Relationship Between Self-Concept and Secondary School Students' Achievement in English Language in North Central Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' achievement in English language in north central zone of Nigeria. The research design for this study is descriptive survey using correlational study type. The study covered all secondary schools in the North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The zone comprises of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There is a total population of 1,232,367 secondary school students in North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The target population of the study consisted of all the 985,230 senior secondary school II students in North-Central Education zone, Nigeria. The sample size for the study composed of 1,500 SS2 students, drawn from an intact class of a randomly selected 50 secondary schools in North-Central Education Zone. The instruments used for this study are Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI) and English Language Achievement Test. Percentage was used in answering research questions, while the formulated hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correction (PPMC) at level of significance 0.05. Finding shows that 87.7% of the secondary school students sampled pass the academic achievement test. Finding further revealed that there was a positive relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement in English language. The researcher concluded that self-concept is an important variable in the students' academic performance in English Language in North central zone, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that self-concept be given the deserved attention at home and by the school authority.

Keywords: Self-concept, English Language, academic achievement

Introduction

Education is of importance to the economic, social, cultural and technological advancement of every nation. For instance, Ijanaku (2009) maintained that when some nations achieved self-government, they turned their attention to nation building by looking up to education as the tool; and to this end hoping that what it had done to the "great power", it can also do for them. In Nigeria, education is the most important instrument of change, and it helps in the transmission and cultivation of societal desirable habits, skills, attitudes and values necessary for the survival of the individual. This was why during the National Curriculum Conference of 1969, it was accepted that it is through functional education that

Nigeria could develop her human resources, which will further develop her material and physical resources. This in turn, would lead to other services that are very important in the development of a healthy national integration.

Education in a broadest sense is seen as a life-long process, which transforms the life of an individual from that of a helpless and dependent creature to a self-reliant, rational and skilful person who can contribute efficiently to the development of his society. The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013) has one of the objectives of education as geared towards self-realization, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, and national unity as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological emancipation. Changes most often are effected through the educational system of the nation through various reform programmes and curriculum development. It is a fact that education is the vehicle for effecting any social change. Education is said to be a polyvalent agent for the transmission of appropriate values, norms, ideals and skills from generation to generation. Azikwe (2007) noted that education is also the most powerful instrument for developing and empowering members of the society to compete for survival.

In a school setting, learners are the centre of focus, while adequate information about students is necessary for a meaningful learning to take place. Several variables have been used to source information needed to foster meaningful learning. Pertinent among others are: Peer pressure, self-concept, academic adjustment, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. However, if students associate with a group which has confidence in themselves, they might be influenced to have better academic achievement. Self-concept is broadly defined as the image of perceptions that students hold about themselves (Onawola, 2011). Self-concept can also be defined as the totality of a complex, organized and dynamic system of learners' beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds about his or her personal existence. It includes attitudes, feelings and knowledge about abilities, skills, appearances and social acceptability (Boulter, 2002).

Self-concept is therefore, an important variable in education, since it links student's motivation, achievement confidence and psychological wellbeing (Hay, 2005). Kayode (2000) reported that self-determined academic motivation is a key mediator between academic self-concept and academic achievement. It can, therefore, be interpreted that academic self-concept influences teacher-rated student engagement (i.e. positive emotion, flexible problem solving, and extracurricular academics), which in turn is associated with students' grades and achievement scores (Cokely, 2000). Positive academic self-concept is shown by high academic self-concept score; while negative self-concept is shown by low academic self-concept score.

According to Clerk, Clemes and Bean (2000), self-concept has to do with social competence, since it influences how a person feels, how he or she thinks, learns, values himself or herself, relates to others and ultimately, how he or she behaves. How he behaves

depends upon how he feels about himself, about other people and about his relationship with them. These feelings make up his self-concept what he thinks about himself as a person. A person's self-concept, and is the fundamental core of his entire personality and it determines the quality of one's behaviour.

