



PSYCHO-SOCIAL PREDICTORS AS CORRELATES OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TWO STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN LITERACY SKILLS IN PANKSHIN, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated psychosocial predictors as correlates of Senior Secondary Two Students' academic performance in literacy skills in Pankshin, Plateau State. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between psychosocial predictors (self-esteem, self-concept and assertiveness) and students' academic performance in English Language literacy skills. The study was guided by three research questions and three hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational survey design. Using a multistage sampling technique, 349 SS2 students' were used as sample size drawn from the population of 8,785 SS2 students' for 2023/2024 session. Psychosocial Predictors and Performance in English Questionnaire (PPP-EQ) and English Literacy Development Performance Test (ELDPT) were used for data collection. They were first validated by three experts and tested for reliabilities. The PPP-EQ yielded a reliability of 0.94, using Cronbach Alpha, while the ELDPT yielded a reliability of 0.91 using Kuder Richardson 21(K-R 21) formula. The three research questions were answered and three hypotheses tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings revealed self-esteem has significant relationship with students' academic performance in English Language literacy skills (reading and writing), while self-concept and assertiveness have no significant correlation with students' academic performance in English Language literacy skills. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Language experts and researchers should write and publish textbooks and journals on the effective roles of self-esteem in the lives of students in enhancing their proficiency in English Language literacy skills.

Key words: Psychosocial predictors, correlates, performance and literacy skills.

Introduction

The quest for education temporarily separates school children from their family members. This makes most infants starting school to cry endlessly for reconnection and re-bonding with their loved ones. This phenomenon has been explained by Bowlby (1969) using the theory of attachment. Reconnection and rebonding according to Bowlby are crucial components of attachment. Through love, care and concern from caregivers, students naturally learn to bond, rebond, connect and reconnect to such individuals. Providing a healthy environment for students to learn and relate with others can improve their attachment to the environment. However, most secondary school students who find comfort, love and care in their homes suffer emotionally, psychologically and socially while in school. This could have some correlations with learners' psychological and social behaviours at school. Developing some level of adjustment academically is what may be required. The inability of many students to meet with the demands of the new environment that is different from the home, could pose some challenges to most students who may find it difficult to adjust easily to a new social environment, relationships and activities.

Nevertheless, education is a veritable tool for launching learners into a new world and larger society. It inculcates in the learners the acceptable values, norms, beliefs and knowledge to develop mental, physical, psychological and social abilities and competencies to be functional and self-reliant (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Education is an instrument for national development and social change. It is vital for maximising the potentials and skills of students for self-fulfilment. This shows that educating a child is compulsory and the right of every child irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and individual challenges (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Muhammed and Muhammed (2010) corroborate that education is a veritable instrument for transmitting cultural values and a tool for personality development.

In Nigeria, there is a positive interaction between education and English Language. This is

because English language is the window through which educational knowledge, content and skills are passed on from More Knowledgeable Other (such as teachers) to students. This interaction effect between education and English Language could influence students' psycho-social behaviours, skills and abilities (Vygotsky, 1978; Woodney, 2013). This implies that English language acquisition in Nigerian education system across all the levels of education is crucial to a healthy relationship and interaction of students with the world. There is a crucial need to give priority attention to English Language teaching and learning in schools since there is a close connection between English Language competence and students' academic performance (Oyetunde, 2013).

English is the medium of instruction in Nigerian educational system. It is used in teaching all the subjects in the Nigerian curriculum such as Literature-in-English, Geography, Social Studies, Mathematics and Physics. It is believed that student who can read and write effectively in English can do well in other subjects. Ebuta and Ekpo (2014) posit that learners need proficiency in English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) for their future career and personality development. This justifies why English Language is a prerequisite for admission into tertiary educational institutions in Nigeria to study any course.

The teaching and learning of English Language in Nigeria may not have been given the needed attention. This is because students' performance in English Language especially in the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) is consistently poor. The West African Examination Council (WAEC, 2020 - 2023) Chief Examiners' Report revealed that students' performance in English Language is poor. Students' answers were characterised by expression errors, vocabulary, mechanical errors and errors of organisation of their ideas. Specifically, the report revealed students' weaknesses in reading and writing skills to include: inability to express themselves in simple and correct English, poor use of mechanics (spelling, punctuation) and tenses. Others include incorrect use of preposition, subject-verb concord, syllabification, wrong amalgamation of

words, poor use of capital letters, poor interpretation of comprehension and writing questions, verbatim comprehension answers, and poor hand writing. Most secondary school students lack the ability to read silently and infer meaning from written text. They often find it difficult to also construct flawless sentences in essay tasks. This seems to place much emphasis on literacy skills such as reading and writing. The weaknesses are blamed on lots of factors like teaching methodology, teacher factors, parental factors including students' factors (Muodumogu, 2012; Ukume, Agbum & Udu, 2018).

