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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Feedback Timeliness, Specificity and Students' Self-Efficacy: Assessing Evaluation Practices in Junior Secondary Schools

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| ABSTRACT
Feedback is a critical component of formative assessment, but its effectiveness depends on when it is delivered and how specifically it communicates performance information. This study examined the relationship between feedback timeliness, feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy among Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students in three public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. Guided by social cognitive theory and formative assessment theory, the study focused on how teacher evaluation practices may relate to students' confidence in completing academic tasks and overcoming learning difficulties. A cross-sectional correlational design was used with 240 JSS II students. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product – moment correlation and multiple regression. The mean scores were 3.42 (*SD* = 0.71) for feedback timeliness, 3.31 (*SD* = 0.76) for feedback specificity and 3.58 (*SD* = 0.65) for academic self-efficacy. Feedback timeliness correlated positively with self-efficacy (r =.42, p <.001), while feedback specificity showed a stronger positive association (r =.55, p <.001). Together, the two feedback characteristics accounted for 33.4% of the variance in self-efficacy. The study identified implications for teacher professional development, formative assessment and students' academic confidence.

| KEYWORDS

Academic Self-Efficacy, Formative Assessment, Feedback Specificity, Feedback Timeliness, Junior Secondary Schools.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Assessment is central to effective teaching because it provides evidence about students' understanding, identifies learning difficulties and informs instructional decisions. However, the educational value of assessment extends beyond the assignment of marks and grades. Assessment becomes formative when information about students' performance is used to guide subsequent teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989).

Feedback is one of the principal mechanisms through which assessment information is communicated to learners. It helps students understand the quality of their work, identify errors and determine the actions required to improve. Nevertheless, feedback does not invariably produce positive outcomes. Its effectiveness depends on the nature of

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the information communicated, the learner's interpretation and the availability of opportunities to act on it (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008).

Two characteristics warrant particular attention in junior secondary education: feedback timeliness and feedback specificity. Feedback timeliness refers to whether learners receive assessment information soon enough for it to remain relevant and useful. Feedback specificity concerns the precision with which comments identify strengths, errors, misconceptions and appropriate next steps.

These characteristics may influence academic self-efficacy, defined as learners' beliefs about their capabilities to perform particular academic tasks. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences the goals individuals pursue, their persistence when confronted with difficulties and their interpretation of challenging experiences. Students who understand their progress and know how to improve may develop greater confidence in their ability to succeed.

Conversely, delayed feedback may reduce opportunities to correct misunderstandings, while vague comments may leave students uncertain about what they should change. A student who receives a mark without an explanation of the errors made may find it difficult to identify the knowledge or skills required for improvement. Feedback that identifies specific errors and provides manageable corrective steps may offer a more useful basis for subsequent learning.

Research on feedback has increasingly emphasised the importance of learners' responses rather than the mere provision of comments. Carless and Boud (2018) highlighted the importance of feedback literacy, while Winstone et al. (2017) examined the learner processes involved in feedback uptake. Recent research has also examined the relationships between perceived feedback, self-efficacy, motivation and academic performance (Qi et al., 2024).

The present study extended this discussion to junior secondary education in Nigeria. It also complemented the assessment-focused research agenda of Edinoh et al. (2026), whose study examined digital assessment and feedback in higher education institutions in North-Central Nigeria. The current study focused on younger learners and the potential relationship between the timing and specificity of classroom feedback and their academic confidence. It was conducted in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Classroom assessment may provide limited opportunities for learning when it is treated primarily as a process of marking students' work and recording scores. Students may receive their results without sufficient information about the quality of their responses, the reasons for errors or the strategies required to improve.

Delayed feedback can make it more difficult for learners to connect comments to their original reasoning. Similarly, vague statements such as 'do better', 'revise your work' or 'poor answer' may communicate dissatisfaction without explaining what the student should do differently.

These practices may be particularly consequential for junior secondary students, who are developing independent learning strategies and forming beliefs about their academic capabilities. However, the relationship between feedback practices and self-efficacy should not be assumed. Students' confidence may also reflect prior achievement, family support, teachers – student relationships and the wider classroom environment.

