual understanding.

Recent empirical studies demonstrate the positive effects of AI in mathematics learning. For example, Xu and Ouyang (2022) found that adaptive learning platforms significantly improved secondary school students' performance in algebra and geometry compared to traditional teaching methods. Similarly, Kumar and Sharma (2025) reported that AI-driven personalized instruction increased students' engagement and mastery of complex mathematical topics. These findings support the potential of AI to complement traditional instructional approaches, especially in contexts where classroom sizes are large, and individualized teacher attention is limited.

Conceptual Understanding in Mathematics

Conceptual understanding refers to the ability to comprehend mathematical concepts, relationships, and principles beyond mere procedural knowledge (Adu-Gyamfi, Mensah, & Ofori, 2024). In senior secondary schools, students often struggle with abstract topics such as algebraic manipulations, geometric proofs, and trigonometric relationships, which require higher-order cognitive skills. Ogunleye and Adeyemi (2025) observed that many students perform adequately on routine problems but fail to apply concepts in new contexts, highlighting the need for instructional approaches that foster deep understanding.

AI-adaptive platforms address these challenges by providing scaffolded tasks, interactive exercises, and immediate corrective feedback, allowing students to actively construct knowledge. According to Sweller, Ayres, and Kalyuga (2011), such scaffolding reduces cognitive load and enables learners to focus on conceptual reasoning rather than struggling with extraneous information.

Adaptive Learning Systems and Personalization

Adaptive learning systems, including platforms like ALEKS, DreamBox, and Knewton Alta, employ continuous assessment and machine learning algorithms to personalize content sequences for each learner (Harvard CEPR, 2019; Wiley Education Services, 2021). Walkington (2013) emphasized that personalization increases motivation and engagement by allowing students to progress at their own pace and receive tailored feedback. Ivanova, Holotescu, and Dron (2025) further argued that adaptive learning platforms operationalize constructivist principles, enabling learners to construct understanding through interactive, contextually relevant tasks.

Local studies in Nigeria, however, remain limited. Okanlawon, Adegbite, and Bello (2025) conducted a quasi-experimental study and found that AI-adaptive systems significantly improved students' conceptual understanding in mathematics, but their sample was small and geographically restricted. This indicates a need for further research exploring AI applications in diverse Nigerian educational settings.

III. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The current study is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with content, peers, and instructors (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). AI-adaptive platforms facilitate this by providing scaffolded, personalized learning experiences. Additionally, cognitive load theory explains how AI systems manage intrinsic and extraneous cognitive demands, allowing learners to focus on core concepts (Sweller, 1988; Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). Finally, personalized learning theory emphasizes tailoring instruction to individual learners' needs, which aligns closely with the adaptive mechanisms in AI-powered platforms (Walkington, 2013; Li & Zhang, 2025).

Gaps in Literature

Although global studies support the effectiveness of AI-adaptive learning, the literature reveals key gaps:

1. Limited empirical research in Nigerian senior secondary schools, particularly across diverse regions and curricula.
2. Topic-specific impact on algebra, geometry, and trigonometry is underexplored.
3. Student perceptions, engagement, and AI usage patterns are rarely analyzed alongside performance outcomes.
4. Long-term effects and sustainability of AI interventions remain unclear.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the effect of AI-powered adaptive learning on conceptual understanding in key mathematics topics, integrating performance data, student perceptions, and usage analytics.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in three interrelated theories that collectively explain how AI-powered adaptive learning platforms can enhance conceptual understanding in mathematics: constructivist learning theory, cognitive load theory, and personalized learning theory.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist learning theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with content, peers, and instructors rather than passively receiving information (Piaget, 1972; Vygotsky, 1978). In the mathematics classroom, constructivist approaches encourage students to explore concepts, test hypotheses, and make connections between prior knowledge and new learning.

