

Original Research Article  
**Academic Interest and Self-esteem as  
correlates of Secondary School Students'  
Academic Achievement in English Language in  
Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Aims:** This study examined academic interest and self-esteem as correlates of secondary school students' academic achievement in English language in Nigeria.

**Study design:** Correlational survey

**Place and Duration of Study:** Anambra State, Nigeria, conducted between December 2021 and March 2022.

**Method:** The accessible population for this study comprises 18,297 senior secondary school two SS2 students from 261 secondary schools situated in the six education zones in Anambra state, the sampling technique adopted was the proportionate stratified random sampling technique. This was used to select 2,160 SS 2 students. The instruments adopted for data collection are: students' academic interest scale, self-esteem scale and students' academic achievement scores in English language. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were statistical tools adopted for data analysis.

**Results:** Table 1, 2 and 3 revealed a moderate positive relationship between secondary school students' academic interest, self-esteem jointly with their academic achievement in English language. Similarly, hypothesis in Table 4, 5 and 6 reports that at 0.05 level of significance and 2158df, the t-test statistic value 15.95 with a Pvalue of 0.00 is less than 0.05, hence the second hypotheses is rejected. This implies that the relationship existing between self-esteem and academic achievement of secondary school students in English language in Anambra State is significant. Furthermore, at 0.05 level of significance 3df numerator and 2045df denominator, the F statistics value 314.12, with Pvalue of 0.00 is less than 0.05, the third null hypothesis is rejected. This goes to show that the relationship existing among secondary school students' academic interest and self-esteem jointly with academic achievement in English language is significant.

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that the joint relationship existing among academic interest, self-esteem jointly with the academic achievement of secondary school students in English language was reported to be moderate and also positive. This implies that the coefficient was close to 1.00 (perfect relationship). Justifying this, it could be likened to the fact that students only spend 45 to 90 minutes per day in school with each teacher, so it is nearly impossible for them to unconsciously transmit all of the knowledge they need to get to them within that time frame. So therefore, there is need for parents as well to fulfil their first job, which is to be a teacher to their children. In the same vein, the relationship existing among secondary school students' academic interest and self-esteem jointly with academic achievement in English language is statistically significant.

*Keywords: secondary school, Academic interest, Self-esteem, Academic achievement, Students, English Language.*

**INTRODUCTION**

The goal of post-secondary education as described in the document of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FGN) and cited by different scholars is to create the right consciousness in individuals and members of the society among other goals. This implies that the idea behind the establishment of schools is to impart knowledge and skills to students who enrol for school activities. However, observations and statistics have shown that while some students achieve high academically in Nigeria, while some student's academic achievement in specific states is dwindling. This has been a major concern to many and research effort is geared towards investigating factors such as secondary student's academic interest and self-esteem. secondary school student's academic interest could be another variable which could hamper academic achievement among secondary school students. Students with interest in academic subjects are likely to be more motivated to manage their own learning and develop requisite skills to become effective learners of that subject. Hence, interest in school subjects which in turn improves academic achievement is relevant when considering the development of effective learning strategies. "In the opinion of [1], academic interest in learning could most probably be a very powerful affective psychological trait and a very strong knowledge emotion". It is further characterized as an overwhelming magnetic positive feeling, a sense of being captivated, enthralled, invigorated, and energized to cognitively process information much faster and more accurately, as well as the most proper implementation of psychomotor traits such as self-regulation skills, self-discipline, working harder and smarter with optimum persistence. Their research also suggested that psychologists conduct research to determine the actual role of interest on students' academic progress at all levels of the educational system.

Nevertheless, literature have it that the past years have witnessed the evolution of research pertaining to interest. This implies that several studies concerned with the effect of interest factors on academic achievement in secondary schools have yielded positive result. Meanwhile the importance of interest in whatever a person does cannot be underestimated. This also includes the interest of students in classroom subjects. When making a distinction about the structure of interest they are two forms of interest namely personal and situational interest. They explained that a student can approach a learning situation with or without interest. "Situational interest on the other hand, refers to an interest that is acquired by participating in an environment or context. Interest leads to a mastery goal orientation when learners are motivated by interest" [2]. "Learners are motivated by intrinsic reward when they recognize that, in the pursuit of an interest, they will be drawn to master the knowledge skills, not just to demonstrate them. Similarly, following the theoretical framework developed by Krapp, Schiefele and Koller et al. in [2] interest is considered a person-object relation that is characterised by the value commitment and positive emotional valences". Interest driven activities are characterised by the experience of competence and personal control, feelings of autonomy and self-determination, students' positive emotional states under optimal circumstances, an experience of flow whereby the person and the object of interest coincide. It was concluded that the overall correlation between interest and academic achievement was about .30. This relationship was, however, inconsistent across school topics and achievement metrics. Because the majority of studies in this field are cross-sectional and based on correlations, it was determined that, first and foremost, the majority of cognitive capacity and prior success or knowledge were not included as additional predictor variables. As a result, it is impossible to say whether or not interest predicts success. Second, the majority of these research were correlational in nature, therefore no causal conclusions can be drawn. Furthermore, there is a large body of research on academic curiosity as an intrinsic motivating driver of academic success.

