

Self-Concept, Attitude to Course of Study and Academic Performance among Students in Umar Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina

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Abstract

The study utilized the correlational survey design; and was guided by four research questions and four hypotheses. It used Akinboye Personal Data Inventory, Attitude to Course of Study Scale and Academic Performance instruments to collect data that was analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis. From a population of 12,966 students, 500 respondents were selected through simple random sampling. Results indicated that self-concept and attitude to course of study are important factors for students' academic performance, as they related significantly with academic performance of students. More so, attitude to course of study was found to be a better predictor of students' academic performance. Recommendations made include that all those concern with the education of students should be committed so that healthy self-concept and attitudes are developed and geared towards the realization of the desired aims. Likewise, stakeholders should be conscious of the fact that attitude towards course of study is an important factor in the educational aspirations of students and as such should develop it to the fullest.

Keywords: Self-Concept, Attitude, Course, Study, Performance

Introduction

The way we think about ourselves may be related to our ability to learn and achieve academic excellence. Some people, for example, have trouble with their work or their lives, not necessarily because of low intelligence or poor bearing or even poor motivation, but because they have learned to consider themselves as inadequate. Children come to value or devalue themselves based on how others see them. The question of self-concept has been called non-directive or client-centered. The essence of this is a belief in a person as someone who is able to seek his own solutions for his problems. The person is capable of self-direction, and his performance outcomes are affected by his personality or self-concept. In 1959, Rogers had already observed that when a person's view of himself changes, his behaviour and performance change accordingly.

Self-concept is seen as individuals' mental images of themselves; it literally refers to the picture or image a person has of himself. Thus, Weiten, Dunn and Hammer as cited in Omoworare and Adebawale (2015) explained self-concept as a collection of beliefs about one's own nature, unique qualities and typical behaviour. It also means the sum of what an individual believes to be true about him, together with the importance he attaches to those beliefs. Likewise, Postorino and Doyle-Portillo as cited in Omoworare and Adebawale (2015) saw self-concept as one's perception or image of one's abilities and uniqueness. To sum it, self-concept generally refers to the totality of a complex, organized and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person hold to be true about his or her personal existence (Yahaya, 2010b). Belief in oneself is a strong and a very good determining factor in human beings' accomplishments; such accomplishments extend to the academics as evidenced in many studies both in Nigeria and the rest of the world.

Attitudes are unconsciously learned through experience. Many factors can influence a person's attitude, including previous experiences and social influences (Craker, 2006). Moreover, Abosi and Ozoji as cited in Yahaya (2010b) asserted that attitude is combination of feelings and beliefs which result in a predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably toward persons, groups, ideas or objects. George (2000) pointed that attitude does not only include the negative attitude such as prejudices, biases and dislikes, but also positive attitudes are sometimes called sentiment, which include our attachment and loyalties to person, objects and ideas. Attitude thus seems like a system of ideas with an emotional core or content. Olasheinde and Olatoye (2014) observe that human beings are not born with attitudes, they learn afterwards. Some attitudes are based on the people's own experience, knowledge and skills, and some are gained from other sources. However, the attitude does not stay the same. It changes in a couple of time and gradually. Interest is the key that unlocks effort which in turn is closely related to attitude. A student's attitude can be identified through the behaviour that he or she displays. A positive attitude towards learning should be fostered, so that students will enjoy learning. Consequently, Slavin (2000) stated that students who possess a positive attitude will succeed at higher educational and professional levels. Studies by Finger and Schlessor (2002) and Williams (2004) pointed to significant relationships between attitude to a subject and achievement in that subject. Akinola (2003), similarly, stresses that attitude has a greater influence on aspects of learning which are emphasized in the classroom. Thus, Dulton (2004) concurs that attitudes are related to academic performance when measured on promotion grades.

Academic performance is determined by the performance of students in different courses over a period of time. This could be described, in other words, as the sum of

an individual's performance in tests and examinations given within the institutions' system at the end of every semester or session.

Whether a self-perception is psychologically healthy or unhealthy, educationally productive or counterproductive, students cling to their own self-perceptions and act accordingly (Adediran, 1992 cited in Yahaya, 2010a). Thus, students who have learned over a lengthy period to see themselves as stupid will experience considerable anxiety over their own successful performance. Russell-Bowie, Yeung and McNerny (1999) have shown results that self-concept was positively related to achievement, and implied that improving self-concept could improve achievement, and improved achievement could improve self-concept.

Correspondingly, Hasenzadeh, Hussini and Moradi (2004) reported that self-concept differed significantly among students pursuing different degrees and courses of study. Therefore, it appears that course of study affects global self-concept of students. Likewise, Jegede (2003) argues that students' positive attitude to science correlates highly with their achievement. Similarly, Adodo (2006) also shows that students' positive attitude toward Integrated Science correlates with achievement. Furthermore, Kiamanesh (2004) explains that researchers have suggested that achievement in Mathematics in secondary schools is a function of many interrelated variables such as students' ability, attitude and perceptions, socioeconomic variables, parents and peer influences and school related variables.