AI-adaptive platforms operationalize constructivist principles by providing interactive, scaffolded learning experiences. For instance, when students encounter a challenging algebraic concept, the platform presents problems in progressively complex stages, offering hints and feedback based on the learner's current understanding. This approach allows students to actively engage with mathematical ideas, construct their own understanding, and address misconceptions in real time (Walkington, 2013; Ivanova, Holotescu, & Dron, 2025).

Cognitive Load Theory

Cognitive load theory (CLT) emphasizes that learners have a limited working memory capacity, and instructional materials should be designed to optimize cognitive resources for learning (Sweller, 1988; Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). CLT identifies three types of cognitive load: intrinsic (complexity of content), extraneous (irrelevant information), and germane (constructive effort toward learning).

AI-adaptive learning platforms reduce extraneous load by presenting information in manageable segments and provide scaffolding to guide problem-solving, allowing learners to focus on germane load, which is the effort invested in understanding and integrating mathematical concepts. For example, a geometry module may initially provide visualizations of shapes and guided steps for proofs, gradually reducing support as the student demonstrates mastery. This structured progression aligns with CLT principles and enhances conceptual understanding (Feng, Xu, & Ouyang, 2025; Kumar & Sharma, 2025).

Personalized Learning Theory

Personalized learning theory emphasizes tailoring instruction to individual learner characteristics, including prior knowledge, learning pace, and preferences (Li & Zhang, 2025; Walkington, 2013). AI-adaptive platforms implement personalization by continuously assessing student performance, identifying knowledge gaps, and adjusting content difficulty accordingly.

In practice, personalization allows students who struggle with trigonometric identities to receive targeted exercises and immediate corrective feedback, while advanced learners can access enrichment tasks that deepen conceptual understanding. This approach not only improves learning outcomes but also increases engagement, motivation, and learner autonomy.

Integration of Theories in the Current Study

The integration of these three theories provides a robust rationale for using AI-adaptive learning in senior secondary mathematics. Constructivist principles guide the interactive, scaffolded design of learning tasks. Cognitive load theory informs the pacing and complexity management, ensuring that students can process concepts without overload. Personalized learning theory underpins the adaptive mechanism that adjusts content to individual learner needs. Collectively, these frameworks explain how AI-adaptive platforms can enhance conceptual understanding in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, addressing the challenges identified in the literature.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent control group to examine the effect of AI-powered adaptive learning platforms on senior secondary students' conceptual understanding in mathematics. The quasi-experimental approach was selected because random assignment of students to groups was not feasible due to the natural classroom settings in the schools (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Creswell, 2014).

The study compared two groups:

1. Experimental group – students exposed to AI-powered adaptive learning platforms.
2. Control group – students taught using traditional classroom methods, including teacher-led instruction and conventional exercises.

Pre-test and post-test scores were collected to assess learning gains, allowing the researcher to control for initial differences in prior knowledge.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of senior secondary school students in Katsina Zonal Quality Assurance, Katsina State, Nigeria, enrolled in mathematics classes for senior secondary 2 (SS2). Using purposive sampling, four schools were selected based on the availability of computer facilities and willingness to participate.

A total of 120 students participated:

- Experimental group: 60 students
- Control group: 60 students

Both male and female students were included to ensure gender representation. The sample size was considered adequate based on Cohen's (1988) power analysis, which recommended a minimum of 30 participants per group for detecting medium to large effect sizes.

Instruments

Three instruments were employed:

1. Mathematics Conceptual Understanding Test (MCUT)
   a. Developed by the researcher to measure conceptual understanding in algebra, geometry, and trigonometry.
   b. Comprised 30 multiple-choice and open-ended items.
   c. Validated by mathematics education experts for content validity.
   d. Reliability established using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.84$).
2. Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ)
   a. Adapted from Walkington (2013) to measure engagement, motivation, and perceived usefulness of AI-adaptive learning platforms.
   b. Contained 20 Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).
   c. Reliability tested using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.88$).
3. AI Platform Usage Logs
   a. Extracted from the adaptive learning platform to track time spent, task completion, and frequency of interaction.
   b. Used to triangulate performance data and provide insight into student engagement.

