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## Psycho-Social Factors as Correlates of Academic Achievement among Secondary School Students in Oyo State

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### Abstract

*The study examined the effects of locus of control, self-esteem and academic motivation on academic achievement of secondary school students in Oyo state. A sample of 300 (male = 166, female = 134) senior secondary school 2 (SSS 2) students Participated in the study. Their age ranged between 13 years and 18 years with mean age of 15.6 years. Data collection involved the use of three valid and reliable instruments to assess locus of control, self-esteem and academic motivation while achievement tests on English Language and Mathematics were used as a measure of academic achievement. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the data. The results obtained indicated that locus of control; self-esteem and academic motivation were potent predictors of academic achievement. The implications of the findings for Counselling practice, teachers and parents were discussed.*

**Keywords:** Academic achievement, locus of control, self-esteem, Intrinsic, Extrinsic motivation

## **Introduction**

The major goal of the school is to work toward attainment of academic excellence by the students. Although, there may be other peripheral objectives, emphasis is always placed on the achievement of sound scholarship. Social scientists and scholars in the field of education generally recognize education as one of the indicators of the social well-being of individuals as well as that of any nation. Education is a powerful instrument for developing intellectual abilities, for shaping cultural attitudes and for acquiring knowledge and skills.

Educational researchers (e.g. Gregore & Guild, 1984) have shown that not all students learn the same way, students are unique in their own ways including the way they learn. In recent time, literature has shown that learning outcomes have been determined by such variables as; family, school, society, motivation factors and government (e.g. Aremu & Sokan, 2003; Aremu and Oluwole, 2001; Aremu, 2000). In the same vein, Parker, Creque, Harris, Majeski, Wool, and Hogan (2003) noted that much of the previous studies have focused on the impact of demographic and socio-psychological variables on academic achievement.

Academic performance, most especially of secondary school students has been largely associated with many factors. Most students in secondary schools in Nigeria are daily confronted with challenges of coping with their academics under serious emotional strains occasioned by long walk to school, poor school environment, and been taught by unmotivated teachers. These would definitely not augur well for academic success (Aremu, 2004). Aremu (2001) further explained that, students are the direct beneficiaries or victims of the learning outcome and he refers to this outcome as the end product of any academic investment.

## Review of Related Literature

Academic achievement is in terms of the actualization of educational objectives. It is affected by situational and constitutional factors (Valle, 1975). Yoloye (1976) posited that, the concept of academic achievement is a reflection of the nature of learning, performance of intellectual task and the realization of educational objectives. Psychosocial attributes such as locus of control, self-esteem, self-concept, anxiety, self-interest, metacognition, study habit and host of others have been found to impart significantly on academic achievement (Schunk, 1996; Pijares, 1996; Marsh, 1993).

Locus of control is an individual's belief system regarding the causes of his or her experiences and the factors to which that person attributes success or failure. Locus of control concept labeled by Rotter (1966) as internal versus external locus of control refers to two contrasting view of causality that people hold. According to Rotter (1966), internal control (IC): refers to people believe that reinforcements are contingent on their own actions. External – control (EC): is defined as people believe that reinforcement are not entirely contingent on their own actions but they perceive what happens to them as the result of luck, chance, fate or powerful others.

Locus of control is defined as the tendency students have ascribed achievements and failure to either internal factors that they control (effort, ability, motivation) or external factors that are beyond control (chance, luck, others' actions) (Miller, Fitch & Marshah, 2003). A person who expects to succeed will be more motivated and more likely to learn. This person will seek out information and is more likely to have good study habits and a positive academic attitude. This can be assessed with the Rotter Internal – External locus of control scale. For instance, if a person has an internal locus of control, that person attributes success to his or her own efforts and abilities. Similarly, if a person with an external locus of control, who attributes his or her success to luck or fate will be less likely to make the effort needed to learn.



People with external locus of control are also more likely to experience anxiety since they believe that they are not in controls of their lives.