Statement of the Problem

This study investigated the relationship of self-concept, attitude to course of study and academic performance among students of Umar Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina. Academic achievement among students has been on the decline and is even being rated as poor and this may have to do with how students lack positive confidence in themselves which results in rampant examination malpractices in institutions of learning to the extent that stakeholders can no longer close their eyes and pretend that this does not exist. Politics and economic constraints in the country have also dealt a damaging blow on the educational system and have somehow ushered in the craze for white collar job. Sometimes the whole essence of education is lost in the conviction that it is only the time's *en vogue* and must be achieved at all costs and forgetting about the important aspects of how students feel and think of themselves generally; how they feel about what they are studying in terms of what interest they have in it, what difficulty they perceive in it and what social benefit it stands to offer them. To this end, this study attempts to find out how self-concept and attitude to courses of study affect the academic performance of students in Umar Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the study:

- 1) Is there any relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students?
- 2) Is there any relationship between attitude to course of study and academic performance of students?
- 3) Is students' self-concept a better predictor of their academic performance than their attitude to course of study?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were generated for the conduct of the study:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between attitude to course of study and academic performance of students.

Ho3: Students' self-concept is not a better predictor of their academic performance than their attitude to course of study.

Methodology

The study used the correlational survey design. Measures of self-concept and attitude to course of study are the predictor or independent variables while the measure of academic achievement is the dependent variable. The population of this study was the entire 12,966 students of Umar Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina, Katsina state (Department of Higher Education, Katsina State, 2019). Five hundred (500) students were drawn from the total population using the simple random sampling technique. This constructs a 95% confidence interval with a Margin of Error of about $\pm 4.4\%$ (<http://research-advisors.com/>, 2006); level of significance was at 0.05.

To achieve this study's purposes, the following instruments were used to obtain relevant information:

a) Adolescent Personal Data Inventory (APDI) (Subscale A) (Tambawal 2001, adapted version) which measured self-concept. This subscale was a general self-perception scale, which taps academic, social, personal and intellectual ability perception of adolescents. The subscale A of the APDI has 30 items. The scoring of the self-concept scale ranges from "Least Like Me" to "Most Like Me" with ratings ranging from 1-5. So, putting 4 against any positive item indicated that the statement is somehow "Most Like Me". So, the scores for the self-concept were determined by first of all reversing all the negative items, such as item 16 {I am unreliable}, if the respondent rates this 1, then it means that he/she perceives him/herself as reliable and so the researcher reversed 1 with 5 before adding the ratings. The total score a respondent has in this instrument represents the construct of self-concept. The

instrument was validated by a group of lecturers of Federal College of Education (Tech.) Gusau and School of Nursing and Midwifery Sokoto. With the unanimous agreement as to content and quality of the items, the instrument was adjudged to possess content validity. To obtain the reliability of the instrument, the stability method was followed. The results of the test-retest produced a fairly high Co-efficient Alpha of 0.874. This led to adoption of this instrument.

b) Attitude Scale (AS) (with subscales on Interest, Difficulty, and Social-Benefits of learning) (Balarabe, 1989, adapted version) which measured attitude to course of study. The scale was classified under three (3) basic factors namely: Interest, Difficulty and Social Benefit on a five point Likert-type scale. In the classification, items 2, 5, 9, 11 and 13 measured Interest; items 1, 4, 7, 10 and 15 measured Difficulty and items 3, 6, 8, 12 and 14 measured Social Benefit. Thus, the instrument has 15 items in total. The scoring of this instrument ranges from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree), so that a high score indicates affirmation of certain attitudes to course of study and otherwise for low scores. The scores for the AS were determined by first of all reversing all the negative items, i.e. items 1, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12; if the respondent rates this 1, then the researcher reversed 1 with 5 before adding the ratings. The range of scores for a single factor – with its 5 statements, therefore, is 1-5 and for the whole factors is 15-75. Validation was done by experts in the Department of Education at Usmanu Danfodio University Sokoto and Umar Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina going through the modified instrument. Factor analysis of the AS under the three basic factors of Interest, Difficulty and Social Benefit produced a unanimous agreement as to content and quality of the items, thus it was deemed to have content validity. Its reliability was measured by the internal consistency method. A split-half measurement produced a Co-efficient of 0.84 (Yahaya, 2010b).

c) A self-developed Academic Performance Test (APT) which measured the respondents' academic performance. The 50 items of the test were scored by summing the correct responses and correct item attracts score of 1 mark. The range of scores for the test is 1—50. Then the total score was converted into a five point scale in line with the GPA calculation. The total score a subject has in this test represents his perceived academic performance. Validation was done by a group of lecturers at the Department of General Studies at Umar Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina, Federal College of Education, Katsina and Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic, Katsina going through the test items. Construct validity was determine by how the test measured the respondents' recognizable quality of intelligence which to some degree count for academic performance; concurrent validity was determined by how the test estimate current performance in the test with the respondents' academic standings in the institution and also content validity was determined by how the items measured the subject-matter knowledge of the respondents. Reliability was determined by the use of inter-rater technique to measure such, which produces a percentage of agreement of 91.3% (Yahaya, 2010b).