It can be predicted that the poor self-concept implying to lack of confidence in facing and mastering the environment, will influence his performance in school. In addition, the school adjustment and self-concept does emerge to be allied. Ample facts indicate that children and adults with poor self-concept when compared with those who have high self-concept are more concerned, less adjusted, less popular, less effective in groups and are less honest about themselves (Brown, 2009).

The relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is supported by researches. Theoretically, the impact of self-concept on academic achievement outcome is compelling. Research findings support the view that self-concept influences academic achievement differently, depending on race or culture (Rouse & Cashin, 2000; Worrel, 2007). There is also a strong empirical evidence indicating differences in the conceptualization of self and academic achievement according to sex and age (Cokely, 2002; Rouse & Austin, 2002; Wong, Wiest & Cusick 2002; Wang, 2006; Award, 2007; Thomson & Zand; 2007; Tolman, Henson, Impett, Schooler & Sorsoli 2008).

Of relevance was Ogunlade (1992) who studied correlation of self-concept among adolescent students in Kwara and Oyo States with a sample of 1,106 adolescent students drawn from the two states reported that adolescents' self-concept has positive statistically significant relationship with students' academic achievement and student's education attitudes. Also, Kayode's (2000) studied the relationship among self-concept, locus of control and academic achievement of pupils in Zaria. The sample contained 320 participants drawn from some selected primary schools in Zaria. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used for data analysis. Finding showed among others that self-concept is significantly related to academic achievement.

Furthermore, Boulter (2002) uses self-concept as a predictor of academic adjustment and performance. Finding showed that academic self-concept positively predicts both general performance as well as that in language, Arts and Mathematics. Therefore, positive self-concept is an indicator of success in the school academic work while negative self-concept is a pointer of poor academic achievement in school. It could be seen from the review that self-concept is very important to academic performance of students, although findings are not always consistent. Therefore, the present study is to find the relationship between self-concept and academic performance of secondary school students. Hence, the issue of the relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement should be the major concern of the Nigerian education researchers. The issue, though of national concern, negates the possibility of a research that can be empirically carried out to cover the nation at large.

In this instance therefore, the Northern Central zone of the country has been selected for this study. The North central Nigeria comprises of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The zone has an estimated population of about 22.5 million people located in the mid-central part of Nigeria. It is geographically unique because its boundaries totally cut across other geographical zones. It is bounded in the North-East by Kaduna state, Kebbi and Zamfara states in the North-West, and Republic of Benin along Agwara Local Government Area also in the North West. Taraba, Cross River and Enugu states to the South West and the zone shares a common boundary with the Republic of Cameroun on the South-East. Ondo and Ekiti states are her boundaries in the West (Nuhu, 2013).

The researcher examined the relationship between self-concept and academic performance in English Language of Secondary school students in North Central Nigeria. This is due to the fact that English Language is a requirement for further studies at all levels. Since English language is our lingua Franca and the bedrock of other subjects or courses, no student can perform excellently in other courses or subjects without understanding its rudiments and prompt usage. Hence, effective teaching and learning as well as better performances in all ramifications lies on our understanding of this language. The importance of English language on educational attainment can never be over emphasized.

One could thus infer from the fore-going that anyone who can read English Language can keep in touch with the whole world without stepping out. English Language, in no doubt, has positive impact on academic performance of students in other fields. Although several studies have been conducted in Nigeria and other nations, self-concept and academic achievement remain of important area in research because of the low level of research using these variables.

When applied to secondary school students, English language achievement is a yardstick for measuring learners' outcomes in the core subject of any nation. Being made a pre-requisite for admission into institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, like other countries of the world, it is mandatory for secondary school students to pass English language at credit level in the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) conducted by the public examination bodies. It is on this basis that this study was conducted in North central zone of Nigeria using the variables of self-concept and academic achievement of secondary school students in English language.

The issue of the relationship of self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement should be the major concern of the Nigerian education researchers. In Nigeria, there is a general concern about the students' current poor achievement in all examinations by the stakeholders in schools. The issue though of national concerns, posed that no research can be empirically carried out to cover the nation at large. In this instance therefore, Kogi has been selected for this study.