According to Jonassen and Graboweski (1993), the locus of control dimension indicates an individual's beliefs regarding the placement of control over his or her events. It is a personality construct referring to an individual's perception of the locus of events as determined by his or her own behaviour versus fate, luck or external circumstances. In other words, a student's locus of control orientation reflects his or her attitude and responsibility allocation for learning. For instance, an internal locus of control signifies that the student accept personal responsibility for his performance, while an external locus of control reflects a belief that the student has little personal control over her learning. Messina (2002) explained that locus of control was perceived as location of control over our lives.

Weiner (1979) attributed academic achievement to internal factors (effort and ability), which is perceived as stable and controllable. Stevenson (1993) found that failure-oriented individuals contributed outcome to be caused by external factors namely, the difficulty, level of the tasks or bad luck. Those failure oriented persons were strongly influenced by prior negative expectancies; they usually had low success expectancy and set themselves unrealistic goals, which were either too high or too low. Ford and Thomas (1997) opined that when students occasionally experienced success, they considered it as good luck or as the result of too easy a task but when they experienced failure; they attributed it to internal stable and uncontrolled factors such as having low ability of themselves.

Self-esteem is the affective or emotional aspect of self and generally refers to how we feel about or how we value ourselves (one's self-worth). Also, self-esteem reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. Therefore, self-esteem could best be described as a set of unconscious self-beliefs, formed over a lifetime, reflecting our perceptions of our



abilities, our lovability, and how we attribute causality for the events in our lives. These unconscious self-perceptions have been burned, often deeply, into our very being and therefore can only be altered by significant and repeated new experiences that recondition our hearts and minds (katz, 1993).

Jackson (1998) stated that self-esteem and academic achievement are strongly correlated; he further explained that if teachers want students to do well on academic achievement measures, it would be wise to work on students' affect as well. Self-esteem is a belief about oneself (self-based self-esteem) and beliefs about how other people regard one (other based self-esteem). It is the feeling of self-competence and self-worth (Romin & Swan, 1989). By self, we generally mean the conscious reflection of one's own being or identity, as an object separate from other or from the environment. There are a variety of ways to think about the self. Two of the most widely used terms are self-concept and self-esteem. Self-concept is the cognitive or thinking aspect of self (related to one's self-image) and generally refers to the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence (Purkey, 1988).

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. It encompasses beliefs (competent/incompetent) and emotions (triumph/despair, pride/shame). Self-esteem issues take on a particular significance for students with learning or attention problems because self-assessment of this concept requires the ability to evaluate and compare. Students with high self-esteem will feel capable of influencing another's opinions or behaviors in a positive way; be able to communicate feelings and emotions in a variety of situations; approach new situations in a positive and confident manner; exhibit a high level of frustration tolerance; accept responsibility; keep situations (positive and negative) in proper perspective; communicate positive feelings about themselves;

possess an internal locus of control (belief that whatever happens to them is the result of their own behavior and actions).

Conversely, students with low self-esteem will consistently communicate self-derogatory statements; exhibit learned helplessness; not volunteer; practice perfectionism; be overly dependent; demonstrate an excessive need for acceptance: a great desire to please authority figures; have difficulty making decisions; exhibit low frustration tolerance; become easily defensive; have little faith in their own judgment and be highly vulnerable to peer pressure.

A dynamic relationship exists between self-esteem and academic achievement. It is a relationship wherein one side of the equation increases at a parallel rate to the other side. As a child improves in self-esteem, his academic competence increases. And as that competence increases, his self-esteem improves. The caring and concerned caregiver must come to realize that positive self-esteem is both a prerequisite and a consequence of academic success (Richard, 2002).

Motivation is an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire or want) that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction. Academic motivation naturally has to do with students' desire to participate in the learning process. But it also concerns the reasons or goals that underlie their involvement or non-involvement in academic activities. Although students may be equally motivated to perform a task, the sources of their motivation may differ. Motivation is a key factor in every learning experience. Meanwhile, a child who is academically motivated wants to learn, likes learning-related activities and believes school is important.