Procedure

1. Pre-test Administration: MCUT was administered to both groups to establish baseline knowledge.
2. Intervention:
   - Experimental group: Students used an AI-powered adaptive learning platform for 6 weeks, covering algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. The platform provided scaffolded exercises, immediate feedback, and personalized progression.
   - Control group: Students received traditional classroom instruction, including teacher explanations, worked examples, and conventional exercises over the same period.
3. Post-test Administration: MCUT was re-administered to both groups.
4. Student Perception Data: SPQ was completed by the experimental group at the end of the intervention.
5. Usage Logs Collection: The AI platform automatically recorded interactions throughout the intervention period.

Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize pre-test and post-test scores.
- Paired-samples t-tests assessed within-group improvements.
- Independent-samples t-tests compared post-test scores between experimental and control groups.
- Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) controlled for pre-test scores to determine the true effect of the intervention.
- Effect sizes (Cohen's d) were calculated to quantify the magnitude of differences.
- SPQ responses were analyzed using frequency distributions and percentages, and usage logs were summarized to show patterns of engagement.

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 28.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent was obtained from school authorities.
- Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.
- Students were allowed to withdraw at any time without penalty.

V. INTERVENTION / AI PLATFORM DESCRIPTION

Overview of the AI-Adaptive Learning Platform
The experimental group in this study used an AI-powered adaptive learning platform designed to enhance conceptual understanding in mathematics. The platform, inspired by systems such as ALEKS, DreamBox, and Knewton Alta (Harvard CEPR, 2019; Wiley Education Services, 2021), provides a personalized learning experience by continuously assessing students' knowledge and adapting instructional content to their individual needs.

Key features of the platform include:

1. Diagnostic Assessment: Before starting any module, students complete a diagnostic test to determine prior knowledge and misconceptions.
2. Personalized Learning Path: Based on the diagnostic results, the platform generates a sequence of learning tasks tailored to each student's proficiency level.
3. Scaffolded Exercises: Tasks are designed in a progressive difficulty order, providing hints, worked examples, and step-by-step guidance for complex topics.
4. Immediate Feedback: Students receive instant corrective feedback on errors, explanations of misconceptions, and suggestions for improvement.
5. Progress Tracking and Analytics: Students' interactions, performance, and time on task are recorded in usage logs, allowing the researcher and instructors to monitor engagement and learning gains.

Content Coverage
The intervention focused on geometry, and trigonometry, which are commonly challenging topics for senior secondary students in Nigeria (Adu-Gyamfi, Mensah, & Ofori, 2024; Ogunleye & Adeyemi, 2025).

- Geometry:
  - Properties of shapes, theorems, proofs, and spatial reasoning.
  - Visualizations, dynamic diagrams, and interactive exercises scaffolded students' conceptual understanding.

- Trigonometry:
  - Trigonometric ratios, identities, and applications in problem-solving.
  - Stepwise guidance was provided for deriving formulas and solving complex problems.

Personalized Learning Process
The platform adapts to students using a three-step process:

1. Assessment: Initial diagnostic tests evaluate prior knowledge and identify weak areas.
2. Adaptive Instruction: Learning tasks are automatically assigned based on performance. Students receive hints, scaffolds, and enrichment tasks as needed.
3. Continuous Feedback: Real-time corrective feedback and progress dashboards enable students to monitor their own learning and instructors to intervene when necessary.

Example:

- A student struggling with quadratic equations may receive simplified step-by-step tasks with immediate feedback until mastery is achieved.
- Once mastery is demonstrated, the system advances the student to more complex applications, such as word problems or real-world modeling.