The general purpose of this study was to examine relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' achievement in English Language in North Central zone of Nigeria. Specifically, this study examined:
1. the level of secondary school students' self-concept in North Central zone of Nigeria.
2. level of secondary school students' achievement in English language in North Central zone of Nigeria.

Research Questions
The following questions have been raised in line with the research purpose:
1. What is the level of secondary school students' self-concept in North Central zone of Nigeria?
2. What is the level of secondary school students' achievement in English language in North Central zone of Nigeria?
3. What is the relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' achievement in English Language in North Central zone of Nigeria?

Hypothesis
H_{O1}: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' achievement in English Language in North Central zone of Nigeria.

Methodology
This paper focus on relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' achievement in English Language in North Central zone of Nigeria. The research design for this study is descriptive survey using correlational study type. In this study, correlational method was used to examine self-concept and academic achievement of secondary school students in North central zone, Nigeria. The correlational method was used for this study because it will enable the researcher to interpret accurately the variables and their inter-relationships. The data was collected in order to establish a relationship between variables without necessarily deciding which variable is the course and which is the effect.

The study covered all secondary schools in the North central geo-political zone of Nigeria. The zone comprises of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau states and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). There is a total population of 1,232,367 secondary school students in North central geo-political zone of Nigeria (Chief Examiner's Reports, 2013-2017). The target population of the study consisted of all the 985,230 senior secondary school II students in North-Central Education zone, Nigeria(Chief Examiner's Reports, 2013-2017).The sample size for the study composed of 1,500 SS2 students, drawn from an intact class of a randomly selected 50 secondary schools in North-Central Education Zone. These figures represented 2.5% of total population of SS II students in the zone (Adopted from The Research Advisors' Sample Size Table, 2006).

The instruments used for this study are questionnaire and English Language Achievement Test. The researcher used the adapted version of The Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI)by Tambawa (2001) which consists of 30 items. These items were generated from the products of some clinical interviews with adolescent in some Nigeria secondary schools as well as from the existing literature. The wide spread use of the inventory in the Nigerian school context was an indication that adolescents between the age of 12 and 21 could take the test with adequate explanation of the pre-test instructions. The researcher adopted the instrument adapted by Tambawal (2001) on personality inventory. The 30 items were checked and validated by 4 lecturers in the department and the quality of the items and the instrument were adjudged to suitable content for this study.The reliability of this instrument was obtained through the measure of stability method (Tambawal, 2001).. The results of the test re-test produced a fairly high co-efficient Alpha of 0.87, and this was accepted for use in this study. This APDI was made up of statement on five-point Liker scale and the respondents were required to respond to all the items based on their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement. The items were rated positively, negatively or not sure as indicated below:Very true of me; Mostly true of me; Partly true of me; Mostly untrue of me; and Very untrue of me.

In order to measure academic achievement of the students, practicing graduate English Language teachers from different secondary schools were engaged in generating test items for the achievement test. Each of them constructed twenty-five (25) objectives test on different set of topics in English language for the Senior Secondary School II class based on the topic covered. The researcher then pooled the items and drafted twenty-five questions from them. For the face and content validity of English Language, the researcher subjected the instrument to opinions and suggestions of seasoned English Language teachers and SSCE Examiners. In other to establish its reliability, the test- retest method was adopted over an interval of four weeks. Afterwards, scores of the two tests were correlated using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.84.Percentage was used in answering research questions, while the formulated hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correction (PPMC) at level of significance 0.05.

Results
Research Question 1: What is the level of secondary school students' self-concept in North Central zone of Nigeria?

In order to answer this research question, respondents' responses on the self-concept questionnaire and achievement test were collated (score range of positive self-concept is between 91-150 while negative self-concept is between 60-90). The summary of the results are as shown in table 1.

Table 1
Level of Secondary School Students' Self-concept in North Central Zone of Nigeria

Self-concept	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
Positive	91-150	1,445	96.3	
Negative	60-90	55	3.7	
Total		1,500	100.0	

Results in Table 1 revealed that, out of the 1500 students that participated in the study, 1,445 representing (96.3%) had positive self-concept with the mean score of 91.02, while 55 representing (3.7%) had negative self-concept. The majority of the students have positive self-concept. This implies that, the self-concept among secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria was classified as positive self-concept which is normal for the students to survive in the school environment.

