

ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The scholastic achievements of secondary school students in Nigeria in externally conducted examinations, particularly the one conducted by the West African Examination Council, from 2020 to 2024 has been fluctuating and is in no way encouraging. The recurring fluctuating in performance in this computer age in public examinations has become a national issue and a significant worry for the officials in the Ministry of Education, parents, as well as other stakeholders in the education industry. Consequently, this research explored the connection between students' belief in their academic abilities and their academic achievements in public secondary schools located in southwestern Nigeria. The population of the research focused on all students in the senior secondary class II attending public secondary schools across the six southwestern states of Nigeria, using the Research Advisor's Table, the sample size of 384 was determined to have a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The student academic self-efficacy scale was utilized to gather information from participants. The research discovered that student academic self-efficacy has a significant relationship with student academic performance. It was recommended that secondary school principals and teachers should institute an actionable ...lution to ensure improvement and stability of student academic performance in the study area.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Low self-efficacy, High self-efficacy, Student academic self-efficacy, Externally conducted examination.

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INTRODUCTION

Education at the secondary school level is crucial for an individual's success in life, societal growth and development, as well as political advancement of any country in the world. It develops and provides students with learning skills that prepare their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domain for higher learning and the world of work to live a better and fulfilled life. This is by developing and fostering their critical thinking, communication, teamwork, creativity, problem-solving, and abilities to work with minimal supervision. According to Adebakin *et al.* (2015), the identified abilities, among others, are needed for improved academic achievement of secondary school students. This level of education encourages individual advancement, fostering independence, self-awareness, and social responsibilities. Completion of secondary education with good academic performance can open doors to a study course of choice in the university, wider opportunities of career advancement and jobs with good and satisfactory pay if the outcome is overwhelmingly impressive. The performance of student in secondary school will provide a platform for them to explore their potentials and develop their inherent talents, and assist in discovering their passions. Students will better comprehend themselves and their next step in life through their performance in various subjects.

The origin of academic performance, according to Buston (1985) in Ajadi (2017), can be traced to the 1830s when in the United States of America, Horace Mann and Samuel Gridley employed the use standardized test to evaluate student progress. Since then, academic performance has been utilized at different educational levels and for various reasons. It is a measure of student outcomes in various subjects at the secondary school level. The teacher as well as the system uses various methods of testing student's performance. This includes students' classroom performance, retention, and graduation rates through teacher-made tests or standardized test conducted by approved examination body (ies).

Academic performance is all about the outcome from a learning experience. It is a determinant of the success students have at the

moment and likely success in the future. Students' success and the quality of the school and student are judged by student performance in school examinations, and this is a crucial indicator that reveals that students have benefited from instruction and learning in the classroom. It also reveals that the school has discharged its own part of the responsibilities diligently. It serves as a crucial metric for assessing the standard of education and important ingredient of educational and national development. It is obvious that, globally, the academic performance of pupils has become one of the key components used to assess the caliber of education provided. Krein and Beller (2005), Oladejo (2010), Gore (2019), Ogunyemi and Oduntan (2020), Godwin (2022), emphasized that academic performance provides information and data for planning, assessment/re-assessment, ranking, and decision-making, diagnose student's strength and weakness as well as teaching pedagogy.

The academic achievement of Nigerian secondary school students in externally conducted examinations, particularly the one conducted by the West African Examination Council (WAEC), from 2020 to 2024 has been fluctuating and is in no way encouraging. The recurring fluctuations in performance in this computer age in public examinations have become a national issue and a source of great concern to the parents and other stakeholders in the education industry. For instance, the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (2024) reported that in 2020, 39.82% of the registered applicants earned five credits, which included Mathematics and English. This might be due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the world, Nigeria inclusive. There was a noticeable improvement in efforts of the government, schools, teachers, parents, and students in 2021 when 81.7% of the registered candidates passed with five credits, including English language and Mathematics. However, in 2022, the percentage of candidates that passed with five credits, including English language and Mathematics, dropped to 76.36% from 81.7% in the previous year (2021). The results of 2023 showed a moderate improvement of 3.42% from the performance of 2022. This implies that 79.81% candidates passed with five credits, including English language and Mathematics, in 2023. In 2024, the performance showed a noticeable decline of

