Secondary School Student's Academic Performance Self Esteem and School Environment: an Empirical Assessment from Nigeria

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Abstract

Exams have long served as the primary tool for determining a student's aptitude and as a way to choose students for academic advancement and employment. This study evaluated how much the school atmosphere and students' self-esteem affected their academic performance in a few senior secondary schools in Obafemi-Owode LGA, Ogun State, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted. Three hundred and ninety-six (396) respondents participated in the study. Descriptive statistics of frequency distribution mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data and provide answers to the research questions. The study found that self-esteem levels, academic achievement levels, and respondents' perceptions of the school environment were all below average for secondary school pupils. In order to increase students' academic engagement and performance, the study found that secondary school students' self-esteem and a supportive school climate are important elements that should be taken into consideration together. The study did, however, suggest that parents and teachers must work together to foster a welcoming and encouraging learning atmosphere where students feel fully supported, motivated, and appreciated.

Keywords: academic performance, self-esteem, school environment, secondary school

Introduction

It has become a national issue that pupils consistently do poorly in the Senior and Junior School Certificate Examinations. In order to solve the issue, the Federal Ministry of Education held Examination Summits in 2010 and 2021. The poor performance syndrome still exists in the public secondary school system despite efforts by governments, parents, teachers, students, researchers, school administrators, alumni associations, international development partners like the UNESCO, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other

stakeholders in education, while it seems to be improving in private secondary schools. Many parents, especially teachers in public secondary schools, policy makers in the public and private sectors and even poor market women therefore struggle to send their wards to private secondary schools despite the attendant cost while deliberately boycotting the public secondary schools in their neighbourhood the causes, effects and symptoms of poor academic performance of students are known in the literature. However, the poor performance has persisted for decades in Ogun State, Nigeria.

There are several school-related aspects that affect children' academic performance, such as school size, evaluation procedures, social roles, grade structures, noise, and extracurricular possibilities. The academic setting is intended to provide a practical setting for imparting healthy lifestyles, positive attitudes, and other ethical behaviors. According to Morton et al. (2016), improved school environments produce better behaved kids, which decreases bullying and vandalism. According to Castelli et al. (2015), the school atmosphere can have an impact on kids' academic achievement regardless of their intelligence level. Given its ability to arrange and foster positive relationships between people of all ages, the school environment can also be thought of as the second teacher.

The school setting includes, among other things, the classroom setup, library setup, temperature (hot or cold), class size, and teacher's lab setup. However, some schools lack key necessary amenities, which is why academic performance is declining in some institutions. According to Moldes et al. (2019), these circumstances may have a negative impact on both students' and teachers' health, which will have an impact on how well the students perform. Thus, it is essential that learning occurs in a supportive atmosphere in order to ensure that it is done properly and quickly. Because the objective of enhancing academic performance is at the core of Nigeria's educational mission, it is important to critically examine the environmental elements that influence student academic performance, methods that can aid them, and provide some recommendations. Environmental influence has received little to no attention in educational discourse and discussion since it has not previously been recognized as one of the factors that affect academic success in secondary schools. However, amazing studies conducted over the previous ten years have found a link between a student's environment and academic achievement (Rabia et al., 2017).

Public education in Ogun State may eventually be relegated to history if the "status quo" is left unchecked, despite the fact that it is the duty of the government to educate its citizens. The goal of this study is to ascertain whether the self-esteem and school environment of secondary school pupils in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria will affect their academic performance.

Research Questions
1.   What is the level of academic performance among secondary school students?
2.   What is the level of self-esteem among secondary school students?
3.   What is the status of school environment in secondary school students?

Literature Review

Additionally, research has revealed that environmental influences have a significant impact on people's physical and psychological potential. This has given rise to the argument that a lot of pupils do not reach their full potential because of insufficient environmental stimulation. Inadequate school facilities, abuse of technology like the internet, and school atmosphere like the teacher-student connection are some environmental factors that have contributed to the poor performance of students (Setiawan et al., 2021).

Self-esteem is the other issue raised by this study. According to Steiger et al. (2014), self-esteem is a person's assessment of his or her value as a person and is tied to the results of their personal and social lives. Although self-esteem is seen to be a fairly constant aspect of personality, it can change in response to recent successes or failures (Telles et al., 2013). Low self-esteem has been linked to detrimental results for young people's behavioral and mental health issues, as well as subpar life skills like social interaction and academic achievement (Keane & Loades, 2017). There has been a strong debate about the connection between poor self-esteem and depression, despite the fact that it is commonly known that the two are associated.

Therefore, while being an open and self-correcting system, the secondary school system does not seem to be addressing the ongoing issue of student performance deficiency as well as the results/outputs of the educational process in an acceptable manner. Additionally, there appears to be a disconnect between the public secondary school system's constituent parts, including the policy makers, the students, the teachers, the parents, and the system's environment. This disconnect ultimately leads to a system error, which is the students' consistently poor academic performance in the SSCE and JSSCE for more than 25 years.

