

Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement among University Undergraduate Psychology Students in Ghana

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Abstract - *The study explored the connection between self-esteem and academic achievement among university undergraduate psychology students of the University of Cape Coast. Specifically, the study investigated self-esteem level of the learners and its relationship with academic achievement. Correlational design was used for the study. In selecting respondents, census procedure was used because the study population was relatively small in size. Questionnaire for measuring self-esteem developed by Rosenberg was used. Students' CGPA was used as a measure for academic performance. Pearson's correlation coefficient as well as Mean and standard deviation scores were utilised in the analysis of the data. Findings of the study revealed that, respondents had higher self-esteem. Further, findings revealed positive strong connection between respondents' academic performance and self-esteem. The study recommends that Guidance and Counselling department of the University of Cape Coast organise programmes that would be tailored toward sustain the increased self-esteem of students.*

Keywords: Self-esteem, Academic achievement, student-lecturer relationship.

INTRODUCTION

Student self-esteem and good education system are among the most significant predictors of national development. Preparing students for adequate knowledge acquisition and skills to serve as competent manpower of a nation is the prime duty of school systems [1], [2]. In this case, students' achievement is crucial for most nations worldwide [2]. The academic success of students enriches the manpower of society and guarantees future development of every country. In contrast, poor education system makes society unable to use the potential of its human capital and subsequently endanger the sustainable development of that particular nation [1]. In this regard, the investigation of component connected to academic scores has become a topic of concern to many researchers in modern times around the globe.

Among the many different factors impacting on students' academics, issues of intelligence have been put at the forefront, however, recently, empirical study has shown that it cannot be considered as the only successful determinant of students' performance [3]. In recent times, many studies have also explored several variables that impact on student's academic performance such as study environment, time management, help seeking, personality traits, self-esteem, motivational strategies, goals and goal orientations [1], [3].

Self-esteem is often seen as ratings of one's self or better put how you feel about yourself [2]. Further, according to hierarchical needs theory by Maslow, self-esteem (self-respect) is in many times been referred to as a need for humans [4]. Self-esteem as social phenomenon is often constructed in the context of the individual's immediate situation [5]. A person's high sense of esteem can accrue to him or her many positive outcomes.

In Ghana, the issue of self-worth and how it affects achievement of students has also been an area of interest to most counsellors and psychology researchers to bring to the fore the essence of self-esteem within the academic circles and the need for educators to make it a priority to enhance students' self-esteem in the classroom situation [6]. It is in the public knowledge that tertiary education in Ghana plays a crucial role in breeding responsible work force for the nation [6]. In this case, the production of effective professionals such as those in health, education, psychology, medicine, counselling just but to mention a few is contingent on proper tertiary education. The question that readily comes to mind is that; does it matter to have good self-esteem (high) in order to do well academically or can we confidently say that there is a link in academic achievement and self-esteem scores? The confirmation of self-esteem's effect on academic scores of students needs more empirical examinations. This study, therefore, aimed at investigating the connection between tertiary students' achievement and self-esteem.

Self-Enhancement theory

Self-Enhancement theory preaches that, people are made to sustain their self-esteem in an optimistic manner [8]. Rogers [9] conceptualized that a person's self-esteem may be seen in two lenses thus, "real-self" and "ideal-self". Congruency occurs when there is an agreement between the "real" and the "ideal-self", of an individual's 'self-esteem. This theory therefore entreats teachers to always encourage rather than rebuke them in order not to get the students frustrated which can affect his/her esteem.

Classical True-Score Theory

This conjecture uses series of assumptions to explain obtained scores of students. In this theory, an attempt is made to explain how measurement errors can negatively affect students raw scores [10]. Classical true-score theory holds certain order to be right; the moment the tenet of the theory is meaningful, the conclusions obtained also becomes meaningful. The fundamental tenet of the theory is that, the score of an individual on a test (achievement) is a product score of 'hypothetical T-score" and an "Error Score". This is normally represented as $X = T + E$; where X is the obtained score, the hypothetical score is T and E constitute errors made on the test [10]. Classical true-score accepts that, the hypothetical score T and errors made on the test seem to add-up and not any other form of relationship, such as a multiplicative one. The crucial assumption this theory is that, the hypothetical T-score is a fixed score upon several testing while the Error variance 'E' changes based on the condition of testing and mental states of test takers [10].

This present study focuses on the psychological dimension, in this case, a student self-esteem which is highly affected by situational variables with particular reference to relevant individuals in the life of the student (i.e. parents and teachers). In a case where an individual student through his or her interaction with important others have come to develop or assume a lower self-esteem, such an individual is bound not to realise his or her "true-score" which is the actual performance of the individual. The person is more likely to depend on other students (probably with high self-esteem) for help during a test and also in learning; which consequently have implications for knowledge and practice for such a student (low self-esteem type) in whichever discipline or field he or she is being trained.