Academic motivation is complex and multidimensional (Lumsden, 1994; 1999). Fundamentally, it comprises the various situational reasons why student choose whether or not to engage in academic task. Student motivation is a slippery concept, in that a student may be intrinsically motivated to perform a particular task (e.g. "I want to do well on this for my own satisfaction") but



extrinsically motivated to perform another (e.g. "I want to do well on this task to increase my grade point average").

No matter the level of difficulty in a task, the driving force behind a student's ability to grasp the knowledge is his desire to understand it. Before any learning can be accomplished, it is imperative that a teacher instills in his students the importance of this knowledge in their lives because motivation is a prerequisite to all learning. It can be easily agreed upon that motivation largely influences the amount of effort exerted on a task and therefore, influences a student's success in that task.

A student who is intrinsically motivated undertakes an activity for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes (Lepper 1988). An extrinsically motivated student performs in order to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself, such as grades, stickers, or teacher approval. Highly intrinsically motivated students can simultaneously be extrinsic in terms of future goal orientations (Lepper, 1988). Students' extrinsic motivational factors combined with positive future goals can actually facilitate their present value and intrinsic motivation (Husman & Lens, 1999). Understanding the relationship between the utility and importance of future outcomes of tasks may facilitate present value and intrinsic motivation of the tasks. This would imply that high academic performance goals with extrinsic factors do not necessarily diminish the effect of students' intrinsic motivation but operate together with various modes of motivation.

Therefore, the inclusion and interaction relationships of the variables (i.e. locus of control, self-esteem and academic motivation) with academic achievement would be of tremendous help to professionals such as counselling psychologists, teachers, social workers, researchers as well as curriculum planners in their attempt to assist the educationally backward students especially students with developmental and learning disabilities.



## Research Questions

The present study sought to investigate the joint and relative contributions of each of the independent variables (locus of control, self-esteem and academic motivation) to the predictions of academic achievement of secondary school students.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design in order to explore the prediction of academic achievement from locus of control, self-esteem and academic motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) of students.

### Participants

A total of 300 senior secondary school students (males = 166, 55.0 per cent, females = 134, 45.0 per cent) randomly selected from secondary school in Oyo state participated in the study. A total of 320 were taken as the sample size for this study. A stratified random sampling technique with a ratio of 3:1 allocation was employed in selecting 213 students from government-owned school and 107 from private-owned school. 15 students were randomly selected from each government-owned school while 10 students were randomly selected from each private-owned school. A total of 213 students were randomly selected from government-owned schools while a total of 107 students were randomly selected from private-owned schools involved in the study. This gave a total of 320 students. The students were randomly selected using dip hand method for each type of school, their age ranged between 13 and 18 years with a mean age of 15.6 years and a standard deviation of 1.60. Of the 320 questionnaires distributed, 20 were not properly filled were not used for the analysis.

## Measures

The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section (Section A) contains bio-demographic data of the respondents which includes gender, age, class, school status and type of school. Section B consists of three parts in which three questionnaires were used in the study: Locus of Control Scale (LOCBS) by Craig, Franklin and Andrews (1984), Self-Esteem Scale (SES) by Rosenberg (1979), Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Scale (IEMS) by Lepper, Corpus and Iyengar (1997) scores on English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) and Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT) were used as measure of academic achievement.

Locus of control behaviour Scale (Craig, Franklin & Andrews, 1984) was used to measure the individual's belief (both internal and external) regarding the placement of control over his or her life events. The scale has 17 items which were answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. The reliability co-efficient (Cronbach's alpha) ranged between 0.79 and 0.75 (Craig, Franklin and Andrews, 1984 and Salami, 1999).

The Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) was used to measure the self-esteem of the students. The scale has 10 items which were answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Lower scores indicate higher self-esteem. The test-retest reliability ( $r = .82$ , 2 weeks interval) and internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ) have been reported (Rosenberg, 1979). The instrument has been used in Nigeria by Nwagwu and salami (1999) that had a test - retest reliability of 0.78 after two weeks interval of administration among secondary school teachers.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Scale (Lepper, Corpus & Iyengar, 1997) was used to assess the continuum of self-regulatory tendencies ranging from external to intrinsic but also focuses exclusively on autonomy which captures the dimension of extrinsic motivation. It consists of two sections, the first deals



with the items and factor loadings for the intrinsic motivation scale with 17 items which are sub-divided into three. They are: challenge, curiosity and independent master. The second section consist of the items and factor loadings for the extrinsic motivation scale with 14 items which are also divided into sub-group of three; easy work, pleasing teacher, and dependence on teacher. The test adopted a five points Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Higher scores indicate higher levels of the individual's rating for the 17 items that formed a single intrinsic score, while higher scores indicate higher levels of the individual's rating for the 14 items that formed a single extrinsic score. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scale were .79 and .80 respectively.