An individuals' pursuit of education and the actual magnitude of their academic achievement depend on several factors, many of which are collectively referred to as correlates of academic achievement. The evolution in research pertaining to interest and led to an

assertion relating the importance of interest, this is because interest is of considerable importance. More particularly, academic interest implies student's interest in school activities. Buttressing further, [3] affirm that academic interest is a psychological construct visible which plays crucial role in various school activities such as academic achievement among others. Academic interest is the decision to participate as well as engage in school activity. Buttressing further, low level academic interest in school activities makes students stay away class and also improve their level of input to achieve good grades and prevents them from being enthusiastic about learning. Adding anti-social dimension to it, loss of academic interest leads students into engaging in unlawful activities such as cultism, robbery and truancy among other vices. Lack of academic interest among school students could be due to daunting self-esteem among students which although has received attention from researchers, but still seem to affect students' academic interest. Operationally, academic interest is measured as student's interest in school activities. Academic interest can also be described as a self-determined zeal which is linked with students' achievement with the subject being learned.

"On the other hand, self-esteem as a variable also explored in this study is described as an enduring personality characteristic which is also agreed with to commensurate with academic achievement" [4]. "Rosenberg, Schoenbech, Schooler and Rosenberg in [5] asserted that this confusion has risen to the level where some researchers insist that the self-esteem, and self-efficacy are all interchangeable constructs. Based on previous studies, the main problem is that students with low self-esteem span across series of issues with affects their academic pursuit [5], and could be likened to lower academic achievement". "Higher perceived self-esteem further leads to effort and persistence at a task, whereas low self-esteem produces discouragement and giving up" [5]. Studies have also revealed that students with lower self-esteem neglect new experience, which demotivates them during learning [6]. Similarly, the value individual's place on his or herself could also be a factor causing an evident change. According to [7], self-esteem implies a person's judgment regarding their self-worth. Aryana further stated self-esteem emanates from when students compare their self-evaluation with actual performance on verity of task. According to by Wool-Folk in [8], self-esteem is defined as an affective act that encapsulates the value or worth one attach to their self-assessments. Self-esteem is widely acknowledged as being less malleable than self-concept as it encompasses the ways that individuals feel about their strengths and weaknesses. On the other hand, [9] defined self-esteem as an individual self-evaluation regarding how an individual self-evaluates themselves in a positive or negative manner. The concept of self-esteem in an individuals' daily routine is important because it influences a persons' achievement in their set goals as well a major influence in decision making. Among secondary school students, self-esteem seem to have received much attention over the years and found to positively correlate with academic achievement. Furthermore, literatures have shown that self-esteem is seen as one of the influential factors which affect's academic achievement among secondary school students. It is also stated correspondingly that high self-esteem may lead to high academic achievement. "In practical terms, self-esteem can be classified as low self-esteem or high self-esteem, people with high self-esteem generally feel worthy of good life and all that entails while those with low self-esteem feel they are of less value" [10]. "This is because accomplishing the task that someone attempts will give the person a feeling of better self-esteem, which will conflict with the low self-esteem such individual feel. Based on this, self-esteem in the context of this study can be deduced as the value students place on themselves which involves a feeling of self-worth, an attitude of approval or disapproval that indicates the extent to which students believe in themselves to be capable, significant and successful". [10]. Their study further revealed that self-esteem is seen as one of the influential factors which affect's academic achievement among secondary school students. It was further stated that high self-esteem could correspondingly lead to high academic achievement.