Reading is a cognitive process that influences students' psycho-social behaviour like self-esteem, self-efficacy and attitude. Reading is central in comprehension and retention of text where the reader is actively involved in using available context and knowledge of the text structure to construct meaning from the text. It is through reading that students get much information about the world to enhance their cognition and develop their personality (Muodumogu & Iorpev, 2018). Ability to read effectively can build students' confidence in themselves in the English classroom. Mart (2012) asserts that students who are avid readers are more likely to speak well and develop fluency and accuracy of expression in speech and writing. Therefore, students need to acquire effective reading skills in order to use it as a tool for learning and self-development.

Writing is an integral part of English language learning every school child must acquire to excel at school (Lawrence, 2012). Writing entertains, informs, educates and preserves information (Lawrence, 2012; Agbum, Ukume & Obiora, 2018). It is a virtual form of communication which is either printed in hard copy or electronic form and it is used as a means of building links between individuals (interpersonal relationship). It serves as a foundation for almost every type of communication in administration, trade and for instructional purposes (Agbum, Ukume & Obiora, 2018). In spite of the benefit of writing, many senior secondary school students as second language users of English lack the ability and capacity to write good essays worthy of publication. This is because they have not built the right psycho-social skills like self-esteem, self-

efficacy, attitude, interest, self-concept, social acceptance and inter-personal relationship through writing and reading in English language. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the influence of psycho-social predictors like self-esteem, self-concept, assertiveness, social acceptance, interest, attitude and interpersonal relationship on students' performance in reading and writing skills.

Psycho-social development relates to one's psychological and social development. Ukaegbu and Obi-Okoye (2017) believe that psycho-social development is the act of stimulating both psychological and social behaviour in an individual to prepare him/her for diverse situations in life. This means that developing the psycho-social behaviour of students in reading and writing is essential to enable them comprehend diverse situations in spoken and written texts. Ken (2015) posits that trust, mistrust, interaction, and self-understanding are essential qualities in a child's psycho-social development. Erikson (1950) describes psycho-social development as the combination of psychology and social skills through which students develop from birth to death as influenced by environmental factors.

Encouraging meaningful interaction and relationship in the school environment between learners and teachers is crucial to effective learning and psycho-social development. Researchers (Ukaegbu & Obi-Okoye, 2017; Kimani, 2016; Stark, 2018) identify some psycho-social variables that can influence students' performance in reading and writing in English lessons. These include self-esteem, self-concept, assertiveness, social acceptance, interpersonal relationship, interest and attitude.

Psycho-social variables may have influence on students' academic performance in Sciences, Social Sciences and Arts education over the years as evidenced in the works of Ukaegbu and Obikoye (2017), Hanior, Ortese and Dabu (2018). Hanior, Ortese and Dabu found that psycho-social behaviour like self-concept of students reduces their state of anxiety, low self-esteem and incapacitation. This is because students who have idea about themselves learn to survive through situations in the school environment (Hanior, Ortese & Dabu, 2018). Hanior, Ortese and Dabu

(2020) identify single parenting as one significant family variable that influences psycho-social behaviour of students like assertiveness and interpersonal relationship. However, students who have the mastery of English language literacy skills (reading and writing) could relate with print materials easily regardless of parenting status, family type and size. This study therefore focused on three psycho-social predictors. These include self-esteem, self-concept and assertiveness of students in reading and writing lessons.

In achieving the social and psychological tasks that come with learning English Language, students need to be psychologically and socially developed and prepared to acquire mastery in the language. Salami (2011) affirms that psycho-social development of students produces a more harmonious relationship between students and their learning environment.

Developing self-esteem in students could be helpful in an English language lesson. Stark (2018) posits that self-esteem is how one feels about himself or herself. It is one's attitude towards self and the ability to have self-confidence in oneself. Hadia and Scema (2013) note that there are two dimensional perspectives to self-esteem. These include self-liking and self-competence. One's self-esteem could be low or high and this could influence the learning of English Language. Students who have self-likeness and competence may likely do well academically.

