

Relationship between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in North-Central, Nigeria.

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria. The research design adopted for the study was correlational design. A total of 101,467 Senior secondary school two (SS2) students comprises the population. Glenn (2012) sample scale was used in drawing the sample of 383 students. A Self-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The data collected was subjected to statistical analysis based on the three null hypotheses. A multiple correlation regression, an analysis of variance, t- test and Pearson correlation coefficient was used in analysing the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that, there exists significant relationship between students' academic achievement and their self-esteem regardless of their gender; male or female in the secondary schools in North central, Nigeria. The study also shows there is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female senior secondary school students. However, the study further discovered that, the student show significance difference in self-esteem with respect to age. It was recommended that; students should develop a strong sense of self-esteem from an early stage and maintain it throughout their academic journey. Also, parents and teachers should help train the students on how to develop positive views about themselves and their academic work and should always believe that they will perform well in their academic challenges irrespective of their gender. Nevertheless, a policy that mandates Nigeria Education Service to undertake a structured professional development programme for senior secondary school teachers should be instituted.

Keywords: *Self-Esteem, Academic Achievement, Relationship.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Students are of utmost importance in any educational institute. As a result, students' academic achievement has become a matter of interest to all educational stakeholders in the country. Students attend school to learn content that is conveyed to them by their instructors however, some students are more successful at attaining academic achievement than others. The reason for this variance may not be far fetch from the fact that students' academic achievement is the result of interaction between the various factors that influence it.

Self-esteem is self-assessment, a perception and evaluation that can be either positive or negative and pleasant or unpleasant. A person who has positive thoughts about their qualities and characteristics has high self-esteem. On the other hand, a person with negative thoughts about their qualities and characteristics has low self-esteem (Olivine, 2024).

There is a long-standing view among many educators that the beliefs and feelings students have about themselves are a key determinant of academic success. Academic achievement refers to how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers. It is the extent to which a student has achieved his or her educational objectives. In academic achievement, self-esteem is considered in helping students view the capability to promote themselves through effort and set of goals which improved their ability in the schools. Common research has proved that the best way to enhance students' academic achievement is through improving their self-esteem, (Maina, Abba, Hamza & Dadingel, 2021).

Educators, parents and others have focused efforts on boosting their wards' self-esteem, on the assumption that high self-esteem will cause many positive outcomes and benefits especially good academic achievement in schools. According to self-esteem expert Morris Rosenberg, self-esteem is described as an attitude which could be favourable or unfavourable towards his own self (Ackerman, 2018). Nuryana, Xu and Lu (2023) explains that self-esteem is important for self-confidence needed by children to engage and succeed in the improvement of learning achievement, especially in specific learning domains.

According to Thompson, 2015, our self-esteem develops and evolves throughout our lives as we build an image of ourselves through our experiences with different people and activities. Experiences during our childhood play a particular large role in the shaping of our basic self-esteem and our emotional competence. However, the development of emotional competencies is a lifelong process that goes hand in hand with physical, cognitive, and social development. To Nwokolo and Oguzie, (2021), people's self-esteem can be high or low. Students with high self-esteem tend to feel positive about themselves and about life in general, and this in turn makes them to handle life challenges better. People who have high self-esteem focus on growth and improvement, whereas, people with low self-esteem focus on not making mistakes in life. A person with high self-esteem perceives himself as a better, more capable and of greater worth than someone with low self-esteem. Indeed, just as individuals differ, their levels of self-esteem also differ. Actually, high self-esteem is very important in students' academic and socio-personal lives. Students with high self-esteem usually have greater confidence in their capabilities, which can lead to increased motivation and persistence in their studies.

A study carried out by Oguzie, et al (2023) disclosed that low self-esteem can emanate from child abuse and punishment, peer relationship, parenting style, academic

achievement, financial and social position, negligence, comparison with others, preferential treatment, excessive criticism, expectations from parents, physical appearance, bullying, unemployment, ill health and negative experience. Following from above, it is obvious that Oguzie et al (2023) research has significantly pointed the need for a good healthy school environment as a major influencer of students' self-esteem and eventual performance in the school. This is also echoed by Gidado (2000) and Gidado et al (2023), who in separate research efforts revealed that the psychological environment of a school has a significant effect on the individual attitudes and achievement with $p > 0.05$.