7.6% in the performance bringing the performance to 72.12%. It is interesting to know that only Lagos State in the southwest of Nigeria made the top 10 in 2021, 2022, and 2024 of the 5 years presented. All other five states (Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti) from the zone occupy the bottom 10 of the chart. This fluctuation and decline may be pointing to progress and setbacks as a result of issues that need to be attended to in Nigerian secondary schools. The significant improvement in 2021, which was not sustained in 2022 and 2024, signaled the need to investigate student academic achievement and academic self-efficacy among secondary school pupils.

Based on the level of students' academic performance from southwest, Nigeria, between 2020 and 2024 at this dispensation, it can be concluded that if urgent steps are not taken to address the situation, it may spell doom for the future of the zone, especially when one considers the crucial roles of having five credits, including English language and Mathematics in gaining admission into the university, in the choice of course of study in the university, in the development of individual student, society and the modern world. In addition, teachers at the secondary schools often complained that secondary school students complained of what to do with the certificate in the country where many educated are roaming about the streets without jobs. They turn a deaf ear and do not want to learn or understand what they teach them in the classrooms. This might be one of the reasons why there is a growing disaffection for schooling, and in pursuing serious academic activities in school. Furthermore, many of the students do not believe or have confidence in their abilities that they can read and pass, having earned credit in five subjects, which must include Mathematics and English, in external examinations on their own without relying on the so-called "Miracle Centers" where they will be assisted to pass.

Researchers and scholars (Scheider and Preckel, 2017; Mahmood, 2017; Arogundade, 2017; Oluhama, 2019; Mba, 2019; and Abdulahi, 2022) have made a number of systematic efforts at investigating and identifying key factors that can promote student's academic performance at secondary level of education, but in spite of all efforts the problem seems unsolved. In view of this, the present research investigated. The correlation between secondary school students' academic performance and their degree of academic self-efficacy.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a concept that evolved out of Bandura's (1977, 1978, and 1997) social cognitive model of behavior, which supports human achievement as dependent emphasizes the relationships that exist between a person's activities, personal characteristics, and surroundings. Bandura (1997) explained that self-efficacy as the conviction that one is capable of organizing and carry out the necessary steps to handle potential circumstances. It is a construct that is very useful in various areas of human life. In academic settings, (Schunk, 1984; Pajares and Grahan, 2009; and Schunk, 2010) refers to student's self-efficacy as the judgment of confidence to successfully perform student jobs in a specified amount of time. It is also students' self-assurance in their capacity to succeed in curricular and non-curricular activities or in accomplishing tasks in the school. It is all about developing confidence in one's abilities to exercise control over encouragement, attitude, and environment. From the definition, self-efficacy is about being assured of one's capacity to succeed and control over the action to succeed

Academic self-efficacy

One significant subcategory of self-efficacy is academic self-efficacy. It reflects the perception of students of their potential success or failure in examinations. Academic self-efficacy has been defined by Burns *et al.*, (2019) and Sitzmann and Yeo (2023) as a student's faith and assurance in their capabilities to succeed in classroom and school activities, and Schunk and Pajares (2022) found a positive connection between academic performance and students' academic self-efficacy. Students' academic success is significantly predicted by their level of

academic self-efficacy. Pintrich and De Groot (2019) submitted that higher academic performance results from students using cognitive and metacognitive methods more frequently when their academic self-efficacy increases. The conviction of the students in possessing the ability to perform credibly well in an academic endeavor is referred to as student's academic self-efficacy. It is a motivational construct that has the power to influence students' level of persistence, perseverance, and sense of direction. Students that have high academic self-efficacy make study plans and aim higher, exert greater efforts and consistence in their learning, settle for more challenging activities, and have confidence that they can study and perform well in any academic endeavor.