Academic achievement among students has remained a source of concern to educators, the society and researchers as well, particularly as the academic achievement of amongst school goers seem to be in a declined state. Olusegun in [10] reported that less than 40 percent of the candidates who sat for public examination in Nigeria obtained up to credit passes in five subjects which are the minimum academic qualifications for admission into tertiary institutions in Nigeria almost every year. This was further buttressed in a report which revealed that a hand full of the examination candidates representing 49.98 per cent obtained credits and above in their annually West African Examination Council. Thus, this further revealed a fluctuation and decline in the performance of students when compared with that of 2018 which was 52.97 per cent, and in 2019 which was 59.22 per cent (West African Examination Council, WAEC, 2020). Academic achievement in English language is described as fair and seems to compare favourably to those of the previous years. The public persistent outcry over the declining state of education particularly in Anambra state is most prominent following the annual release of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) results [11]. In secondary schools, the classroom is an embodiment of different students with varied personality type. These personality types could determine their level of academic achievement in any given subject including English Language as is the focus of the study. "Accordingly, [12] stated that the importance and role of English language has not diminished since the attainment of independence rather it has taken additional roles in all spheres of life". "The language is an important factor in the educational system, more especially when it functions as a medium of instruction in schools. English language is the language of science and technology and a passport to educational advancement and prestigious employment, the language of commerce, trade and administration, and a means of national and international communication" [16].

[14] in "the National Policy on Education opined that the relevance of English language as a core subject offered in secondary schools which enables students enrol in higher degree courses in higher institution". As such, it is naturally expected that the level of attainment of the students in English language will be evident in their performance in other subject areas. Due to this, failure in English language tends to invalidates grades obtained in other subjects no matter how high the grades are, this is irrespective of the importance of English language in pursuing higher education, students' academic achievement seems to be dwindling. This worrisome state bothers on all and sundry and more so if not rectified, it could lead these students into being involved in all sort of societal crimes like school dropout, street urchins, and loss of interest in academic pursuit, hence the crux of this study, Specifically, the study will determine:

1. The correlation between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.
2. The correlation between secondary school student's self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.
3. The correlation among secondary school student's academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions

1. What is the correlation between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State?
2. What is the correlation between secondary school student's self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State?
3. What is the correlation among secondary school student's academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses raised was tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant correlation between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.
2. There is no significant correlation between secondary school student's self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.
3. There is no significant correlation among secondary school student's academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.

## REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

"In relation to the present study, [3] conducted a study on classroom environment and academic interest as correlates of achievement in senior secondary school chemistry in Ibadan South west Local Government area, Oyo State, Nigeria". The study adopted the correlational research design. Four hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level significance. The sample for the study comprised of 208 SS II students from ten randomly selected public secondary schools in Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection were classroom environment students' questionnaire, students' academic interest scale and chemistry achievement test with reliability coefficients of  $r = 0.85$ ,  $r = 0.76$  and  $r = 0.81$  respectively. The statistical tool used for data analysis was Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis. The findings of the study revealed among others that composite contribution of classroom environment and academic interest was significant. However, classroom environment better predicted achievement than students' academic interest. The outcome of Ezikes' study is related to the present because it examined classroom environment and academic interest as correlates of achievement in senior secondary school chemistry, an adopted similar statistical tool as that which was adopted for use in the present study. However, the study differs from the present study because it determined the relationship of only one variable (academic interest) and one subject (chemistry), nevertheless, the present study is set to determine the correlation between students' academic interest, self-esteem and secondary school students' academic achievement in English language.

"According to [16], who investigated personality traits, self-esteem and academic achievement in secondary school students in Campania, Italy". The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. The sample for the study comprised of 439 subjects (225 males) with an average age of 12.36 years from three first level secondary school classes of Southern Italy. The instruments for data collection were Academic Achievement Scores, The Big five Questionnaire Children, Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale and the Barratt Simplified Measure of Social Status with reliability coefficients of 0.85, 0.95 and 0.66 respectively. The statistical tool for data analyses were student's t-test, Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r$ , and hierarchical multiple linear regression. The findings of the study revealed that academic results correlated significantly both with personality traits and with some dimensions of self-esteem. Moreover, hierarchical regression analyses brought to light, in particular, the predictive value of openness to experience on academic marks. The findings, stressing the multidimensional nature of academic performance indicated the need to adopt complex approaches for undertaking action addressing students' difficulties in attaining good academic achievement. Troncone, Drammis and Labellas' study is related to the present study as it examined variables (independent and dependent) similar to those in the present study. However, Troncone, Drammis and Labellas' study differs from the present study in terms of research design and location. The present study adopted the correlational survey research design to determine the correlation between secondary school students' academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement of secondary school students.