There could be an interaction between students' self-esteem and their academic performance in English Language. Students' inability to speak, read or write effectively in English that is consistently evident in their poor performance could influence their self-esteem (Sommer & Dumount, 2011). This is because self-esteem is a personality booster and it is perceived to significantly influence students' academic performance at school (Kimani, 2016).

Students home and the school have crucial roles to play in developing the spirit of self-concept in school aged children especially those at senior secondary school level of education. This is because self-concept gives students a clear picture of their attributes, abilities, qualities, deficiencies, capacities, values and limitations (John, Abdul-Jaleel & Emma, 2014). Self-concept

is a perception every human being has of himself or herself. It is a component of personality development and it indicates who one really is and how one fits into a world (John, Abdul-Jaleel & Emma, 2014). Saani (2012) links students' academic performance to poor self-concept.

Self-concept theorists like Rogers (1947) notes that self-concept has always had a strong influence on professions. It is believed that self-concept is the central ingredient in human personality development and personal adjustment. In every student, there is a tendency for self-actualisation and development in an environment (Rogers, 1947).

Teaching students to be assertive about themselves is important in personality development for cognitive formation. Assertiveness according to Garner (2012) is the open, honest and appropriate expressions of one's true feelings, needs and desires. A student who is true to himself or herself about his/her abilities and limitations in English Language is on a gateway to academic advancement. Pryor and Rodgers (2014) note that assertiveness is the ability to express one's opinions, feelings, ideas and needs openly in a way that encourages conversation. This means that assertive students in an English Language lesson are actively involved in the process and they could learn new things in English Language through their art of openness that encourages meaningful conversation in the classroom.

The study therefore sought to investigate psycho-social predictors as correlates of students' academic performance in literacy skills in Pankshin, Plateau State. Specifically, the study focused on the psycho-social indices of self-esteem, self-concept and assertiveness

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and academic performance in English Language literacy skills?
2. What is the correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance in English Language literacy skills?
3. What is the relationship between students'

assertiveness ratings and performance in English Language literacy skills?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills.
2. There is no significant correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills.
3. There is no significant relationship between assertiveness and students' performance in English Language.

Literature Review

The study was anchored on two theories namely, Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory and Rogers' (1959) theory of self-esteem. Vygotsky posits that no learner is born empty of ideas. Every learner is born with rich, but unsystematic, disorganised and spontaneous concepts. The role of the teacher as a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) is to encourage social interaction and give assistance to learners through verbal explanations that would enable the learners' concepts to become more systematic and logical. The kind of interaction encouraged by the teacher and the assistance given may have influence on students' self-esteem, self-concept and assertive behaviour.

The theory of self-esteem (Rogers, 1959), holds that every learner needs an environment that provides genuine and acceptable empathy and relationship for academic and social advancement. The role of the teacher or parent is to enable learners build positive spirit about themselves and abilities. This perception may influence the way the learners behave with others and feel about themselves. The feeling of self-actualization is crucial to students' academic performance.

Empirically, studies have shown the relationship between psycho-social predictors and students' academic performance. Sommer and Dumount (2011) believe that self-esteem and academic performance of students are

significantly related. Ukaegbu and Obi-Okoye (2017) affirm that self-esteem significantly predicts academic adjustment and performance of first year university students. Studies by Muhammad, Syed and Khalid (2017) and Subon, Unin and Sulaiman (2020) are also in agreement that there is a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance among university students. However, Alokun, Ogunsanmi, Makinde and Fashina (2014) found a significant difference between the academic performance of students with high self-esteem and those with low self-esteem in favour of those with high self-esteem. However, there has been conflicting reports on the variable of self-concept. While Lanyca, Saani and Dawson-Brew (2014) revealed that students' self-concept does not directly predict their academic performance, the studies of Bala (2014) and Kimani and Chamudeswari (2013) shown a significant and positive relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students.

The empirical reports on the variable of assertiveness by Ghodrati, Tavakoli, Benetez, Rodriguez and Olan (2018) and Galata (2018) showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between assertiveness of students and their academic performance. However, the report of these studies may be different from the current study.