Several scholars have found a link in students' self-esteem scores and achievement. For example, Rosli, Othman, Ishak, Lubis, Saat and Omar [11] investigated the connection in self-esteem scores and achievement among the second-year

undergraduates' students. The academic year 2010/2011, of Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Faculty, UKM were used. In their study, 330 undergraduate university students were sampled using random sampling procedure. The study participants were made to respond to Rosenberg Self-esteem questionnaire to get esteem scores and the researchers also relied on respondents CGPA as an indicator of performance. The connection in achievement and self-esteem were analysed using simple linear regression, and Pearson's correlation matrix. findings revealed self-esteem predicted academic achievement.

Also, Ahmed-Abdallah and Alseed-Ahmed [12] explored the impact self-esteem on English fluency learning of tertiary students in Sudan. 221 students from Department of English both in White Nile College for Science and Technology and El-Imam El-Mahdi University in 2013/2014 academic year were used as the study sample. Correlation design was used for the study. Questionnaire for students and interview schedule for lecturers were used. Descriptive statistics, thus mean, standard deviations, percentages and frequencies as well as inferential statistics, thus, Two-Way ANOVA and T- test, correlation matrix were used in the analysis of the data. Findings indicated positive connection in self-esteem and performance in English.

Moreover, Bahrami and Bahrami [13] examined the connection between esteem scores and performance. Cross-sectional design was utilised the investigation where high school 8th graders in Iran were used. Using random procedure 54 students were selected for the study. Scores in mathematics were used to represent 'achievement' and questionnaire on self-esteem by Rosenberg were used as instruments for the study. Findings revealed that students' esteem scores have a calculable connection with their achievement.

Additionally, Laryea, Saani and Dawson-Brew [14] examined the impact of self-concept on school achievement. 297 Junior High Students in Elmina, Ghana were selected to serve as respondents. Questionnaire was used to measure their self-concept, however, students final scores in core subject (English, Maths, Science and Social studies) served as an "achievement" score for the study. Inferential and descriptive tools helped in the analysis of the data. The findings revealed that self-concept predict performance.

Furthermore, Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir and Kumar [15] investigated achievement, self-esteem and gender relationships. The researchers sampled 153 Iranian undergraduate learners in some universities in Malaysia to be the study respondents. Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) served as

measure of performance. Respondents were made to complete an adapted Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) [19]. Multinomial logistic regression and t-test were the procedures utilised in the analysis. Findings indicated self-esteem predict academic achievement only when gender is controlled.

Amini [16] explored the function of personal-efficiency, personal-regulation and self-esteem in learners' performance. 500 high school learners were selected to serve as respondent of the study in Share Kord. Findings revealed positive connection between esteem scores and achievement. Finally, Mefteh [17] also examined the linkage between esteem scores of students and achievement. 378 high school students were the respondents. Achievement was measured using CGPA while Cowper Smith questionnaire of esteem was used as indicator of self-esteem. Analysis indicated significant linkage in self-esteem and achievement.

In conclusion, the various studies cited have revealed statistical linkage in learners' performance and self-esteem. This study aimed to determine the level of Psychology undergraduate students' self-esteem from the University of Cape Coast.

Hypothesis

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between students' self-esteem and academic achievement.

H₁: There is statistically significant relationship between students' self-esteem and academic achievement.

METHODS

Research Design

The correlation design, a type of descriptive design adopted for the investigation. Descriptive survey design focuses exploring real issues about a phenomenon under study at a particular point in time.

Participants

The target population for the study was all the Psychology level 400 students of the University of Cape Coast, 2017/2018 year group. The population was estimated to be one hundred and sixty-two (162). The Census sampling procedure was used with the reason that the size of the population was relatively small. If the population is small in size, it is ideal to use all of them [18].

Data Collection Instrument

The main instrument used in gathering the data with regard to students' self-esteem was an adapted questionnaire from Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire [19]. Performance was obtained by means of Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

A pilot test was done to refine the instrument [20]. Internal consistency index of the instrument was .92.

Data Collection Procedure

Copies of the instrument (RSES) were administered to respondents by the researchers themselves in the lecture halls of the respondents after permission has been sought from the head of department, Department of Education and Psychology as well as the various lecturers whose instructional period the researchers used for the data collection.

Data Analysis

Mean and standard deviation was used in analysing the data to answer the research question. However, the testing of the hypothesis was done using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC). All ethical protocols surrounding the conduct of a scientific study which includes confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to during and after the conduct of the study.