Conversely, students that don't believe in themselves have lower or no study plans, set no goals for themselves, have issues in deploying effective learning styles, procrastinate, and attribute their academic failure to their ability. Hence, they have confidence that they cannot perform well academically. People who have low self-efficacy view difficult academic assignments as dangers that should be avoided. They have minimal goals and expectations of success, which always result in low academic performance. Several studies point to the significant contributions of academic self-efficacy to student's academic achievement (Pajares and Kranzler, 2005; Pajares and Miller, 2009; Ogunyemi and Oduntan, 2020; and Ayandabalu, 2022). Low academic self-efficacy may be responsible for students' negative attitudes, lack of interest in reading, and phobia for learning, which can result in poor academic performance. Students' confidence and sense of academic self-efficacy should be fostered by their teachers. So that they can improve on their academic achievement.

Related studies

The academic performance of students is influenced by their academic self-efficacy; it also regulates motivation by shaping the aspiration and the outcomes expected from one's effort (Bandura 2007). Various research evidence showed that students' academic success is influenced by their academic self-efficacy. Studies by (Pajares & Miller, 2009; Bong, 2009; Schunk, 2013; Lock & Lathan, 2018; Lopez and Lent, 2019; and Hienemann, 2020) have made important findings on the connection between students' academic achievement and their perceptions of their own academic competence.

Pajares and Kranzler (2018) investigated high school students and discovered that a noteworthy direct association was found between students' academic self-efficacy and English Language performance ($r = 0.341, P < 0.05$). Furthermore, Pajares and Miller (2018) discovered a strong direct link between student academic self-efficacy and academic performance ($r = 0.413, P < 0.05$). Pintrich and De Groot (2019) revealed that a number of indicators of results, such as grades, performance on assignments, and test and quiz results, and the caliber of essays and reports, were positively connected with students' academic self-efficacy. Similarly, Muhydeen and Kerstal (2023) discovered a relationship between academic success and self-efficacy. ($r = 0.38$).

In a study carried out by Ogunyemi and Oduntan (2020) on students' academic self-efficacy and test anxiety as indicators of school-based assessment discovered that there was a substantial correlation between secondary school students' academic self-efficacy and their school-based assessments. In a related study, Sirin (2019) found that Students' academic success in senior secondary school was greatly influenced by their academic self-efficacy. The researcher, however, stated that the academic self-efficacy of the students varied significantly on an age basis but not on sex or gender differences.

Ayandabalu (2022) in his study on the connection between students' academic self-efficacy, anxiety, and English language proficiency among students in middle school in Bangkok found that; there was no substantial relationship between middle school students' academic self-efficacy and English language proficiency, but there was a substantial moderately unfavorable association between English language, anxiety, and English language performance. In addition, there was a strong, moderately unfavorable relationship between students' self-efficacy in the classroom

and their concern about the English language. He concluded that English Language, anxiety, and Middle school pupils' academic self-efficacy were a strong predictor of their English language proficiency.

Ogunyemi and Olabintan (2018) investigated the effect of student academic self-efficacy, study habits, and attitude in school-based assessment on junior secondary school students in Ogbomoso South Local Government Area of Oyo State. The study found that, together, study habits, attitude, and student academic self-efficacy predicted students' academic success in the English language, and that student academic self-efficacy was the highest predictive variable.

In another related study, Sitzmann and Yeo (2023) investigated a meta-analytic of the within-person self-efficacy domain and performance of English Language and Reading. Students in the two courses took pre- and post-examinations to assess their proficiency and track their development. To ascertain each student's level of academic self-efficacy and to ascertain whether scores would alter, pre- and post-surveys were also utilized. When the results were analyzed, student academic self-efficacy in vocabulary acquisition and reading was demonstrated to be a major predictor of vocabulary and reading growth.

In a study conducted by Anastasia *et al.*, (2017) to predict English Language achievement from English self-efficacy in high school students in George Manson, United States. Three different analytical approaches – Multiple Regression, Hierarchical Linear Model, and Path Analysis were used. Their findings showed that, regardless of the method of analysis; student academic self-efficacy is an important predictor of English Language achievement, even after controlling for demographic characteristics of the students and schools.