Research Question 2: What is level of secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in North Central zone of Nigeria?

In order to answer this research question, students' achievement test scores in English were collated (score range for pass mark is between 40-100 while the failed is between 0-39). The summary of the results are shown in table 2.

Table 2
Level of secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in North Central Zone of Nigeria

Academic Achievement	Score Range	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
Passed	40-100	1,316	87.7	
Failed	0.39	184	12.3	93.65
Total		**1,500**	**100.0**	

From Table 2, out of the 1,500 secondary school students that participated in the study, the result indicated that 1,316 representing 87.7% of the secondary school students in North Central, Nigeria passed the academic achievement test with the mean score of 93.65, while 184 representing 12.3% failed the academic achievement test. This shows that the majority of the secondary school students sampled pass the academic achievement test.

Hypotheses Testing
H_{O1}**:** There is no significant relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in North Central zone of Nigeria.

In order to test this research hypothesis, participants' responses to the self-concept questionnaire and academic achievement test scores were collected. The data collated from the study was analyzed as shown in Table 3 using PPMC.

Table 3
Pearson Product Moment Correlation showing the relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in North Central Zone of Nigeria

Variable	df	Cal.r	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
Self-concept				H_{01}
Academic Achievement	1498	0.07	0.01	**Rejected**

$ρ < 0.05$

As shown on Table 3, the calculated r-valuewas 0.07 while its P-value is 0.01. On this basis, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected at p-value< 0.05. This means that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in North Central zone of Nigeria. The reason was that the p value (.01) was lower than 0.05 alpha level ($ρ< 0.05$).

Discussion
The first finding revealed that the self-concept among secondary school students in North-Central, Nigeria was classified as positive self-concept which is normal for the students to survive in the school environment. This finding is in line with that of Emeaba (2014) who found that the level of self-concept of secondary school students in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria was average. Also, Yilmaz (2009) found that Social Studies' teachers that are teaching History have high self-efficacy.

The second finding shows that the majority of the secondary school students sampled pass the academic achievement test.This finding supports that of Oke (2013) who found out that the level of academic performance of secondary school students in Ado-Ekiti was average. In the same vein, Emeaba (2014) also found out that 30% of the respondents had Distinctions, followed by 43% who had Credits, 18% with Passes and 9% failed.

The third finding shows that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in North Central zone of Nigeria. In this study, majority of the respondents had above average self-concept and their academic achievement were above average mean score. This finding is in line with that of Kayode (2000) who reported that self-concept predicts academic achievement. Also, in a study carried out by Yahaya, Ramli, Boon, Ghaffar and Zakariya, (2009) they found that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and

academic achievement. Worthy of note in this prediction of self-concept and academic achievement was that self-concept is central and very important in all life endeavours. If the self-concept is low, such individual would be considered not to do his or her very best especially in academic performance. The instance of self-concept as predictor of academic achievement is a case in point. One can possibly postulate that as the students involved in this study had high self-concept, their academic achievement was equally high, or above average.

Conclusion

Having discussed the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that in the Nigerian schools' system, the issue of self-concept and academic achievement is still controversial amongst scholars in educational research. That is, self-concept might be an important variable in the students' academic performance in English Language in North central zone, Nigeria. This should be of concern to all education stakeholders (educational psychologist, school teachers, administrators, parents and counsellors) in an attempt to sustain high self-concept of students in bid to boost their academic achievement.

It is recommended that education stakeholders should do their best to maintain and sustain high self-concept of students in the research area because high self-concept has severally been reported as a positive factor in the academic attainment of students. The recurrence of the variable of self-concept is being strong predictor of students' academic achievement in English, should be of significant concern to other researchers in education. The researcher is, therefore, of humble opinion that the issue of self-concept be given the deserved attention both at the home and by the school authority. If students are adequately motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically, their self-concept will continue to be high and their academic achievement will be improved.

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