There was therefore a need for a context-specific investigation of the relationships between feedback timeliness, feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy among JSS II students in public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. Understanding these relationships may help teachers develop evaluation practices that provide students with useful, comprehensible and actionable information.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The study aimed to examine the relationship between feedback timeliness, feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy among JSS II students in public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives were to:

I. determine students' perceptions of the timeliness of teacher feedback;
II. examine the specificity and actionability of feedback provided during classroom assessment;
III. establish the relationship between feedback timeliness and academic self-efficacy;
IV. determine the relationship between feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy; and
V. examine the combined predictive contribution of feedback timeliness and specificity to academic self-efficacy.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

I. How timely was the feedback provided to junior secondary school students?
II. To what extent was teachers' feedback specific and actionable?
III. What relationship existed between feedback timeliness and academic self-efficacy?
IV. What relationship existed between feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy?
V. To what extent did feedback timeliness and specificity jointly predict academic self-efficacy?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the.05 level of significance:

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between feedback timeliness and students' academic self-efficacy.
H_{02}: There is no statistically significant relationship between feedback specificity and students' academic self-efficacy.
H_{03}: Feedback timeliness and feedback specificity do not jointly predict students' academic self-efficacy to a statistically significant extent.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Feedback Timeliness

Feedback timeliness refers to the appropriateness of the interval between a learning activity and the provision of information about performance. It concerns more than the speed of marking. Feedback should arrive when learners can understand its relevance, connect it with their original responses and use it in subsequent learning activities.

The optimal timing may differ according to task complexity, learners' prior knowledge and the nature of the feedback. Immediate correction may be useful for factual errors and short practice exercises, whereas complex assignments may require more considered feedback. The key consideration is whether feedback supports learning at the point when corrective action is possible.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) demonstrated that feedback effects vary according to the information communicated and its relationship to learning goals. Shute (2008) similarly emphasised the importance of formative feedback that is specific, supportive and directed towards improving performance.

In junior secondary classrooms, timely feedback may involve prompt marking, oral explanations, short diagnostic assessments and correction exercises. Its implementation may nevertheless be constrained by large classes, teachers' workloads and limited time for individual guidance.

2.2 Feedback Specificity

Feedback specificity concerns the extent to which comments provide precise information about a student's performance. General praise and criticism may communicate approval or disapproval without helping students identify the knowledge or strategies required for improvement.

For example, the comment 'Your answer is inadequate' offers little diagnostic information. By contrast, 'You identified the correct concept, but your explanation needs two examples showing how it applies in practice' identifies both a strength and an improvement target.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) distinguished feedback directed at the task, the processes used to complete it and self-regulation from feedback focused primarily on the person. This distinction is important because information about performance and strategies is more directly connected to the actions learners can take.

Brookhart (2017) argued that effective feedback should provide information that students can use to improve their work. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) similarly linked formative assessment with the development of self-regulated learning. Together, these perspectives suggest that specificity should be assessed in terms of the clarity, relevance and actionability of comments rather than their length.

Feedback literacy also matters. Students need to understand assessment information, evaluate their work and determine appropriate responses. Carless and Boud (2018) conceptualised these capacities as important to students' effective engagement with feedback.

2.3 Academic Self-Efficacy

Academic self-efficacy refers to learners' beliefs about their capabilities to perform specific academic tasks. It is distinct from actual achievement, general self-esteem and motivation, although these constructs may be related.

Bandura (1997) identified mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion and emotional or physiological states as sources of efficacy beliefs. Teacher feedback may contribute to these experiences by providing evidence of progress, identifying successful strategies and helping learners interpret difficulties.

Zimmerman (2000) explained that self-efficacy is important to self-regulated learning because students' beliefs about their capabilities influence their academic goals and learning strategies. Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) also highlighted the reciprocal relationships between motivation, self-efficacy and learning.

Feedback may support self-efficacy when it shows learners how to improve through achievable steps. However, overly general praise or comments that focus on fixed ability may offer little information about what students can do to improve. Effective feedback should therefore communicate realistic performance information while preserving learners' sense that progress is possible.