English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) is a 50-item multiple choice English language achievement test with four options per item (A to D). Some of the test items were constructed by the researchers with the assistance of an expert in the field of English language while few of them were selected from the past West African Examination Council (WAEC) questions based on the syllabus for Senior Secondary School (SSS) 2 classes.

All the test items were submitted to some other experts in the field of English for validation. After some revisions were made, the experts independently and unanimously recommended the use of the test. To establish the highest degree of reliability, the test was pre-tested on a small sample of ( $n = 50$ ) randomly selected Senior Secondary School (SSS) 2 students. The internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the scale reported was .77. The test-retest reliability measure of the test with interval of three weeks was .79.

Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT: This test was made up of 50 multiple-choice items with five options A-E. Some of the test items were constructed by the researchers with the assistance of an expert in the field while some were selected from past West African Examination Council (WAEC) questions based



on the syllabus for Senior Secondary School (SSS) 2 classes. All the test items were submitted to some other experts in the field of Mathematics for validation. After some revisions were made, the experts independently and unanimously recommended the use of the test. To establish the highest degree of reliability, the test was pre-tested on a small sample of ( $n = 50$ ) randomly selected Senior Secondary School (SSS) 2 students. The internal consistency reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) for the subscale reported was .76. The test-retest reliability measure of the test with interval of three weeks was .78.

### **Procedure**

Permissions were obtained from the principals of the sampled schools after which the researchers administered the questionnaires on the participants. All the participants for the study were administered the three instruments namely: Locus of control behaviour Scale, Self Esteem Scale, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation Scale, English Language Achievement Test and Mathematics Achievement Test in their respective schools by the researchers. The researchers with the cooperation of the school counsellor and teachers participated in the distribution and collection of questionnaires from the respondents. Informed consent of the participants was also sought before the administration of the questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis.**

Data were analysed using multiple Regression analysis in order to establish the prediction among the independent variables (locus of the control, self-esteem and academic motivation) on dependent variable (academic achievement). It should be noted that the students' scores in English and Mathematics were transformed to z-scores before they were used for computation.

## Results

The results, based on the research questions are presented below.

**Table 1:** Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlation Matrix of the Predictor Variables (Locus of Control, Self-Esteem, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation) and the criterion (dependent variable, Academic Achievement) (N = 300)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Academic Achievement	1.000				
Locus of Control	.356	1.000			
Self-Esteem	.349	.437	1.000		
Intrinsic Motivation	.450	.511	.518	1.000	
Extrinsic Motivation	.448	.452	.325	.535	1.000
Mean	70.09	24.04	15.24	12.28	19.74
Standard deviation	17.87	5.51	3.36	1.63	4.91

Table 1 summarizes the zero-order correlations between the academic achievement and other measures in the study. The results show that there were significant correlations between academic achievement and each of intrinsic motivation ( $r = .450$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), extrinsic motivation ( $r = .448$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), locus of control ( $r = .356$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and self-esteem ( $r = .349$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 2:** Summary of Regression Analysis on Sample Data

Multiple R = .660					
Multiple R <sup>2</sup> = .435					
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .424					
Std. Error of Estimate = 11.1690					
Source of variation	SS	DF	MS	F-Ratio	Sig. of P
Regression	28186.655	4	4697.776	37.658	.000
Residual	36551.010	295	124.747		
Total	64737.665	299			