Research Method

The study employed a correlational research design. Correlational research investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. This was informed because the study tested the relationship between psycho-social predictors (self-esteem, self-concept and assertiveness) and students' academic performance in literacy skills. The population of the study comprised 8,785 SS two students attending public schools in Pankshin, Plateau State. Using multi-stage sampling technique, a sample of 349 SS two students was drawn. The researchers designed Psychosocial Predictors and Performance in English Questionnaire (PPP-EQ) and English Literacy Development Performance Test (ELDPT) as instruments for data collection. The PPP-EQ was a personalised instrument with 10-

clustered items each on students' self-esteem, self-concept and assertiveness. Students were asked to supply their honest opinion to each item using a modified 4-point Likert scale of Always (AL =4), Sometimes (S. =3), Hardly (H =2) and Never (N = 1). The ELDPT consisted of summary writing, reading comprehension and essay writing questions based on SS 2 English curriculum content. The summary passage was marked over 30%, comprehension (20%) and essay writing (50%). The instruments were validated by three experts in language education and test and measurement from Benue State University,

Makurdi. The instruments were trial tested with their reliabilities estimated. The PPP-EQ yielded a reliability of 0.94 using Cronbach Alpha, while the ELDPT yielded a reliability of 0.91 using Kuder Richardson (K-R 21). The research questions were answered and the null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient.

Results

The data collected were analysed and presented in tables according to the three research questions and three hypotheses that guide the study.

Research Question One

What is the relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and academic performance in English Language literacy skills?

Table 1: Relationship Between Students' Self-Esteem and Academic Performance in English Language Literacy Skills

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Remark
Self-Esteem	349	2.59	0.51	0.764	High Positive Relationship
Academic Performance	349	58.08	15.42		

Table 1 shows that computed r is 0.764 indicating that there is a high positive relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and academic performance in English Language literacy skills. By implication, as students' self-esteem

improves, students' academic performance in English Language literacy skills also improves. Thus, students with high self-esteem are more likely to record high academic performance in English Language literacy skills.

Research Question Two

What is the correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance in English Language literacy skills?

Table 2: Correlation Between Students' Self-Concept and Performance in English Language Literacy Skills

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	Remark
Self-Concept	349	2.47	0.52	0.269	Low Positive Relationship
Academic Performance	349	58.08	15.42		

Table 2 reveals that computed r is 0.269 indicating that there is a low positive correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance in English Language literacy skills. In this way, enhancing students' self-concept will result in a

slight improvement in students' performance in English Language literacy skills. By implication, improving students' self-concept could slightly make the students perform better in the classroom.

Research Question Three

What is the relationship between students' assertiveness ratings and performance in English Language literacy skills?

Table 3: Relationship Between Students' Assertiveness and Performance in English Language Literacy Skills

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Remark
Assertiveness	349	2.61	0.49	0.041	Low Positive Relationship
Academic Performance	349	58.08	15.42		

Table 3 shows that computed r is 0.041 indicating that there is a low positive relationship between students' assertiveness ratings and performance in English Language literacy skills. By implication, being assertive results in slight improvement in students' performance in English Language literacy skills. This means that students'

assertiveness is less likely to enhance their performance in English Language literacy skills.

Hypotheses

The three hypotheses formulated for this study were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results are presented below.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills.

Table 4: Pearson Moment Correlation on the Relationship Between Students' Self-Esteem and Performance in English Language Literacy Skills

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Df	P-Value	Remark
Self-Esteem	349	2.59	0.51	0.764	348	0.000	Significant
Academic Performance	349	58.08	15.42				

Results in Table 4 shows that $r = 0.764$, $df = 348$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. Since p value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the result is significant. Therefore, there is

significant relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills.

Table 5: Pearson Moment Correlation on Relationship Between Students' Self-Concept Ratings and Performance Scores in English Language Literacy Skills

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	Df	P-Value	Remark
Self-Concept	349	2.47	0.52	0.269	348	0.197	Not Significant
Academic Performance	349	58.08	15.42				

Results in Table 5 shows that $r = 0.269$, $df = 348$, $p = 0.197 > 0.05$. Since p value of 0.197 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This suggests that the result is not significant.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between assertiveness and students' performance in English Language.

Table 6: Pearson Moment Correlation on Relationship Between Assertiveness and Students' Performance in English Language

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	Df	P-Value	Remark
Assertiveness	349	2.61	0.49	0.041	348	0.443	Not Significant
Academic Performance	349	58.08	15.42				

Results in Table 6 shows that $r = 0.041$, $df = 348$, $p = 0.443 > 0.05$. Since p value of 0.443 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This signifies that the result is not significant. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between assertiveness and students' performance in English Language.

Discussion

The discussion of findings in the study was based on the analysis of the three research questions and three null hypotheses based on the variables of self-esteem self-concept and assertiveness.