2.4 Feedback Timeliness and Self-Efficacy

Timely feedback may be positively associated with academic self-efficacy because it enables learners to address errors while the original task remains familiar. When students can apply feedback and observe improvement, they may gain evidence that their efforts and strategies can lead to success.

Nevertheless, timing alone may not determine effectiveness. Prompt feedback can be confusing or discouraging if it is poorly explained. Delayed feedback may still be valuable when it provides detailed guidance and opportunities for revision.

The relationship between timeliness and self-efficacy is therefore an empirical question. The present study examined whether students who perceived their feedback as more timely also reported stronger confidence in their academic capabilities.

2.5 Feedback Specificity and Self-Efficacy

Specific feedback may help students develop confidence by clarifying the relationship between their current performance and the expected standard. It can identify what has been achieved, what requires improvement and which strategies may be used next.

This relationship is consistent with social cognitive theory because performance information can shape learners' judgements about their capabilities and the actions required to succeed (Bandura, 1997). It also aligns with feedback literacy, which emphasises the learner's capacity to interpret and use assessment information (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Qi et al. (2024), using meta-analytic path analysis, examined the relationships among perceived formative feedback, self-efficacy, motivation and academic performance. Their work provides a relevant contemporary basis for examining how feedback and efficacy beliefs may be connected.

Specificity should not, however, be confused with the volume of comments. Excessively detailed feedback may overwhelm students when it identifies too many improvement priorities at once. Feedback should be clear, manageable and appropriate to learners' developmental level.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored in social cognitive theory and formative assessment theory.

Social cognitive theory. Bandura (1997) proposed that self-efficacy influences effort, persistence and responses to challenges. In the present study, feedback was conceptualised as information that may influence students' interpretation of performance and their beliefs about their capacity to improve. Timely feedback may provide relevant evidence of progress, while specific feedback may clarify the strategies required for success.

Formative assessment theory. Formative assessment involves gathering and using evidence of learning to guide subsequent instruction and improvement. Black and Wiliam (1998) emphasised the educational value of assessment when evidence is used to modify teaching and learning. Sadler (1989) explained that learners need to understand the standard required, compare their current performance with that standard and take action to close the gap.

Together, these theories suggest that feedback may be most useful when it is timely, specific, understandable and accompanied by opportunities to apply it.

2.7 Empirical Studies and Research Gap

The literature identifies several dimensions of effective feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) examined how feedback can influence learning, while Shute (2008) synthesised evidence on formative feedback and its characteristics. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) demonstrated through meta-analysis that feedback interventions do not invariably improve performance, highlighting the importance of how feedback directs attention.

Black and Wiliam (1998) reviewed evidence supporting formative assessment, while Kingston and Nash (2011) cautioned that claims about its effectiveness must be supported by methodologically sound research. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) linked formative assessment with self-regulated learning, and Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) examined the role of self-assessment in promoting learning.

Subsequent research has placed greater emphasis on the learner's active role in feedback. Carless and Boud (2018) developed the concept of feedback literacy, while Winstone et al. (2017) reviewed interventions designed to improve feedback uptake. Little et al. (2024) further examined interventions intended to develop student feedback literacy.

Recent work also demonstrates the continuing development of feedback research. Qi et al. (2024) examined the relationships among perceived feedback, self-efficacy and academic performance. A systematic review published in 2026 examined the measurement of student and teacher feedback literacy, identifying the importance of valid instruments and multidimensional measurement (Zhan et al., 2026).

Edinoh et al. (2026) investigated digital assessment and feedback in higher education institutions in North-Central Nigeria. Their findings provide a relevant connection to the present research agenda, although their participants and emphasis differed from those in this study.

The specific gap addressed by this study was the joint examination of feedback timeliness and specificity as correlates and potential predictors of academic self-efficacy among JSS II students in public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. The design also provided a framework for examining the contribution of these feedback characteristics while recognising the limitations of cross-sectional evidence.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study was a cross-sectional correlational survey of JSS II students in public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. This design was appropriate for examining the relationships among feedback timeliness, feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy at a particular point in time.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. The schools were located in Owerri, the state capital, which comprises the Owerri Municipal, Owerri North and Owerri West Local Government Areas. The participating schools provided the institutional context for examining students' perceptions of feedback timeliness, feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy.