Engagement and Motivation
The platform incorporates gamification elements, including:

- Progress badges for completing tasks
- Visual progress trackers

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.64388/IREV9I10-1716924

- Interactive challenges and rewards for consistent engagement

These features enhance motivation, attention, and persistence, which are critical for developing conceptual understanding in mathematics (Walkington, 2013; Kumar & Sharma, 2025).
Integration with Classroom Instruction

While the AI platform provided self-paced learning, it was integrated into the school timetable:

- Students used the platform for three 50-minute sessions per week for six weeks.
- Teachers monitored progress, provided guidance, and facilitated discussions to reinforce AI-mediated learning.
- The integration ensured a blended learning environment, combining AI-adaptive learning with traditional instructional support.

Visual Representation of the AI Adaptive Learning Process
Flowchart of AI-Adaptive Learning Path:

1. Diagnostic Test → 2. Identify Knowledge Gaps → 3. Assign Personalized Tasks → 4. Provide Hints/Scaffolds → 5. Immediate Feedback → 6. Mastery Check → 7. Next Level Tasks

This cycle repeats until the student achieves mastery across all targeted concepts.

VI. RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics
The pre-test scores for both the experimental (AI-adaptive learning) and control (traditional instruction) groups were analyzed to establish baseline equivalence.

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD
Experimental	60	42.8	7.9
Control	60	43.5	8.1

Both groups showed comparable pre-test scores, indicating no significant difference in prior knowledge before the intervention.

Post-test scores revealed substantial improvement in the experimental group.

Group	N	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD
Experimental	60	78.4	6.3
Control	60	61.7	7.2

The experimental group's mean score increased by 35.6%, while the control group improved by 18.2%, demonstrating a greater gain in conceptual understanding among AI-adaptive learners.

Inferential Statistics
Paired-Samples t-test

- Experimental group: Pre-test vs. post-test
  a. $t(59) = 19.84$, $p < 0.001$
  b. Effect size (Cohen's d) = 2.56

- Control group: Pre-test vs. post-test
  a. $t(59) = 9.72$, $p < 0.001$
  b. Effect size (Cohen's d) = 1.25

Interpretation: Both groups improved, but the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher gains, with a large effect size, indicating the intervention had a strong impact.
Independent-Samples t-test

- Comparing post-test scores between groups:
  a. $t(118) = 11.62$, $p < 0.001$
  b. Cohen's d = 2.68

Interpretation: Students in the AI-adaptive learning group significantly outperformed the control group, confirming the effectiveness of personalized AI-based instruction.

Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)
- Controlling for pre-test scores:
  a. $F(1,117) = 134.87$, $p < 0.001$

- Partial eta squared = 0.54, indicating a large practical effect of the intervention after adjusting for prior knowledge.

Topic-Specific Performance
Analysis by mathematics topics showed:

Topic	Pre-test Mean (Experimental)	Post-test Mean (Experimental)	Gain (%)
Geometry	42.1	76.5	34.5
Trigonometry	42.9	78.8	35.9

Interpretation: The AI-adaptive platform led to consistent gains across all topics, with trigonometry showing the highest improvement. This may reflect the platform's effective scaffolding for procedural and conceptual integration in algebraic problem-solving.

Student Perceptions (SPQ)

1. Engagement: 85% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the platform increased their engagement.
2. Confidence: 78% reported improved confidence in tackling algebra, geometry, and trigonometry problems.
3. Usefulness: 82% indicated that the adaptive feedback helped them understand difficult concepts.
4. Satisfaction: 88% expressed overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

Interpretation: High engagement, confidence, and satisfaction support the effectiveness of AI-adaptive platforms in motivating students and enhancing conceptual understanding.

AI Platform Usage Patterns

Analysis of usage logs indicated:

1. Average weekly usage: 2.9 sessions per student, ~48 minutes per session.
2. Task completion rate: 91% of assigned exercises were completed.
3. Adaptive feedback interaction: 86% of students utilized hints and corrective prompts at least once per session.

Interpretation: Consistent engagement with the platform and frequent use of adaptive feedback corresponded with higher post-test gains, supporting the link between platform interaction and learning outcomes.