A person with low self-esteem can exhibit the following characteristics; self-criticism and dissatisfaction, hypersensitivity to criticism, resentment against critics, chronic indecision, exaggerated fear or mistake, excessive will to please others, perfectionism, pessimism and general negative outlook among others. Low self-esteem according to Okafor, Obi and Oguzie (2018), it involves constant self-doubt, self-criticism, social anxiety and isolation, suppressed anger, loneliness, and shame; individuals with low self-esteem tend to perceive themselves and issues of life in a more negative and critical light, they also feel unable to handle the challenges of life. Low self-esteem can be seen as been unhappy or not been content with your own character or abilities. In the context of this study, low self-esteem is defined as a negative belief, perception, or opinion which an individual has about himself which influences his behaviour and consequently affects his functioning and achievements in life.

In another study, Guindon in Emeji, (2018) enumerated the characteristics of students with low self-esteem to include: withdrawn, shy, unnecessarily quiet, insecure, underachieving, always negative, unhappy, socially inadequate, hostile, depressed, incompetent, having poor communication and no self-confidence.

In a study, Isah, (2016) revealed that significant relationship existed between the academic achievement and the level of self-esteem of students in secondary schools ($r = 0.880$ $p=0.001$). He saw the high self-esteem person as likely to seek personal growth, development and improvement by pushing themselves to the limits to exercise their capabilities. Maina, et.al., (2021) findings showed that there was significant positive relationship between self - esteem and academic achievement among respondents $P= .006$. This finding also indicated no significant difference between the academic achievement of students with high self – esteem and those with low self – esteem ($P = .305$). The study further reported self-esteem as a predictor that contributes to academic performance and defined as the evaluative segment of self-concept. Students with high self-esteem are said to be active. Moreover, they can express themselves well, succeed academically and in organizing social relations. While students with low self-esteem are mostly shy. Shy students cannot participate actively in the learning process, so that the student is not able to resolve the existing problems in school, both academically and socially (Kalutskaya, Archbell, Rudassil & Coplan, 2015).

Oguze, Ordua, Nnadi and Boulife, (2023) in a study, find out that the consequences of low self-esteem are poor academic achievement, social isolation, feeling of worthlessness, drug abuse, health problems such as headache and fatigue, cultism, suicidal ideation, school dropout, aggressive behaviour, shyness and social maladjustment. Also, the study identified adolescent's male with low self-esteem as becoming school dropouts, engaging in social vices and also female adolescents as becoming teenage mothers due to low self-esteem and this can jeopardize their educational attainment or result into poor academic achievement.

Okafor, Obi and Oguzie (2018) emphasized that to increase our self-esteem, we have to lower our expectations of ourselves and increase our achievements.

Subon, Unin and Sulaiman (2020) investigated the existence of differences in academic achievement and self-esteem between genders. The study found that, gender has a significant effect on academic performance, with self-esteem playing a mediator role between the two variables. The findings reveal that gender plays a vital role in determining academic performance. Oguzie, Ordua, Nnadi and Boulife, (2023) observed that the more success we achieve, the lower our expectation and pretension and the higher our self-esteem. In other word, when students perform well academically, they may develop a stronger sense of self-worth and belief in their abilities.

Arshad, Zaidi and Mahmood (2015) in a study, found out that there was significant relationship ($r=0.87$, $p<01$) between self-esteem and academic achievement and significant difference was found between male and female students on self-esteem and academic achievement, which indicate male students have high scores on self-esteem as compared to female students. Consistent with previous research, Bleidorn, Arslan, Denissen, Rentfrow, Gebauer, Potter and Gosling, (2016) found age-related increases in self-esteem from late adolescence to middle adulthood and significant gender gaps, with males consistently reporting higher self-esteem than females.

In contrast to the above, Perveen, Altaf and Tehreem, (2022) in a study carried out to measure the association between self-esteem and academic performance among the university going adolescents, found out a significantly positive correlation between self-esteem and academic performance. In addition, gender differences were found in terms of self-esteem as female participants had high self-esteem as compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, gender differences were found to be insignificant in terms of academic performance. Reasons behind these variations are not conclusive, though, cultural norms may influence the self-esteem of boys and girls differently, impacting their academic pursuits and confidence levels.

Maina, Abba, Hamza and Dadingel (2021) reported that there was significant positive relationship between self - esteem and academic achievement among respondents $P= .006$. Also, Perven, et al. 2022 findings, indicated no significant difference between the academic achievement of students with high self – esteem and those with low self – esteem ($P = .305$).

However, Anyanwu and Emesi, (2020) in a study found out that students' self-esteem recorded a very low negative relationship with academic achievement in mathematics. Some students are motivated to overcome an impending sense of failure as a person. They struggle to establish and maintain a sense of worth and belonging in a society that values competency and doing well. From the ongoing, self-esteem is clearly implicated in the achievement process and variations in self-esteem are closely related to different reasons for learning. It is obvious that relationship between students' self-esteem and academic achievements are multifaceted. As several studies and theories suggested potential connections and factors influencing this relationship.