Adeolu and Babajide (2019) equally investigated the relationship between English Language student academic self-efficacy and performance in English in Oyo State secondary schools. In the study, the English self-efficacy scale (ESES) and English Achievement Test (EAT) were used, and data were analyzed with t-test and Spearman rank-order Correlation coefficient. The study revealed that there is no discernible variation in the average accomplishment scores of secondary schools' students who are male and female in English Language and no discernible distinction between students who are masculine and female academic self-efficacy scores in English.

In addition, the association between high school students' academic self-efficacy and their proficiency in the English language was examined in Selangor, Malaysia, by Ra *et al.* (2006). The study was to examine whether the perceived academic self-efficacy of English language learners significantly influences their performance in the language. A descriptive correlative study was conducted using the student academic self-efficacy scale (SASES) developed by Bandura (1986) and EAT of the students. Positive relationships were found by correlation analysis between a number of self-efficacy aspects, including academic success efficacy ($R = 0.48$, $P = 0.00$); their expectancy beliefs ($R = 0.34$, $P = 0.005$); and self-assertiveness ($R = 0.41$, $P = 0.005$) with academic performance in the English language. They concluded from the study that when students have a strong level of academic self-efficacy in the English language, their performance will improve.

Adeyemo (2021) in his own study investigated student academic self-efficacy and subject enrolment in secondary schools in Oyo State, self-efficacy beliefs of arts and science students, as well as gender differences in the student academic self-efficacy beliefs of Arts and Science students. The t-test statistic was used to analyze the data collected for the study. He found that significant differences exist in student academic self-efficacy beliefs of Arts and Science students, male and female Arts students, male and female Science students.

Statement of the problem

The persistent variation in secondary school student' academic performance, in public examinations, particularly the one conducted by

WAEC between 2020 and 2024, has become a national embarrassment and overwhelming issue to the government, educational planners, school administrators, and parents. Similarly, secondary school teachers complained that the students they teach turn a deaf hear and do not want to learn or understand what they teach them in the classrooms. Because of lack of confidence. Many of the students seem not to have confidence in their abilities that they can read and pass credibly in external examinations. Persistence of this trend may spell doom for the southwest geo-political zone in Nigeria. Based on the above, this study will examine how self-efficacy affects the academic achievement of secondary school students in southwest Nigeria.

Hypothesis

Student academic self-efficacy has no relationship to secondary schools' students' academic performance in South-West Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Population and participants

Three hundred and twenty thousand nine hundred and forty (320,940) students during the 2023/2024 academic session from public secondary schools in the six states (Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti) that make up the south-west Nigeria constituted the population for this study. The sample comprised 384 respondents, comprising 128 selected disproportionately from each of the three states selected from the southwest geo-political zone using a multi-stage sampling procedure. The sample size was calculated and derived using the Research Advisor's Table at 95% degree of confidence with 5% error margin. The first step was the use of a purposive sampling technique to select Ogun, Oyo, and Ondo being states with more than five local governments in all their Senatorial Districts. Some of the states in the zone do not have this criterion. The second stage was the use of a simple random technique to select one Senatorial District from each of the selected states, making three senatorial districts from the three selected states. The third stage was the use of a simple random technique to select three local governments each from the selected Senatorial Districts, making 12 local governments that were selected. The fourth stage was using a simple random technique to select two schools each from each of the local government selected, making a total of 24 schools all in all. After this, a purposive sampling technique was used to select a secondary school with senior secondary level each from the selected local governments. This allows the researcher to select respondents to provide reliable information on the variable of the study. Finally, the simple random technique was used to select 16 students from the senior secondary class II at the selected schools, making a total of 384 respondents selected for the study.

Materials and instruments

SASES developed by Jink and Morgan (1999) was used to measure students' level of academic self-efficacy. The instrument was validated through a pilot testing using a sample of 100 senior secondary student's class II in public secondary schools in Lagos State, which was not part of the states selected for the study. The reliability coefficient of the scale established through Cronbach's Alpha Reliability analysis was 0.87. Correlation Matrix of the Inferential statistics was used to test the only hypothesis formulated for the study at a 0.05 level of significance.