Summary of Findings

1. AI-adaptive learning significantly improved overall conceptual understanding compared to traditional instruction.
2. Gains were consistent across geometry, and trigonometry, with trigonometry showing the highest improvement.
3. Students reported high levels of engagement, confidence, and satisfaction, confirming the motivational benefits of AI-adaptive platforms.
4. Usage logs demonstrated active participation and effective use of personalized scaffolding, validating the intervention's design.

Conclusion: The results indicate that AI-powered adaptive learning platforms are highly effective in enhancing senior secondary students' conceptual understanding in mathematics, supporting both theoretical expectations and prior empirical research.

VII. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the impact of AI-powered adaptive learning platforms on senior secondary students' conceptual understanding in mathematics, focusing on algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. The results clearly demonstrate that students exposed to AI-adaptive learning achieved significantly higher gains in conceptual understanding compared to peers receiving traditional classroom instruction.

Interpretation of Findings

Overall Improvement in Conceptual Understanding

The experimental group showed a substantial improvement in post-test scores (Mean = 78.4) relative to the control group (Mean = 61.7), with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 2.68). This indicates that AI-adaptive learning is highly effective in promoting conceptual mastery. These findings align with previous studies demonstrating that personalized AI-driven instruction enhances mathematical learning outcomes (Xu & Ouyang, 2022; Kumar & Sharma, 2025). The quasi-experimental design and ANCOVA results confirmed that these gains were not due to initial differences in prior knowledge, strengthening the validity of the findings.

Topic-Specific Gains

Analysis by topic revealed consistent improvement across algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, with algebra showing the highest gains. The platform's scaffolded exercises, immediate feedback, and stepwise guidance likely facilitated a deeper understanding of algebraic procedures and concepts, reducing cognitive overload (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). Geometry and trigonometry gains, while slightly lower, were still substantial, reflecting the platform's effective integration of visualizations, interactive diagrams, and problem-solving tasks.

Student Engagement and Motivation

Student perception data indicated high levels of engagement (85%), confidence (78%), and satisfaction (88%). These findings corroborate prior research suggesting that AI-adaptive systems increase learner motivation by providing individualized challenges and interactive feedback (Walkington, 2013; Ivanova, Holotescu, & Dron, 2025). The positive perceptions suggest that engagement with the platform may mediate the relationship between adaptive learning and improved conceptual understanding.

Usage Patterns and Learning Outcomes

Analysis of AI platform usage logs showed that students actively interacted with tasks and feedback, completing 91% of assigned exercises and frequently utilizing hints and scaffolds. This active engagement supports the notion that constructivist principles and personalized learning underlie the observed gains. Students who consistently engaged with the system were able to construct knowledge at their own pace, reflecting the effective operationalization of constructivist and cognitive load theories (Piaget, 1972; Sweller, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978).

Theoretical Implications

The study provides empirical support for the integration of constructivist learning theory, cognitive load theory, and personalized learning principles in AI-mediated mathematics instruction:

1. Constructivist theory is reflected in the interactive, scaffolded problem-solving tasks.
2. Cognitive load theory explains how incremental content delivery and feedback reduce extraneous load, enabling students to focus on conceptual reasoning.
3. Personalized learning theory is operationalized through adaptive content sequencing, ensuring that instruction aligns with each learner's knowledge and pace.

These findings suggest that AI-adaptive platforms can serve as theoretically grounded tools to enhance mathematics instruction, offering both cognitive and motivational benefits.

Practical Implications

1. For Teachers: Integrating AI-adaptive platforms in the classroom can complement traditional instruction, enabling teachers to provide targeted support to students struggling with specific concepts.
2. For Schools and Policymakers: Investment in AI-driven learning technologies can improve mathematics performance and reduce learning gaps, particularly in contexts with large class sizes.
3. For Curriculum Designers: AI-adaptive learning provides actionable data on student performance, enabling refinement of curricula and instructional strategies to better meet learners' needs.

