



Psychological Factors Influencing Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated psychological factors influencing academic achievement of secondary school adolescents. The design for the study is ex-post-facto. The population for the study is 300 participants who were independently and randomly selected. Two standardized instrument tagged “Psychological Factors Assessment Questionnaire (PFAQ) and Economics Achievement test was used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instruments was 0.81 and 0.76 respectively. Two hypotheses were formulated for the study. The data collected were analyzed with an independent t-test. The data analysis showed that school phobia significantly influence academic achievement of students while achievement motivation does not. Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended among others that, teachers, parents, counselors as well as the school authorities should be made to aware of the existing relationship between self-concept, anxiety, achievement motivation, locus of control and academic achievement. This would enable them provide a better, useful and relevant educational, vocational, personal and social services that will enable students, teachers and parents and the school authorities recognize and appreciate the presence of individual differences, among students and how best to reinforce them in every situation.

Key words; Psychological factors, school phobia, achievement motivation, Academic Achievement

INTRODUCTION

Development of any nation depends largely upon the literacy rate and quality of education that is accessible to its citizens. Qualitative education is fundamental to the whole process of human development. It allows the individuals to become independent so that they can contribute meaningfully in the development of the society and the nation at large. Chaudary (2004) recommended that academic achievement is the knowledge attained or skills usually developed by pupils in schools, measured by test scores or by marks assigned by teachers pertaining to school subjects or to fields of liberal arts or to sphere of ideas and abstractions. As explained by Rajamnickam & Vasanthal (1993) academic achievement becomes evident as a student evolves into a resourceful and enthusiastic learner who is ultimately capable. Generally speaking academic achievement is something that students achieve at school, college or university in class, laboratory, library or field work. It does not include other achievements in sports or music. It requires dedication, sacrifice, self-discipline, motivation and cordial relationship with parents, peers and teachers.

Academic achievement as stated by Sunitha (2005) is the knowledge acquired and skills developed in school subjects, generally indicated by marks obtained in tests in annual examination. He also believed that home environment factors like parent’s encouragement, care, support, guidance, parenting and physical facilities had significant influence on academic achievement of the students. Some attempts have

been made in establishing the direct relationship between certain psychological variables and academic achievement while some are still under investigation. Psychological factors constitute of many variables, but the ones to be considered in relation to the study of academic achievement include self concept, achievement motivation, locus of control and school phobia.

Self concept as one of the psychological factors is ones perception of oneself. It is seen as the way one looks at oneself in terms of competence, confidence, personal regard etc, which have bearing on personal experiences. Achievement motivation is a learned motive to compete and strive for success. It involves ones effort to improve oneself, to pursue, seek progress and strive to achieve goals. In like manner locus of control refers to an individual's perception about the underlying main causes of events in his/her life. It has to do with the believe that whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or an event outside our personal control (external control orientation).

School phobia is an anxiety disorder in children who have an irritation, persistent fear of going to school (Colman 2003). It implies a young child's sudden averting to our fear of attending school, usually considered a manifestation of separation anxiety. In order words, the school phobia may be viewed as a young child's sudden aversion to or fear of attending school, usually considered a manifestation of separation anxiety. Most students enter school expecting to learn, but negative school experiences often reverse their views. In particular, students who have learning difficulties begin to perceive themselves as unable to learn (Chapman, 2008). In effect, when students find themselves in situation where there are high levels of uncertainties, indefinites, or loss of specific (cherished) objects, they are bound to be anxious.

On the other hand, most people see themselves in several different roles. For example, adolescents in secondary school have varying beliefs about their athletic ability, their ability to make lasting friendship, their musical ability and their academic ability. They also have a generalized achievement motivation and self concept, such as a propensity towards optimism of pessimism (Crowl, Kaminsky and Podell, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

Studies carried out by researchers on interest, attitude and study habit as an aspect of psychological influence on academic achievement to show whether there is positive correlation between interest, attitude and study habit and academic achievement found that while some of the factors were significant others are not (Cron and Crow, 1996). It is against this general background that the researcher is motivated to investigate the psychological factors influencing academic achievement among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to find out how psychological factors (school phobia and achievement motivation) influence students' academic achievement. In specific terms, the study will;

1. Investigate the extent to which school phobia influence academic achievement of students in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State.
2. Verify the extent to which achievement motivation influence academic achievement of students in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State.

Hypotheses

1. School phobia does not significantly influence academic achievement of secondary school students
2. Achievement motivation does not significantly influence academic achievement of secondary school students

RESEARCH METHOD AND PROCEDURES

Three hundred 300 secondary school adolescents from Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers state, Nigeria was used for this study. They were randomly and independently selected for the study using simple random sampling technique. A 20 items questionnaire named Psychological Factors Assessment Questionnaire (PFAQ) will be used to collect data for Psychological variables, while Economic Achievement Test (EAT) derived from the SS2 students' scheme of work through the help of the economics teacher was

used to test students' academic achievement. The test re-test technique was used to determine reliability of the instrument and the scores obtained were 0.81 for the PFAQ and 0.76 for the EAT.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using t-test statistic.