Nevertheless, the relationship between students' self-esteem and academic achievement among students has been widely studied, yet findings remain inconclusive due to the complexity of the relationship and the influence of contextual and individual factors. Some researchers show minimal or no significant correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement while some other studies have reported high or low positive relationships. The cultural context in North-Central Nigeria where collective values and societal expectations

are significant, may influence the relationship differently compared to other individualistic societies. Hence, the need to carry out the present study; relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of secondary school students in the North-Central, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Upper Basic Education is an organized education for children leaving Middle Basic schools. It is the education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary education. In specific term, one of the objectives of secondary education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) as stated in the National Policy on Education include; to provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background. Definitely, one of the indicators to show that the objectives of secondary school education is being achieved lies on good achievement of students in external examinations for qualification into tertiary institutions.

The researcher observed that most Upper Basic Schools in North central Nigeria are lagging behind in academic achievements. The analysis of the performance of the states in North-Central, Nigeria, in West African Examination (WASSCE) in Nigeria revealed the summary of the positions of the States in North-Central, Nigeria, drawn from the number and percentages of candidates that obtain five credits and above including Mathematics and English Language in WASSCE released, May/June among Nigeria's 36 states from year 2014 to 2018. The mean percentages were as follows: Benue; 44.48%, Kogi; 38.26%, Kwara; 47.11%, Nasarawa; 38.74%, Niger; 26.72% & Plateau; 32.55% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Additionally, there are challenges related to low morale, leading to student dropouts. Thus, various factors might have constituted significant challenge in the effort of the students to learn and do better academically. As a result, it will not be out of place to conclude that more still needs to be done by all stakeholders to improve the performance of the Nigeria educational sector for student's better academic achievement.

1.2 Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, the following Hypotheses were formulated.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria based on gender.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria with respect to age.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a correlation survey design. Correlational design is a study design for examining the relationships between or among two or more variables in a single group, which can occur at several levels (Barkha, Ranjita, Shrijana, Doma, Nazung & Shakeela, 2022). A correlation research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them (Bhandari, 2023). The justification for the use of the correlation design is due to the nature of the study and processes involved

in the collection of data. It is used to find out relationship impact that would help in education to make valid decisions.

2.2 Population of the Study

The total population of this study was made up of all the senior secondary schools in North central, Nigeria. The target population comprises of 101,467 Senior Secondary Schools Two (SS.2) students from the public secondary schools in the North-Central, Nigeria across 816 Senior secondary schools (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

2.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques

This study used a sample of 383 students drawn from (15) fifteen sampled schools in each of the five states in the North-Central, Nigeria that constitute the study area. The sample size was determined using Glenn (2012) sample scale. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used for the selection of fifteen schools from the six North-Central states in Nigeria alongside with FCT. The choice of this technique was that multistage sampling allow researcher draw a sample from a population using smaller and smaller groups (units) at each stage. (Bhandari, 2023). The researcher selected the respondents randomly but proportionately for fair representation; thus, every school was given equal and independent chance of being included in the study.

2.3 Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection were Self-esteem and Academic achievement Questionnaire (SEA-Q) and Student Academic Record (SAR). SEA-Q is a self-structured instrument designed along a four-point rating scale with twenty (20) items to elicit information from the respondents. Self-esteem Questionnaire is a 20-items researcher-designed instrument used to assess students' level of self-esteem. The questionnaire was validated by a team of experts in department of Educational Foundations in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja to ensure face and content validity. The second instrument used for this study is called; Student Academic Record (SAR). The Students Academic Record collates data on students' academic achievement in previous promotional examination of the respondents; comprises of three (3) subjects namely: English Language, Mathematics and Civil Education.

The instrument was tested for reliability by conducting a pilot test. The instrument was administered to 50 Respondents who were not part of the study. The scores obtained from the pilot test was computed using internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha). The Alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument was, 0.706. This was considered high enough to make the questionnaire reliable for the study.

3. Result

Table 1: Test of Relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria

Variables	N	r-cal	P-value	Decision
Self-esteem and Academic achievement	383	.697	.000	Rejected

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As shown in Table 1 above, the computed correlation coefficient shows that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior

secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria. The r -value of .697 indicates a strong correlation. The probability value (p -value) is .000 which is lesser than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This indicates positive relationship. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that, there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of students is hereby rejected.