3.3 Population and Sample

The population comprised Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students in public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. JSS II students were selected because they had sufficient exposure to classroom assessment procedures and were able to report on their perceptions of teacher feedback and academic self-efficacy.

The sample comprised 240 JSS II students drawn from three public secondary schools in Owerri, Imo State: Government Secondary School, Owerri; Community Secondary School, Egbu, Owerri; and Government Secondary School, Nekede, Owerri.

The three schools were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on school types, geographical accessibility, and availability of functional JSS II classes. Within each selected school, 80 JSS II students were chosen using a simple random sampling technique to ensure fair and unbiased participation across the available class arms. The total JSS II enrolment across the three participating schools at the time of data collection was 960 students, distributed as follows:

I. Government Secondary School, Owerri: JSS II Enrolment = 320 students
II. Community Secondary School, Egbu, Owerri: JSS II Enrolment = 350 students
III. Government Secondary School, Nekede, Owerri: JSS II Enrolment = 290 students

Out of the 240 copies of the research instrument administered to the selected sample, a total of 240 students correctly completed and returned the instrument, representing a 100% response rate. Table 1 shows the detailed distribution of the sample.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample.

Table 1
Distribution of the Sample by School

School	JSS II students
Government Secondary School, Owerri	80
Community Secondary School, Egbu, Owerri	80
Government Secondary School, Nekede, Owerri	80
Total	240

3.4 Research Instruments

Three measurement components were used.

Feedback Timeliness Scale (FTS). This scale assessed students' perceptions of how promptly feedback was returned, whether it remained relevant to the task and whether students had time to use it.

Feedback Specificity Scale (FSS). This scale measured whether teachers identified errors, explained misunderstandings, acknowledged strengths and provided practical steps for improvement.

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES). This scale assessed students' confidence in completing assignments, understanding difficult concepts, correcting mistakes and succeeding in challenging academic tasks.

The instruments used a five-point response scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES) was adapted from Morgan and Jinks (1999) Children Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES). The original instrument was simplified and modified to suit the reading level, age and contextual background of Junior Secondary School (JSSII) Students. Modification included rephrasing complex vocabulary into clear, age – appropriate language and focusing items on daily classroom assessment situations. Overall, the draft instrument consisted of 22 items across the three subscales: Feedback Timelines (6 items), Feedback Specificity (8 items) and Academic Self-Efficacy (8 items).

3.5 Validity and Reliability

Educational measurement specialists reviewed the instruments for relevance, clarity, and age appropriateness. To ensure construct and content validity, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of comparable students who were not included in the main study sample. Exploratory factor analysis was also conducted to verify the underlying factor structure and dimensionality of the instrument scales. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with separate coefficients reported for each construct. The coefficients were.82 for feedback timeliness .88 for feedback specificity, and.86 for academic self-efficacy.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, formal ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics review board, alongside administrative permissions from the Imo State Ministry of Education and the principals of each participating school. Eligible students completed the questionnaires under conditions that protected confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, with parental or guardian consent and student assent obtained where required. Teachers did not influence students' answers. Completed questionnaires were checked for missing data, inconsistent responses, and eligibility before analysis.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The analysis used descriptive statistics, Pearson's product – moment correlation and multiple regression. Means and standard deviations addressed the first two research questions. Pearson's correlation assessed the relationships among the three variables. Multiple regression examined the combined predictive contribution of feedback timeliness and specificity to academic self-efficacy.

Statistical significance was evaluated at the.05 level. Effect sizes and model diagnostics accompanied significance tests. Because students were drawn from three schools, the analysis considered the clustering of students within schools by calculating cluster-robust standard errors to account for nested data structures. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Version 27).