Research Method

Research Design

This research study adopted a survey research design to assess the influence of school environment and self-esteem on academic performance of secondary school students in Obafemi Owode Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Sample size and sampling Technique

For the purpose of this study, the sampling covers the students at the 7 selected secondary schools with respondents of 1000 and above. The sample size for this study was determined by applying the Cochran (1997) formula as it is the standard method of randomization and is also suitable for identifying the limits of errors considered as the most essential items in the survey. This helped the researcher to obtain the sample of 411 for the study. The multi-stage sampling procedure was chosen because it is a stage-by-stage system of sampling. The schools were first selected through purposive sampling method in which the schools with less than 1000 student population were eliminated. Additionally, proportional stratified random sampling method was used for the selection of 411 students from the seven schools; and, the selection of the participants was done using simple random sampling technique. In addition, 411 students from the seven schools were chosen using a proportional

stratified random sample approach, and the participants were chosen using a basic random sampling method.

Instrumentation

Standardized instruments were used for this study

School Environment Scale - Richford 2020. The instrument is tagged to measure the learning environment of the respondents. It consists of fifty items. All the items were based on 5 point likert i.e. Strongly agree= SA, Agree= A, Neutral = N, Strongly disagree =SD, Disagree = D. These will be scored as follows: Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Strongly disagree = 2, Disagree = 1.

Self-esteem scale (Adaniji & Oyefeso, 1985). It is a 15 item questionnaire with likert response format of SA (5) A (4) U(3) D(2) SD(1) designed to measure high and low self-esteem. That is how an individual rates him/herself and his/her perception on how people perceive him/her. A highest possible score of 75 and a least possible score of 15 could be obtained by any given respondent. For the sample of this study, score above 59.42 indicate high self-esteem while below indicated low self-esteem. Adanijo and Oyefeso (1985) obtained the validity of the instrument as well as split-half reliability of 0.76 and crombach alpha of 0.72.

In order to obtain the academic achievement of the students, their academic records of the examinations done in English and Mathematics will be obtained from the school heads. It will be the scores of each student in English Language and Mathematics for the 2021/2022 sessions. The study will be limited to English Language and Mathematics.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher visited all the seven selected schools with a letter of introduction from the School of Education, Babcock University Ilishan, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, as well as letter of ethical approval or clearance was obtained from Babcock University Health Research Ethics Committee (BUHREC). These letters were taken to the school principals through the Zonal Education Officer (ZEO) to secure permission to carry out the study in the selected schools. A period of three weeks was used in the administration of instrument and collection of data. The researcher and two research assistants were involved in the administration of the instruments to each of the sample respondents chosen.

Method of Data Analysis

In this study, the data analysis tools that were adopted include descriptive and inferential statistics. The scores of the students in English Language and Mathematics were converted to standard scores (Z-scores) since the scores were obtained from seven different schools and were graded by different teachers using different scales. The Z-scores was further converted to T-Scores to remove the negative values and decimal fractions that showed up. Simple regression analysis was used to test hypotheses one through three. All the hypotheses were tested at 5 percent level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) using the SPSS 25 version software.

Results

Table 1: Overview results of secondary school students' academic performance

Category	Criteria	Frequency	%	
75-100	A1 – Excellent	27	6.8	
70-74	B2 – Very Good	25	6.4	20.8
65-69	B3 – Good	30	7.6	
60-64	C4 – Credit	26	6.6	
55-59	C5 – Credit	56	14.1	28.8
50-54	C6 – Credit	32	8.1	
45-49	D7 – Pass	71	17.9	32.0
40-44	E8 – Pass	56	14.1	
0-39	F9 – Fail	73	18.4	18.4

The result presents the overview results of secondary school students' academic performance. The academic performance was done based on the scores and grade. At the distinction level, we have A1, B2 and B3. Out of the 396 students, only 82 (20.8%) students fall at this category. At the credit level (C4, C5 and C6), 114 (28.8%) students were in this category. Additionally, Table 4.2.1(a) revealed that 127 (32%) were at the pass level (D7 and E8) while the remaining 73 (18.4%) failed.

In order to tease out the level of academic performance among secondary school students, all the results were group into two either as passed or failed based on promotion and university admission criteria. The credit and distinction levels (A1, B2, B3, C4, C5 and C6) are summarized as passed while the E8 and F9 are summarized as failed as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The level of academic performance among secondary school students

Category	Criteria	Frequency	%	Remark
50-100	Passed	196	49.5	Number of students with passed results
0-49	Failed	200	50.5	Number of students with failed results

Table 2 revealed that a little above average failed (50.5%) and 49.5% passed. It could be deduced from the results that the level of academic performance among secondary school students is on the average.

Table 3: Self-esteem among secondary school students

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-esteem	396	32.00	75.00	38.05	3.87

Table 3 reveals the extent of self-esteem among secondary school students. It was observed from the table that the respondents had a mean score of 38.05 (50.7%), which is moderate. This is because it is higher than the minimum score of 32 which is 42.7%.