The finding based on research question one and hypothesis one revealed that there is a significant relationship between students' self-esteem ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills. This means that students' self-esteem improves their academic performance in English Language literacy skills (reading and writing). This is because students who trust in their abilities in reading and writing are likely to perform highly in reading comprehension or writing test.

The result of this finding is similar to the finding of Sommer and Dumont (2011) that self-esteem and academic performance of students are significantly related. The finding of this study is also in agreement with Ukacgbu and Obi-Okoye (2017) who found that self-esteem significantly

Therefore, there is no significant correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills.

predicts academic adjustment and performance of first year university undergraduates in River State, Nigeria. The result of this study is in agreement with the report of Muhammad, Syed and Khalid (2017) who reported a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance among university students in Pakistan. However, Alokun, Ogunsanmi, Makinde and Fashina (2014) reported that there was a significant difference between the academic performance of students with high self-esteem and those with low self-esteem in favour of those with high self-esteem. This difference may be because students with high self-esteem are confident about whatever they do in class and they are open minded and willing to learn at all times to improve themselves further. This quality often puts them first before students with low self-esteem who are often withdrawn, afraid of trying and failing. This report affirms the findings of Subon, Unin and Sulaiman (2020) who revealed a significant relationship between self-esteem of students and their academic achievement at school. The consistency in the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance of students is because students' psychological readiness, trust, confidence and worth are crucial to their classroom participation, interaction and performance in class work, test and examination in reading comprehension and writing.

The finding based on research question two and hypothesis two revealed that there is no significant correlation between students' self-concept ratings and performance scores in English Language literacy skills. This implies that the perception students have about their values, beliefs and identities have nothing to do with the way they learn to read and write at school. Students' personalities and cognitive structure are two distinctive domains that may or may not have influence on each other due to other factors such as environment of the students and method of teaching they are exposed to in reading and writing lessons.

The finding of this study affirms the report of Laryca, Saani and Dawson-Brew (2014) who revealed that students' self-concept does not directly predict students' academic performance. However, it was further showed that self-concept only predict students' academic performance when they are able to exert some level of effort in learning what they have been taught during lessons. The result of this study is dissimilar with Bala (2014) who found a significant relationship between students' high and low self-concept and their academic performance. Again, the finding of this study is also in total disagreement with the findings of Kimani and Chamudeswari (2013) that there was a significant positive relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of students in the higher secondary school level. This means that the variable of self-concept has an inconsistent relationship with students' academic performance. This may be because the thought, impression, value one has for oneself may sometimes be true or false and may not exactly match who that person is academically based on his/her abilities to read and write effectively in English Language.

The finding based on research question three and hypothesis three revealed no significant relationship between assertiveness and students' performance in English Language literacy skills. This means that being assertive has nothing to do with students' ability to read and write effectively in English Language. This is because being assertive requires one's quality of relating with others without being aggressive, but rather being confident and affirmative. This may be good qualities students need to be avid readers and

effective writers, but such qualities do not determine how well students can read and perform in their reading comprehension and writing tests. The ability to read and comprehend and write effectively are more cognitive than psychosocial. The result of this study contrasts the finding of Ghadrati, Tavakoli, Benetez, Rodriguez and Olan (2018) and Galata (2018) who found that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between assertiveness of students and their academic performance. The dissimilarity between the current and previous studies may be because assertiveness is an affective behavioural trait of students' abilities to be positive, confident and polite in relating with others and situations as sociable beings. That may or may not be helpful in certain cognitive tasks in reading and writing skills in English Language. The ability to read and write effectively goes beyond being assertive.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that self-esteem is an effective psychosocial predictor that has positive relationship with students' academic performance in English Language literacy skills (reading and writing). However, self-concept and assertiveness are psychosocial predictors that do not directly influence students' academic performance in English Language literacy skills. It was also concluded that academic performance is tuned towards cognitive activity than a psychosocial behaviour. Therefore, any psychosocial predictor such as self-esteem that would relate with academic performance must involve activities, feelings and behaviours that transcend selves to connecting with other learning materials and activities in and around the school environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. Language teachers should always stimulate students' self-esteem in reading and writing lessons using purpose setting and goal setting questions, prompts, stories and sharing of personal experiences on the topic to be taught so as to develop students in preparatory to actively participate in the process of learning English Language literacy skills.

2. Language experts and researchers should write and publish textbooks and journals articles on the effective role of self-esteem in enhancing students' English Language literacy skills.
3. Professional language and literacy associations such as Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN) and Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) should organise workshops for teachers and students on the importance of self-esteem in getting young school students to read and write independently.

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