4. Results

4.1 Feedback Timeliness and Specificity

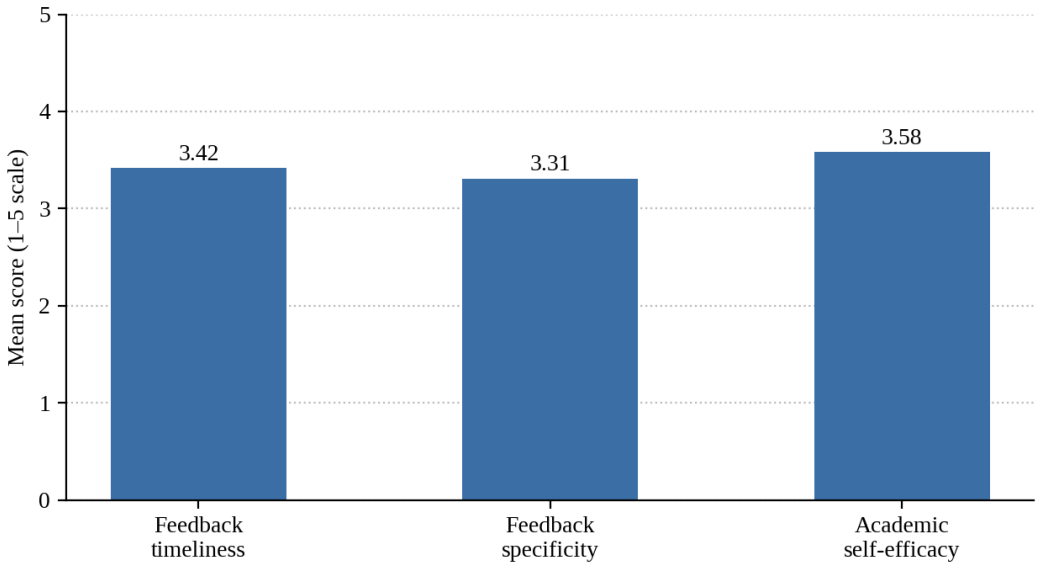
Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Feedback timeliness	240	3.42	0.71	Moderately favourable
Feedback specificity	240	3.31	0.76	Moderately favourable
Academic self-efficacy	240	3.58	0.65	Moderately favourable

Note. SN=sample size; SD = standard deviation. Mean values are based on a 5 -point scale. Interpretation categories serves as descriptive benchmark thresholds.

Table 2 shows that academic self-efficacy had the highest mean (3.58), followed by feedback timeliness (3.42) and feedback specificity (3.31). The pattern suggested that students reported relatively favourable confidence in their academic abilities while identifying greater room for improvement in the specificity of teacher feedback.

Figure 1
Mean Scores for the Study Variables



4.2 Reliability of the Measures

Table 3
Internal-Consistency Estimates for the Scales

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's α
Feedback Timeliness Scale	6	.82
Feedback Specificity Scale	8	.88
Academic Self-Efficacy Scale	8	.86

Table 3 reports the internal consistency of the three scales. All coefficients demonstrated high internal consistency reliability exceeding the acceptable threshold of 7.0. Reliability alone does not establish validity, and evidence that the instruments measured the intended construct was also considered.

4.3 Relationships Among the Study Variables

Table 4
Pearson Correlation Matrix for the Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Feedback timeliness	1.00	.48	.42
2. Feedback specificity	.48	1.00	.55
3. Academic self-efficacy	.42	.55	1.00

Note. N = 240. p <.001

The correlation between feedback timeliness and academic self-efficacy was positive (r =.42, p <.001), indicating a moderate positive association: students who reported more timely feedback also tended to report stronger academic confidence. The correlation between feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy was stronger (r =.55, p <.001), suggesting that students who perceived their teachers' comments as more specific and actionable also tended to report greater confidence in their academic abilities.

Feedback timeliness and specificity were themselves positively correlated (r =.48, p <.001), indicating that the two characteristics may occur together. It was therefore important to examine their separate contributions in a regression model. Consequently, null hypotheses H_{01} and H_{02} were rejected. These correlations do not demonstrate causation.

4.4 Joint Predictive Contribution of Feedback Timeliness and Specificity

Table 5
Multiple Regression Predicting Academic Self-Efficacy

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	1.67	0.22	—	7.59	< .001
Feedback timeliness	0.18	0.06	.20	3.24	.001
Feedback specificity	0.39	0.06	.45	6.59	< .001

Note. B = unstandardised coefficient; SE B = standard error; β = standardised coefficients.