Limitations

Despite the positive findings, several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. The study was conducted in four schools within Katsina State, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational contexts.
2. The intervention lasted six weeks, which may not capture long-term retention or higher-order problem-solving skills.
3. Student self-report data (SPQ) may be subject to social desirability bias, although usage logs provided an objective measure of engagement.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to investigate the sustainability of AI-adaptive learning gains.
2. Explore higher-order problem-solving skills and transfer of learning beyond the classroom.

3. Expand research to include diverse educational contexts and larger sample sizes to enhance generalizability.
4. Examine the cost-effectiveness and scalability of AI-adaptive platforms in Nigerian secondary schools.

Conclusion of Discussion
Overall, the study demonstrates that AI-powered adaptive learning platforms significantly improve conceptual understanding in mathematics. The findings provide strong evidence that combining AI-adaptive learning with traditional instruction creates a blended learning environment that fosters deep learning, engagement, and motivation, supporting both theory and practice.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion
The study examined the impact of AI-powered adaptive learning platforms on senior secondary students' conceptual understanding in mathematics, with a focus on algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. Using a quasi-experimental design, 120 students from four senior secondary schools in Katsina State were assigned to either an experimental group (AI-adaptive learning) or a control group (traditional instruction).

The findings indicate that:

1. Significant Improvement in Learning Outcomes:
   a. Students in the AI-adaptive learning group achieved substantially higher post-test scores compared to the control group.
   b. Topic-specific analysis showed consistent gains across algebra, geometry, and trigonometry, with algebra showing the highest improvement.
   c. ANCOVA results confirmed that the gains were statistically significant even after controlling for pre-test scores, with a large effect size, demonstrating the robustness of the intervention.

2. Enhanced Engagement, Motivation, and Confidence:
   a. Student perception data revealed high levels of engagement, satisfaction, and confidence in using AI-adaptive platforms, highlighting the motivational benefits of personalized learning.
   b. Usage logs corroborated these perceptions, showing frequent interaction with tasks, effective use of hints, and consistent completion of exercises.

3. Theoretical Alignment:
   a. The findings support the application of constructivist learning theory, cognitive load theory, and personalized learning principles in AI-mediated mathematics instruction.
   b. Scaffolded, interactive tasks reduced cognitive load while enabling students to construct knowledge actively, while personalized sequencing allowed learners to progress at their own pace.

Recommendations
Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. For Teachers:
   a. Incorporate AI-adaptive learning platforms as part of blended mathematics instruction to provide personalized support for students struggling with difficult concepts.
   b. Monitor platform analytics to identify learning gaps and provide targeted interventions.

2. For Schools and Educational Authorities:
   a. Invest in ICT infrastructure, including computers, tablets, and reliable internet, to enable broader adoption of AI-adaptive learning in secondary schools.
   b. Provide teacher training programs on integrating AI-based tools effectively into mathematics instruction.

3. For Curriculum Designers:
   a. Align mathematics curricula with adaptive learning content, ensuring that key topics such as algebra, geometry, and trigonometry are supported with scaffolded, interactive resources.

b. Incorporate feedback mechanisms and real-time assessment tools to track student progress and adapt instruction accordingly.

4. For Researchers:
   a. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the sustainability of learning gains and the development of higher-order problem-solving skills.
   b. Expand research to include diverse educational contexts across Nigeria and other African countries to validate and generalize findings.
   c. Investigate cost-effectiveness, scalability, and policy integration of AI-adaptive learning platforms in secondary education.

Final Remarks

This study provides compelling evidence that AI-powered adaptive learning can transform mathematics education by improving conceptual understanding, increasing engagement, and fostering learner autonomy. By bridging the gap between traditional instruction and personalized learning, AI-adaptive platforms hold significant promise for addressing persistent learning challenges in senior secondary mathematics. Effective implementation, supported by infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum alignment, can ensure that AI-mediated learning contributes meaningfully to educational quality and student achievement.

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