Table 4: summary of the level of self-esteem among secondary school students

Category	Criteria	Frequency	%	Remark
51-75	High	165	41.7	Number of participants with High level of self-esteem
26– 50	Moderate	231	58.3	Number of participants with moderate level of self-esteem
1-25	Low	-	-	Number of participants with low level of self-esteem

Table 4 presents the level of self-esteem among secondary school students. The level of self-esteem among secondary school students was categorized as high (51-75), moderate/average (26-50) and Low (1-25). Majority 231 (58.3%) of the participants had moderate level of self-esteem and the remaining 165 (41.7%) had high level of level of self-esteem.

Table 5: Status of school environment as perceived by the respondents

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
School environment	396	89.00	250.00	108.95	21.63

Table 5 reveals the status of school environment as perceived by the respondents. It was observed from the table that the respondents had a mean score of 108.95 (43.6%), which is fair and not favorable. This study observed that the status of school environment as perceived by the respondents was not good enough.

Discussion of Findings

Education at the secondary school level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. The findings of data analysis presented in table 4.2.1 revealed that there is a moderate academic performance among secondary school students as about 49.5% has grades that could qualify them for higher class or education. This implies that students' academic achievement or performance is dropping day by day. This is also reflection of the recurring poor performance of students in the Senior

and Junior School Certificate Examination, which has become a national problem. Consistent lower academic performance at the Senior Secondary School is a threat to every country's educational system. This is in tandem with the findings of Abaidoo (2018) whose findings revealed that the average academic performance (47.0%) of the JHS students in Gomoa Manso Basic School is weak. This is also supported by Moradeyo and Babatunde (2020) that there is decline in the academic performance of secondary school students. However, Nigeria is known for having a hike in the rate of school dropouts compared with other countries globally due to poor performance (Okoye, et al, 2019).

This results contradict the breakdown of the results in 2022 WAEC which showed that 1,222,505 candidates, amounting to 76.36 percent of the 1,601,047 candidates that sat for the examination, obtained credits and above in a minimum of five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics (WAEC Report, 2022)

High school is the time when most students are developing their sense of identity of being whom they are. Through the many pressures and daunting responsibilities of being a student, one learns and understands the importance of having a high self-esteem in the school. Self–esteem is important to everyone. Having a high self-esteem has many positive effects and benefits, especially among high school students. Positive self-esteem is one of the building blocks of academic achievement; it provides a firm foundation for learning. Students who feel positive about themselves have fewer sleepless nights, succumb less easily to pressures of conformity by peers, are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, are more persistent at difficult tasks, are happier and more sociable, and most pertinent to this study is that they tend to perform better academically.

The outcome of this study showed that the self-esteem of secondary school students is moderate, which may be as a result of some factors inherent in the students or circumstances around them (their experience and exposure within the school). This corroborates the findings of Ayodele, Uwannah, Nwagburuka, Egwuonwu and Akinpelu (2022) that majority of students are likely to have low self-esteem as a result of feeling inadequate over not being good in some subjects (therefore causing examination anxiety) and in addition have low self-esteem as a result of other experiences. In addition, Asika (2021) examined self-concept, self-esteem, and self-esteem as predictors of academic performance in mathematics among junior secondary school students in Edo State, she reported moderate level of self-esteem among her subjects.

This study observed that the status of school environment as perceived by the respondents was not good enough. The finding was adjudged by the perception or the view of the students in an empirical manner and may be as a result of some factors inherent in the students or circumstances around them (their experience and exposure within the school). This is in line with the findings of Waldman (2016) who observed that before students can succeed academically, they must feel safe, both physically and mentally, and to have a safe learning environment, students must feel welcomed, supported, and respected. Personalizing learning helps students develop skills including thinking critically, using knowledge and information to solve complex problems, working collaboratively, communicating effectively, learning how to learn, and developing academic mindsets that would greatly increase students' engagement (Ayodele, 2013; Raccoon, 2018).

Additionally, in Nigeria, students had to endure difficult conditions like extreme cold or unbearably hot temperatures in the classrooms. In some cases, lack of competent teachers, relevant texts and curricular are major issues students confront in schools. Students are sometimes made to contend with violence from fellow students and even their teachers (Okoye, et al, 2019). These conditions are not conducive to learning and the resultant effect is high rate of dropouts in our schools.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the level of academic performance among secondary school students below average, level of self-esteem was moderate, and the status of school environment as perceived by the respondents was fair but not favorable. This implies that to increase secondary school students' academic engagement and performance, it is important to take into account both their sense of self and the school environment.

Limitation of the Study

The degree to which the results of this study can be generalized has some restrictions. First off, just seven schools—out of the many in the federation—and one local government local government region were included in the study. As a result, the conclusions might not apply to governments other than the local ones where the study was conducted. Second, the study excluded pupils from various levels of education in Nigeria in favor of secondary school students. Thirdly, only one dependent variable (academic performance) was included in the study, which focused on aspects of the school environment such as the classroom setting, the learning experience, student perceptions of their teachers, their social self-perceptions, and their academic self-perceptions. Finally, out of all the psycho-social variables, only the personal variable of self-esteem was taken into account.

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