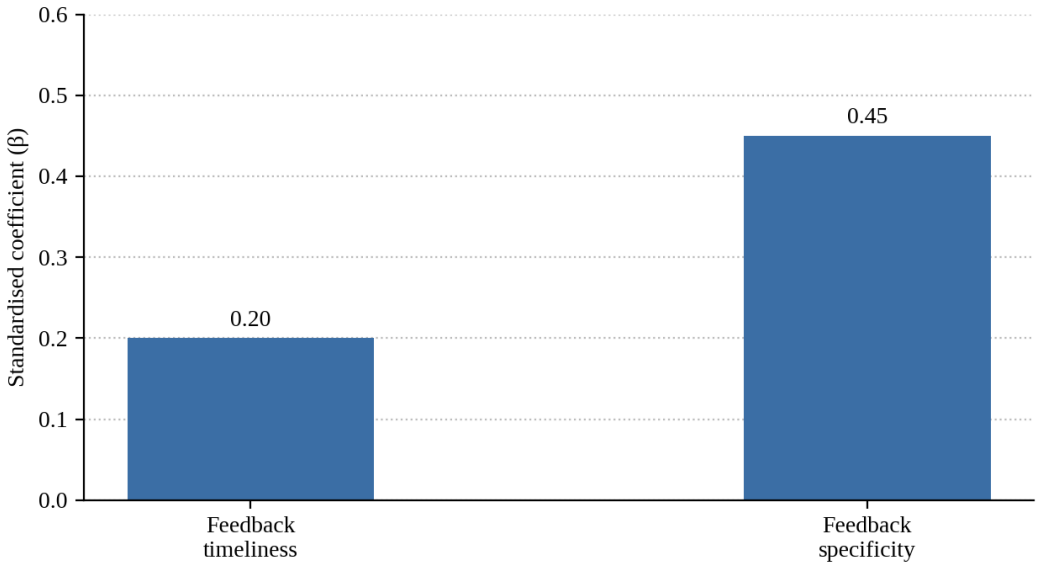
Table 6
Regression Model Summary

Statistic	Value
R	.58
R^2	.334
Adjusted R^2	.328
F(2, 237)	59.4
P	< .001
N	240

The regression model explained approximately 33.4% of the variance in academic self-efficacy, $F(2, 237) = 59.4$, $p < .001$, indicating that the two predictors jointly contributed to the prediction of self-efficacy. Consequently, H_{03} was rejected. Feedback timeliness had a standardised coefficient of $\beta = .20$, while feedback specificity had $\beta = .45$. Both coefficients were positive, suggesting that each feedback characteristic had a positive conditional association with self-efficacy after controlling for the other predictor.

The larger coefficient for specificity suggested that the precision and actionability of feedback may warrant particular attention. This comparison was provisional: coefficients, uncertainty intervals, model assumptions and potential confounding factors had to be examined before substantive conclusions were drawn.

Figure 2
Standardised Regression Coefficients for the Feedback Variables



5. Discussion

5.1 Feedback Timeliness and Academic Self-Efficacy

The positive correlation ($r = .42$) indicated that students who received more timely feedback tend to report higher academic self-efficacy. This was consistent with the argument that timely information allows learners to identify errors and use corrective guidance while the original task remains relevant.

This interpretation aligns with Hattie and Timperley's (2007) feedback framework and Shute's (2008) review of formative feedback. Both emphasise the importance of information that supports learning rather than merely evaluates performance.

However, prompt feedback may not improve confidence if it is confusing, discouraging or disconnected from learning goals. The educational implication is that teachers should aim for appropriate timing while preserving the clarity and usefulness of their comments.

5.2 Feedback Specificity and Academic Self-Efficacy

The stronger correlation between feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy ($r = .55$) – compared to timeliness was mirrored in the regression model which assigned specificity larger standardised coefficients. This supported further investigation of the role of actionable feedback in students' academic confidence. Specific comments can clarify the relationship between current performance and the standard expected, while providing learners with practical steps for improvement.

This interpretation is consistent with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, Carless and Boud's (2018) work on feedback literacy, and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick's (2006) account of formative assessment and self-regulated learning.