“On the other hand, [1] conducted a study on academic achievement prediction: Role of interest in learning and attitude towards school in secondary schools in Bayelsa State”. The study adopted the multiple prediction design. Six research questions guided the study, while six hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample for the study comprised of 518 students drawn with the aid of table of random numbers from the 14459 students who enrolled for the 2013 May/June Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) in Bayelsa State. The instrument for data collection were the Interest in Learning and Attitude to School Scale, which had a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Multiple regression statistical technique was used for analysis with SPSS to test tenability of each postulated null hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level. The findings of the study revealed a significant correlation and multiple prediction of students’ academic achievement with the predictor variables; accounting for 21.60% of the variance in students’ academic performance. The findings further revealed that improvement of students’ interest in learning and attitude to school could contribute in boosting their performance academically. Kpolovie et al.’s study is related to the present study due to the content coverage of the title. However, the study differs in terms of the research design adopted and sample differential, in this wise the present study will be conducted to examine academic interest, self-esteem as correlates of academic achievement of secondary school students in Anambra state to fill the gap created in the Kpolovie et al.’s study.

[14] conducted “a study on performance of senior secondary school student in English Language as correlate of academic performance in general subjects in Ogun State”. The study adopted the Ex-post facto research design. Three hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample for the study comprised of 200 senior secondary school students form selected secondary schools in Ogun State. Two instruments, performance in English and General Subjects (PEGS), and an achievement test in English and General subjects (ATES) were used for data collection. The validity and reliability of the instrument were established accordingly. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. This study revealed that there exists a significant relationship between the achievement of students in Mathematics, Biology, Economics and by their performances in English. Adekola, Shoaga, and Lawals’ study is related to the present study as it revealed the relationship between English language, its importance and other core subjects. The study differs from the present study as it adopted the ex-post facto research design in conducting this study, however, the present study adopted the correlational survey design.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The design for this study was the correlation survey research design. According to [13], “a correlational research design seeks to establish relationship between two or more variables as well as indicates the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables”. Correlational survey design is more suitable for this study because it seeks to observe the values of variables such as academic interest, and self-esteem in order to examine the relationship existing between these variables under study and secondary school students’ academic achievement. The area of the study is Anambra state. The population for this study comprises 18,297 senior secondary school two SS2 students from 261 secondary schools situated in the six education zones in Anambra state (Awka = 4476, Ogidi = 3075, Aguata = 1899, Nnewi =2373, Onitsha = 5674 and Otuocha = 800). The sample for this study comprises 2,160 SS 2 secondary school students drawn from the six education zones in the state. This represents more than 12% of the total population. To arrive at this sample size, multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. The instruments adopted for data collection are: students’ academic interest scale, self-esteem scale and students’ academic achievement scores. The students’ academic interest scale was adopted for this study. The

scale was earlier adapted from the academic interest scale, a self-report 30-item inventory developed by Althoff (2010). The scale consists of four subscales of motivation, organization, responsibility and self-awareness. The SAIS consists of 30-item statements structured on a 4-point scale type of SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, and SD = 1. The SAIS was assigned a scoring range of 30 – 120, where 30 – 60 = low interest, 61 – 90 = moderate interest, 91 – 120 = high interest. More so, the students' academic interest scale yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81 as reported by [3] and 0.734 as reported by [14].

Self-Esteem scale for adults was developed by Rosenberg (1965). The primary use/purpose of the scale was developed originally to assess self-esteem among adolescents. More so, the domains measured by the self-esteem scale is the global and unidimensional self-esteem of adolescent and adults, hence the adoption of the instrument in the present study. While designed as Guttman scale, the SES is now commonly scored as a 4-point scale. The scale consists of 10-items, the 10 items are answered on a 4-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Five statements were positively scored whereas the rest five statements were negatively scored. Items 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10 are scored in reverse valence of strongly agree – 1, agree – 2, disagree – 3, strongly disagree – 4. Items 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 are scored as strongly agree – 4, agree – 3, disagree – 2, strongly disagree – 1. Self-esteem scale can range from 10 to 40. A score of 20 would indicate a trusty neutral self-esteem. The instrument was re-validated for local use by [3] and then administered to a parallel sample. The SES has been validated for use with both male and female adolescent, adult and elderly populations. The criterion validity yielded and coefficient of 0.55. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale generally has a high reliability. The test-retest correlations were typically in the range of 0.82 to 0.88, and Cronbach alpha for various samples are in the range of 0.77 to 0.88. Similarly, the coefficient as reported by Tella et al. [2] is 0.79, and a reproducibility coefficient of 0.92 and test-retest correlation of 0.85 for the self-esteem scale as reported by Okwaraji, Aguwa and Shiweobi-Eze (2016). Furthermore, these instruments adopted for this study have been previously adopted and validated by experts and used in conducting studies in Nigeria. In administering the instruments for data collection, this was done through direct delivery with the help of regular classroom teachers who served as research assistants. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (Pearson  $r$ ) and Multiple Regression Analysis ( $R$ ,  $R^2$  and  $R^2$  adjusted).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Research question 1:** What is the correlation between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State?