Procedure

The researcher with three research assistants visited the three states selected for the study (Ogun, Oyo, and Ondo States) to administer the self-efficacy scale. The research assistant, led by the researcher, made three different visits before administering the rating scales on the selected respondents. On the first occasion, they visited the selected senatorial district in each of the states to survey the four local governments selected randomly selected in each of the selected senatorial districts in Ogun, Oyo, and Ondo States. The second visit was to identify two schools, each from the selected local government, and approach the school leadership on the mission for

Table 1: Correlation matrix of student academic self-efficacy and secondary schools' students' academic performance

Indices	Mean	SD	1	2
Academic Performance	18.72	1.233	1	
Student academic self-efficacy	3.57	1.032	0.41**	1

P≤0.05. SD: Standard deviation

the visit and permission on when to for the administration of the instrument. The 3rd time was on the agreed date to administer the instrument on 16 selected participants from each of the 24 selected schools across each of the senatorial districts from each of the three states for the study.

RESULTS

Student academic self-efficacy has no relationship to secondary schools' students' academic performance in south-west Nigeria.

The matrix correlation in Table 1 showed the student academic achievement and academic self-efficacy are significantly correlated ($r = 0.41$, $P \leq 0.01$). Hence, the hypothesis stands rejected.

DISCUSSION

The result is expected because the students believe in their ability to perform a task successfully; hence, they enjoy the learning process more. The students seem to set higher goals with more challenging learning activities and put in more efforts and commitment in their learning activities. It seems their parents also supported their aspiration, knowing fully well the implication of academic performance in the life of a student. The result is in line with the position of Bandura (2007) who concluded that student's academic self-efficacy contributes to their academic performance. The result is also in line with the findings of Pajeres and Kranzler (2018) who found that English language proficiency was significantly correlated with students' academic self-efficacy. The findings in also in line with that of Sirin (2019) who found that students' academic success in senior secondary school was greatly influenced by their academic self-efficacy.

However, the finding is against the findings is against the findings of Ayandabalu (2022) who concluded that there is no discernible correlation between middle school students' academic self-efficacy and their proficiency in English. The study was also against the findings of Adeolu and Babajide (2019) who found no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of secondary schools' male and female students in English Language and no significant difference in the English Language student academic self-efficacy scores of male and female students.

CONCLUSION

This paper investigated academic self-efficacy and students' academic performance in southwest Nigerian secondary schools. The study specifically established the relationship between student academic self-efficacy and the intellectual achievement of secondary school students in South-West Nigeria. The hypothesis tested revealed a significant relationship between student academic self-efficacy and student academic performance. The study is a challenge to the government and all stakeholders in secondary education to encourage secondary school students to develop confidence in themselves that they can perform well if others are doing well, they also do better.

For secondary school students in southwest Nigeria to develop academic self-efficacy, like any other students around the world, there is a need to emphasize boldness, setting very high standards, be consistent even when passing through difficult situations, put in more efforts in their studies, and attribute failures to lack of efforts as against lack of ability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations are suggested in light of the study's findings to improve secondary school academic performance in southwest Nigeria:

The secondary school principal in southwest Nigeria should be more conscious of the fact that the academic performance of secondary school students is pivotal to drive students' future academic activities. Hence, the need to encourage student to develop the boldness to improve their academic performance. It is not enough to identify the influence of student academic self-efficacy on their academic performance without actionable solution by the secondary school principal and teachers to resolve issues with student academic performance.

Finally, government, educational institutions, principals, students, parents, and/or guardian, as well as the entire society, should be aware of the importance of academic performance in externally conducted examinations in the future of the geo-political zone. Hence, the need to work hand-in-hand to assist our students from the zone to improve their academic performance for a better opportunity to gain admission to Nigeria universities.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The author personally conceived the study, collected data, analyzed the data and wrote all parts of the manuscript. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declared that there are no conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and publication.

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