Hypothesis 1: School phobia does not significantly influence academic achievement of secondary school students

Table 4.1: The influence of school phobia on academic achievement of secondary school students

School Phobia	N	X	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal-t	Crit-t	Dec
Low	194	36.31	4.11	298	5.26	1.96	Sig.
High	106	39.18	5.16				

In table 4.1 it is shown that students with high and low school phobia are 194 and 106 in number respectively. Students with the school phobia had the mean score of 36.31 and standard deviation of 4.11 while those with high school phobia had mean score of 39.18 and a standard deviation of 5.16. Based on their mean scores it is deduced that the students with high school phobia under achieve as compared to their counterparts with low school phobia. Furthermore, when mean difference was subjected to an independent t-test statistics, a calculated t-value of 5.26 at the degree of freedom 298 at 0.000 level was found greater than 0.05, the chosen level of probability, it is then decided that school phobia significantly influence academic achievement of students.

Hypothesis 2: Achievement motivation does not significantly influence academic achievement of secondary school students

Table 2: The influence of achievement motivation on academic achievement of secondary school students

School Phobia	N	X	Std. Dev.	Df	Cal-t	Crit-t	Dec
Low	156	37.24	4.60	298	0.343	1.96	Non-Sign
High	144	37.42	4.83				

In table 4.2, it is shown that students with high motivation had the mean score of 37.24 and a standard deviation of 4.60. On the other hand those with low motivation had the mean score of 37.42 and SD of 4.83. Based on their mean scores it is deduced that students with low achievement motivation tend to under achieve as when compared to their counterparts with high achievement motivation. However when this means difference was subjected to an independent t-test, a calculated t-value of 0.343 was obtained at a degree of freedom of 298 at 0.732 significant level. Thus since the p-value of 1.96 is less than 0.05, the chosen level of probability has non-significant influence on academic achievement of students.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings showed that, there is a significant difference between the influences of high/low school phobia on academic achievement of secondary school students. It therefore appears to mean that those who have high level of school phobia find it difficult to benefit from the actual learning process. The result of this study is in agreement with the result of an earlier study carried out by Hogan (1995) who explained that many adolescents withdraw from social activities or avoid difficult tasks for fear of failing or being embarrassed. They may appear inattentive, forgetful or unmotivated to engage in classroom discussions. Academic performance starts to suffer and teachers may interpret their behavior as defiant, disorganized or lazy.

Socially, children may isolate themselves to avoid participation in peer interactions. They may have a poor self-concept and believe they lack the skills to initiate and sustain a friendship, which leads to further worries about being rejected by peers. Over time, children are more likely to develop sadness and develop

a stable pattern of anxious thinking. Avoiding school or minimizing academic and social activities offer youth effective, short-term relief to reduce anxious feelings, but over time have serious negative consequences. Additionally, families are affected by this problem. Parents often feel blamed by the school given the common misperception that the issue is simply a matter of discipline. In reality, parents struggle to manage conflicting feelings around empathic desire to comfort their children and exasperation associated with the battle to get them to school.

Achievement Motivation and Academic Achievement

The result of this finding showed that, achievement motivation had insignificant influence on students' academic achievement. Though, it is noted that, when achievement motivation is high, academic achievement is also high. The result of this study does not agree with the result of an earlier study carried out by Rabideau (2005) who opined that, motivation is the driving force behind all the actions of an individual. The influence of an individual's needs and desires both have a strong impact on the direction of their behaviour.

Supporting this view, Slavin (2006) maintained that, motivation is one of the factors that contribute to academic success, motivation is what gets one going, keeps on going and determine where one is to go. It is important to encourage the students' academic motivation because motivation is crucial to students' academic success at any age. Human beings are said to be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation is said to be derived internally in the work itself. That occurs while a person is performing an activity in which he takes delight and satisfaction in doing that particular task. Gottfried (1990) reported that students who are more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically motivated succeed fare better and students who are not motivated to engage in learning are unlikely to succeed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School, colleges and universities have no worth without students. Students are most essential asset for any educational institute. The social and economic development of the country is directly linked with student academic performance. The students' performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leaders and manpower for the country, thus responsible for the country's economic and social development. Students' academic performance measurement has received considerable attention in previous research, it is challenging aspects of academic literature, and science students' performance are affected due to social, psychological, economic, environmental and personal factors. These factors strongly influence on the students' performance, but these factors vary from person to person and country to country.

From the findings of the study, the researcher among others recommends that, teachers, parents, counselors as well as the school authorities should be made to aware of the existing relationship between self-concept, anxiety, achievement motivation, locus of control and academic achievement. This would enable them provide a better, useful and relevant educational, vocational, personal and social services that will enable students, teachers and parents and the school authorities recognize and appreciate the presence of individual differences, among students and how best to reinforce them in every situation

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