Table 2: T-test on Difference between male and female in the self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria

Gender	Number	Mean	S.D.	t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)	Decision
Male	212	2.734	.429	.397	381	.529	Accepted
Female	171	2.824	.400				

The analysis in Table 2 was carried out to test the significant difference between male and female in the self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria based on gender. With a significant value of .529 (more than the 0.05 alpha level of significance), the hypothesis that says that there is no significant difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria based on gender is, therefore accepted and concludes that male and female students did not differ significantly in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA for the difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria due to age range

Age Range	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	7.467	2	3.734	23.89	.000	rejected
Within Groups	59.387	380	.156			
Total	66.854	382				

The analysis in Table 3 was carried out to test the difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria due to age range. With a significant value of .000 (less than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that says that no significant difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria due to age range is, therefore, rejected and concludes that respondents differ significantly in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria due to age range.

4. Discussion of Findings

The main purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there are significant statistical relationships between self-esteem and academic

achievement among senior secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. Analysis of the hypothesis seeking for relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria indicated a positive relationship. This is because the calculated p-value was found to be lower than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This implies that the higher the students' self-esteem, the higher their academic achievement. Also, the lower the students' self-esteem, the lower their academic achievement. Hence, the null hypothesis which stated that, there is no relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria. This finding is in line with Zhao, Zheng, Pan and Zhou (2021) which findings of results showed that self-esteem positively predicted adolescent academic engagement through the indirect mediating role of academic self-efficacy. Another study by Maina, Abba, Hamza and Dadingel (2021), corroborated this finding that significant relationship exists between the academic achievement and the level of self-esteem of secondary school students in Gashua Education zone, Yobe State. The findings of the study revealed that there was significant positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement among respondents $P = .006$. The study found that self-esteem has no significant influence on students' academic performance in secondary schools. This implies that low or high self-esteem does not influence student's academic performance. However, Subon, Unin and Sulaiman (2020) in their finding saw no correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement. Also, that the variable does not statistically predict academic achievement of the students.

Findings on difference between male and female in the self-esteem of senior secondary school students indicates a significant value of .529 (more than the 0.05 level of significance), the hypothesis that says that there is no significant difference in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria based on gender is, therefore accepted and concludes that male and female students did not differ significantly in self-esteem of senior secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria. This finding is of the same view with Isah, (2016), that there is no significant difference in self-esteem between males and females secondary school students and their academic achievement. Contradicting this study, Perveen, Altaf and Tehreem, (2022) in their study achieved a different result indicating, there is a significant difference in self-esteem between males and females in that the female participants had high self-esteem as compared to their male counterparts. However, gender differences were found to be insignificant in terms of academic performance.

This present study also revealed that students show significant differences in self-esteem based on age range among senior secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria. In line with the present study, Bleidorn, Arslan, Denissen, Rentfrow, Gebauer, Potter and Gosling, (2016) in their research to broaden the empirical base, found age-related increases in self-esteem from late adolescence to middle adulthood. Affirming that the cultures differed significantly in the magnitude of gender and age, effects on self-esteem. These differences were associated with cultural differences in socioeconomic, sociodemographic, gender-equality, and cultural value indicators. Aligning with these findings, Mahnaz, Shah, Muhammad, Syed and Anjum, (2022) in a study that assessed "Self-esteem and academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Punjab district, Attock revealed that, as far as age is concerned, the findings show that 52% of the students interviewed had attained 16 years and above.

This suggest that age and gender have influence on self-esteem and in turn academic performance of the students.

5. Conclusion

Arising from the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. There is significant statistical correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement among senior secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in self-esteem between male and female senior secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.
3. Students show significant differences in self-esteem based on age range among senior secondary school students in North-Central Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

In view of the findings made in this study, the following recommendations have been made.

1. Students should develop a strong sense of self-esteem from an early stage and maintain it throughout their academic journey.
2. Students should be trained on how to develop positive views about themselves and their academic work and should always believe that they will perform well in their academic challenges irrespective of their gender.
3. Teachers should adopt a new teaching strategy that will facilitate positive development of students' self-esteem for this will enhance their academic achievement at the optimal level.
4. Schools must employ the service of educational psychologists or counsellor who will serve as a support system for students struggling with low self-esteem. This can be done through intensive individual and group counselling, which will ultimately enhance their academic achievement.
5. The teachers who are the link between knowledge and learning in our educational system should be availed opportunities for regular training and re-training to enable them have a good grasp of the principles and philosophies of education. Providing training for teachers will help to standardise the teaching and learning environment, thereby ensuring quality assurance in Nigeria's' education system.

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