Results

What is the level of University of Cape Coast Psychology undergraduate students' self-esteem?

This question sought to examine the general self-esteem level of respondents of the study. After the reverse coding of negatively worded items, the data was analysed. Details of the analysis is shown in Table 1.

Table 1- Respondents level of self-esteem

Statements	M	SD
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	3.4	.60
I think I am good at all times.	3.1	.97
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	3.5	.61
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	3.4	.60
I feel I do have much to be proud of.	2.9	1.0
I certainly feel useful at all times.	3.1	.91
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	3.3	.75
I have more respect for myself.	2.0	1.1
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a success.	3.4	.91
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	3.4	.78
Mean of Means	3.2	.82

Results from Table 1 shows that respondents have positive self-esteem. This is evidenced by the mean of means score of 3.2 and a standard deviation score of .82 which is an indication of homogeneous responses. On the scale respondents agreed (M= 3.2, SD= .82) to the statement "I feel that I have a number

of good qualities.” This is followed by their agreement ($M= 3.4, SD= .91$) of the statement “I take a positive attitude toward myself”. Again, respondents also agreed ($M= 3.4, SD= .60$) to the statement “I am able to do things as well as most other people.” The respondents can therefore be said to have high self-esteem.

Table 2-Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on self-esteem scores and academic performance. ($N=162$)

Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation (r)	Coefficient of determination
.000	.72	.52

$p < 0.05; r^2 = 0.52$

The relationship between students (respondents) self-esteem scores (obtained using Rosenberg self-esteem questionnaire) and academic performance (measured using respondents CGPA) was investigated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient. Preliminary analysis was performed to check whether the assumption of normality, linearity and Homoscedasticity was violated. However, none of the assumptions were found violated and so the test statistic of Pearson’s r was used. Strong, positive connection existed between the two variables [$r = .72, n=162, p < .0005$], with higher levels of self-esteem scores connected with high levels of academic performance. The researchers have defined the Pearson’s r score of .72 to be an estimate of a strong association using Pallant [21] category of strong, medium and weak.

DISCUSSION

The research question aimed at examining respondents’ self-esteem. The analysis of the data indicated that the respondents had high self-esteem. The respondents’ self-esteem scores as revealed in the study is not surprising because it might be as a result of the content of the programme (BSc. Psychology) that they are reading. Psychology programme teaches students to understand themselves, others and also to develop a cordial relationship with people. Again, since they are being nurtured by professionals (psychologists), all things been equal, it is more likely that the cordial relationship nature of the lecturer-students’ relationship might be an igniting factor that has shoot the esteem scores of the learners up. Result of the study corroborates with other study findings in the literature. For example, Santrock [22] indicated that parents and teachers’ interaction with learners affect the learners’ self-esteem and subsequently their performance. This is to say that learners’ interaction with relevant others (parents, teachers, friends etc.) in

academic environment or home affect how learners perform [23], [24].

Furthermore, the study had a hypothesis to assess the linkage in achievement scores and self-esteem scores. Results indicated a strong, positive linkage in the two variables, with higher levels of self-esteem scores related to high levels of academic scores (performance). The outcome of the investigation corroborates with several studies in the literature. First, Ahmed-Abdallah and Alseed- Ahmed [15] explored influence of self-esteem on English fluency learning of tertiary learners in Sudan and discovered a positive connection between the two variables. Rosli, Othman, Ishak, Lubis, Saat and Omar [11] investigates connection in self –esteem scores and achievement among the second-year undergraduates’ students and also discovered linkage in achievement and self-esteem scores. Finally, Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir and Kumar [15] had a significant linkage of students’ achievement to self-esteem scores in Malaysia in a similar study.

CONCLUSION

With the findings in mind, the study can conclude that respondents have strong self-awareness, positive self-image and think that they have positive attributes to be proud of as individuals and that they do not stand inferior to others. It can also be inferred that a person’s self-esteem has a strong positive connection with his or her performance. As expatiated in the classical true-score theory, a person with “high self-esteem” stands the higher chance of obtaining less errors in terms of their scores (performance) and hence stands a better chance to exhibit whatever he/she was taught practically well, as oppose to their counterpart with low self-esteem. Most definitely, this has implication for the professional development of individuals across all disciplines in the university.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with the conclusions, recommendations have been made for policy and practice:

1. The management of the University of Cape Coast must as a matter of policy strengthen the capacity of the counselling units for each of the traditional halls and the academic departments to assist in organising programmes to help sustain the high self-esteem scores of students since it has implication for better achievement.
2. Management of University of Cape Coast must also incorporate a plan of continuously sensitizing their academic staff through workshops and seminars the need to develop and sustain cordial students and lecturer professional

relationship to foster high self-esteem development of students.

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