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant correlation between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.

Data presented in Table 1 shows that a moderate positive relationship of 0.544 exists between secondary school students' academic interest and their academic achievement in English language. Similarly, in Table 4 reveals that at 0.05 level of significance and 2158df, the calculated  $t$  5.03 with  $P$ value 0.000 which is less than 0.05, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The correlation existing between academic interest is statistically significant with academic achievement of secondary school students in English language in Anambra State. This finding aligns with the findings of [3] which found that composite contribution of classroom environment and academic interest was significant.

**Research question 2:** What is correlation between secondary school student's self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant correlation between secondary school student's self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.

The results presented In Table 2 observed that a moderate positive relationship of 0.577 exists between secondary school students' self-esteem and their academic achievement in English language. On the other hand, Table 5 shows that at 0.05 level of significance and 2158df, the calculated t 15.95 with Pvalue 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the second hypothesis is rejected. The correlation between self-esteem is statistically significant with academic achievement of secondary school students in English language in Anambra State. In agreement with [16] as it revealed that academic results correlated significantly both with personality traits and with some dimensions of self-esteem. Furthermore, the findings stressing the multidimensional nature of academic performance indicated the need to adopt complex approaches for undertaking action addressing students' difficulties in attaining good academic achievement in Mathematics.

**Research question 3:** What is the correlation between secondary school student's academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State?

**Hypotheses 3:** There is no significant correlation among secondary school student's academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State.

Table 3 shows that a moderate positive relationship of 0.562 exist among secondary school students' academic interest and self-esteem jointly with academic achievement in English language. Table 6 further reveals that at 0.05 level of significance 3df numerator and 2045df denominator, the calculated F314.12 with Pvalue 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the third null hypothesis is rejected. The correlation existing among secondary school students' academic interest and self-esteem jointly with academic achievement in English language is significant.

This finding is in agreement with the findings of [1] which found that a significant correlation and multiple prediction of students' academic achievement with the predictor variables; accounting for 21.60% of the variance in students' academic performance. Similarly, the findings of the study revealed that the correlation among secondary school students' academic interest and self-esteem jointly with their academic achievement in English language is significant.

**Table 1: Correlation between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement in English language (N =2160)**

Sources of variation	N	Academic interest r	English language r	Remark
Academic interest	2160	1.00	0.544	Moderate positive relationship
English language	2160	0.544	1.00	

**Table 2: Correlation between secondary school student's self-esteem and academic achievement in English language (N =2160)**

Source of Variation	N	Self-esteem r	English language r	Remark
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Self-esteem	2160	1.00	0.577	Moderate positive relationship
English language	2160	0.577	1.00	

**Table 3: Summary of regression analysis on secondary school students' academic interest, self-esteem and academic achievement in English language in Anambra State (N=2160).**

R	R Square	R <sup>2</sup> Adjusted	Remark
0.562	0.315	0.314	Moderate positive relationship

**Table 4: t-test on the relationship between secondary school student's academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in English language (N=2160).**

N	Cal. r	Df	Cal. T	Pvalue	Decision
2160	0.527	2158	5.03	0.000	S

\*S-significant

**Table 5: t-test on the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics (N=2160)**

N	Cal. r	Df	Cal. T	Pvalue	Decision
2160	0.654	2158	15.95	0.000	S

\*Significant

**Table 6: Summary of regression analysis on the relationship existing among secondary school students' academic interest, self-esteem jointly with academic achievement of secondary school students in English language (N=2160)**

N	R	R Square	R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	Df	Cal. F	Pvalue	Remark
2160	0.562	0.315	0.314	2158	314.122	0.000	S

\*Significant

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the joint relationship among academic interest, self-esteem jointly with the academic achievement of secondary school students in English language was reported to be moderate and also positive. This implies that the coefficient was close to 1.00 (perfect relationship). This is likened to the view that students in school only spend 45 to 90 minutes per day with each teacher, so it is nearly impossible for them to unconsciously transmit all of the knowledge they need to get to them within that time frame. So therefore, there is need

for parents as well to fulfil their first job, which is to be a teacher to their children. In the same vein, the relationship existing among secondary school students' academic interest and self-esteem jointly with academic achievement in English language is statistically significant.

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