The finding does not imply that feedback specificity is universally more important than timing. The relative contributions could vary across subjects, age groups, teachers and assessment types.

5.3 Combined Contribution of Feedback Characteristics

The regression model explained 33.4% of the variance in academic self-efficacy, demonstrating the importance of evaluating the combined contribution of feedback timeliness and specificity rather than relying solely on bivariate correlations. Both characteristics emerged as significant predictors within the specified model. Nevertheless, a cross-sectional association cannot establish that changes in feedback practices cause changes in students' confidence.

Other influences, including prior achievement, teacher support, classroom climate and socioeconomic circumstances, may contribute to self-efficacy. Future analyses should consider appropriate covariates and, where feasible, longitudinal or experimental designs.

5.4 Implications for Classroom Evaluation in Nigeria

The study provided a basis for examining the quality of classroom feedback in junior secondary schools in Imo State and similar settings. Its practical implications include the following. First, teachers should establish workable assessment schedules that allow students to receive feedback before related learning opportunities have passed. Second, feedback should identify specific strengths, errors and corrective actions rather than relying exclusively on grades or general comments. Third, students should have opportunities to apply the information they receive through corrections, resubmissions and guided practice.

Professional development should also address feedback literacy, including how students interpret assessment information and how teachers can encourage learners to respond constructively. Recent research on feedback literacy measurement reinforces the importance of assessing these capacities carefully rather than assuming that the provision of comments automatically leads to their effective use (Mohd Noor et al., 2024; Zhan et al., 2026).

These recommendations are consistent with the broader aim of improving assessment quality in Nigerian education. They should, however, be refined in light of school resources and teachers' working conditions.

5.5 Limitations

Notwithstanding the insights provided by this study, two main limitations should be noted alongside justifications for the validity of the findings:

First, the data were gathered from three public schools in Owerri, Imo State, which may limit the direct generalisability of the findings to private institutions or other regions. Justification: Nevertheless, public secondary schools in Owerri share core curricular frameworks, administrative structures, and socio-cultural dynamics typical of public education across Imo State and the broader South-Eastern Region. Consequently, the identified patterns offer strong contextual and practical relevance for similar public school settings.

Secondly, the study utilised a cross-sectional, self-report design without controlling for extraneous variables such as prior achievement, teacher support, or school-level differences, describing associations rather than causal effects. Justification: However, student self-reports directly capture learner perceptions and lived classroom experiences, which are critical drivers of educational outcomes. Furthermore, cross-sectional designs provide a well-established, valid foundation for identifying key relational dynamics and guiding future longitudinal research.

6. Conclusion

This study examined feedback timeliness, feedback specificity and academic self-efficacy among JSS II students in public secondary schools in Imo State, South-Eastern Nigeria. It used descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, multiple regression and charts to report the relationships among these variables.

The results showed positive associations between both feedback characteristics and self-efficacy, with feedback specificity exhibiting a larger association. These associations should not be interpreted as evidence that feedback practices cause changes in students' confidence.

The principal contribution of the study was its school-based empirical evidence on how classroom evaluation practices may be connected to learners' academic confidence in Imo State. Further research with larger and more varied samples is necessary to establish the magnitude and generalisability of the relationships.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the literature reviewed, the following recommendations are made:

I. **Improve feedback timeliness.** Schools should establish practical procedures for returning assessed work while the relevant learning objectives remain current.
II. **Strengthen feedback specificity.** Teachers should identify particular strengths, explain errors and provide manageable steps for improvement.
III. **Promote feedback use.** Students should be given opportunities to correct mistakes, revise work and demonstrate improvement.
IV. **Provide professional development.** Teacher training should include formative assessment, actionable comments, feedback literacy and strategies for supporting students' academic confidence.
V. **Monitor assessment quality.** School leaders should evaluate the usefulness of feedback alongside conventional marking and record-keeping practices.
VI. **Conduct further research.** Future studies should use larger multi-school samples across Imo State and other South-Eastern states, consider prior achievement and school-level differences, and explore longitudinal or intervention designs to investigate whether improved feedback practices precede changes in self-efficacy.

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