The scores obtained from the instruments were subjected to simple descriptive statistics for the purpose of determining the mean scores and standard deviation. And in order to test the hypotheses, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistical technique was used to test hypotheses 1 and 2 while regression analysis was used to test hypothesis 3.

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students.

Table 1: Relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	p	Decision
Academic Performance	500	3.31	1.039	.442	.005	Sig.
Self-Concept		117.55	8.408			

Table 1 shows that relationship between self-concept and academic performance was positive and significant, Pearson's $r(498) = .442, p = .005$. This indicates a significant relationship between self-concept and academic performance because the p-value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students is rejected. This means that self-concept of students in Umaru Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina is an important factor for their academic performances.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between attitude to course of study and academic performance of students.

Table 2: Relationship between attitude to course of study and academic performance of students

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	r	p	Decision
Academic Performance	500	3.31	1.039	.320	.000	Sig.
Attitude to Course of Study		61.49	4.764			

Table 2 shows that relationship between academic performance and attitude to course of study was positive and significant, Pearson's $r(498) = .320, p = .000$. This indicates a significant relationship between academic performance and attitude to course of

study because the p-value is less than the .05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between academic performance and attitude to course of study of students is rejected. This means that students' attitude to course of study in Umaru Musa Yar' Adua University, Katsina is an important factor for their academic performances.

Ho3: Students' self-concept is not a better predictor of their academic performance than their attitude to course of study.

Table 3: Prediction of academic performance of students by their self-concept and attitude to course of study

Variables	r	r ²	Adjusted r ²	SE	β	F	t	p-value
SC	.445	.198	.195	.932	.397	61.38	11.603	.000
ACS	.677	.458	.456	6.201	.541	210.10	16.243	.000

Dependent Variable: Academic Performance
 SC: Self Concept
 ACS: Attitude to Course of Study

From table 3, a look at the squared part correlations revealed that self-concept accounted for 19.8% of the variance in academic performance $r^2_{adj} = .195$, $F(1, 499) = 61.38$, $p < .05$ while attitude to course of study accounted for 45.8% of the variance in academic performance $r^2_{adj} = .456$, $F(2, 498) = 210.10$, $p < .05$. Thus, the significant results of the procedure indicated that the combination of the predictor variables were able to account for a significant amount of variance in the dependent variable.

Although self-concept was an explanatory variable of academic performance, analysis of regression coefficients indicated that attitude to course of study, $\beta = .541$, $t = 16.243$, $p < .05$ emerged as the significant predictor when all variables were in the model. This indicated that attitude to course of study was a better predictor of students' academic performance than their self-concept. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. Thus, it is concluded that attitude to course of study predict students' academic performance better than their self-concept.

Discussion of the findings

An analysis of table 1 reveals that the relationship between self-concept and academic performance of students was an indication that students in the area of study have a true

reflection of their selves. Thus, the findings this study support the findings of significant relationships between self-concept and academic performance of earlier study carried out by Hasenzadeh, Hussini and Moradi (2004). The general picture from this study was that academic performance of students in the area of study had bearing with their self-concept. In other words, students' self-concept has influence on their academic achievement. This then reconfirm the conclusion drawn by Salawu (1991) as cited in Yahaya (2010b) that one of the important single causes of students' success or failure educationally relates directly to the question of what they believe about themselves.

An analysis of table 2 showed that relationship between attitude to course of study and academic performance was significant. This is an indication that students' academic performance was closely related to their attitude to course of study. The result found in this study lent support to the findings of Craker (2006), Finger and Schlessler (2002), Williams (2004), Akinola (2003), and Dulton (2004). This study, therefore, provides the general picture that attitude to course of study of students in the study area had a lot of bearing on their academic performance. In other words, students' attitude to courses of study has a great amount of influence on their academic performance.

The third finding of the study reveals that both self-concept and attitude to course of study are significant in respect to students' academic performance. But, it further indicates that attitude to course of study is a better predictor of academic performance of students than their self-concept. The result of this study support the findings of Craker (2006); Williams (2004), Dulton (2004) and that of Adodo (2006), the revelation was that the academic performance of students in the area of study was mostly predicted by their attitude to course of study and that the variation in the academic performance of students was explained also by it. In other words, students' attitude to course of study was more related to their academic performances than their self-concept.

Conclusion

This study brought into spotlight that both self-concept and attitude to course of study were very vital to the academic performance of students in the area of study. And that while self-concept relates favourably with attitude to course of study and academic performance, it was attitude to course of study that was a corner stone to the academic performance of students in the area of study.

Recommendations

i. Counsellors, the school, parents and all significant others in the life of students should understand that attitudes to what students learn play an important role in their

academic performances and thereby, they can capitalize on that for the maximization of educational aspirations.

ii. Additionally, the institution should help students to develop positive self-concept to maximize their academic performance through appropriate counselling measures.

iii. Moreover, all those concerned with the education of students should put all hands on deck so that healthy self-concept and attitudes are developed and geared towards the realization of the desired aims as they are found to be highly vital in educational endeavours.

iv. Finally, counsellors, teachers and parents should understand and accept the fact that attitude towards course of study is a very important factor in the educational aspirations of students, and as such should develop it to the fullest.

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