Significant at 0.05 level

It was found that the linear combination of Locus of Control, Self-Esteem, Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation had significant effect on Academic Achievement of students ( $F_{(4, 295)} = 37.658, P < 0.05$ ). The independent variables also yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of 0.660, and multiple regression (R<sup>2</sup>) adjusted of 0.435. This means that 43.5% of the total variance in academic achievement of students could be explained by the combination of locus of control, self-esteem, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

**Table 3:** Relative contribution of the independent variables to the predictions of academic achievement.

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	SEB			
(Constant)	20.262	2.504		10.850	
Locus of Control	.277	.055	.232	5.013	.000
Self-Esteem	.225	.046	.233	4.917	.000
	.516	.053	.454	9.754	.000



Intrinsic Motivation	.471	.058	.360	8.115	.000
Extrinsic Motivation					.000
					.000

In table 3 above, it was observed that the independent variables (Locus of Control, Self-Esteem, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation) has a relative contribution to the academic achievement of the students: Intrinsic Motivation ( $B = .516$ ,  $t = 9.754$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), Extrinsic Motivation ( $B = .471$ ,  $t = 8.115$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), Self-Esteem ( $B = .225$ ,  $t = 4.917$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and Locus of Control ( $B = .277$ ,  $t = 5.013$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) were significant with the Academic Achievement. However, intrinsic motivation alone turned out to be the strongest predictor of academic achievement.

### Discussion

Association of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with academic achievement is meaningful in that these serve to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction. It has to do with students' desire to participate in learning process. Motivation is a key factor in every learning experience. Analysis revealed the former to be the strongest predictor of academic achievement more than the latter. This significance lend a good credence to several studies which have shown positive correlations between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement (Ogundokun, 2007; Cordava & Lepper, 1996; Gottfried, 1985), suggesting that a decline in intrinsic motivation may signify a decline in achievement. This result is easily explainable bearing in mind that intrinsic motivation is a more natural way for students to be involved with work and is likely to result in more effective learning. Children who do feel capable of taking on challenges, and like to master the material independently as a result of receiving high marks and positive feedback perform better in their academic.

Extrinsic motivation was also found to be a significant predictor of learning. This explanation was supported by the work of previous researchers (Ogundokun, 2007; Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Harackiewicz, Barron, Pintrich, Elliot, & Thrash, 2002) who found that children who are particularly focused on the extrinsic consequences of their behaviours will do partially well on objective indicators of performance. The possible explanation for the result may not be unconnected with a functional perspective. It may be quite adaptive for students to seek out activities that they find inherently pleasurable, while simultaneously paying attention to the extrinsic consequences of those activities in any specific context. Seeking only immediate enjoyment with no attention to external contingencies and constraints may substantially reduce a student's future outcomes and opportunities. Conversely, attending only to extrinsic constraints and incentives can substantially undermine intrinsic interest and the enjoyment that can come from learning itself. It is also possible that children who do poorly in school are more often subjected to lectures from teachers and parents about how and why they should be doing better, thus shifting their attention to more external sources of motivation.

Locus of control was found to be a significant contributor to the academic achievement of the students. This result is in consonance with prior studies (Abe, 1995; Bode, 1995; Schunk, 1996; Faustman & Mathews, 1980) who found that there is a positive relationship between locus of control and academic achievement. Children who see that their actions can have an impact on internal locus of control and who are taught how to recognize a good performance are more likely to grow up with the desire to excel in academic tasks. The explanation for this result could be that since knowledge flows from the teacher to the student which may invariably cause withdrawal from students, students were allowed to take more active control in the learning



process; in addition to the fact that the teacher was able to take into consideration the locus of control of each student, be it internal or external.

Result of the present study revealed that self-esteem significantly predicts academic achievement. This finding is consistent with the earlier research findings of Lany (1997) and Wiggins, Shatz and West (1994) who found that people who feel, worthy, able and competent are more likely to achieve their goals than those who feel worthless, impotent and incompetent. This result is easily explainable bearing in mind that students who have high academic achievement would also have a self-esteem and academic responsibility over time; students who have low academic achievement would also have low self-esteem and academic responsibility over time.

### **Implications of the findings for counselling practice**

This study has an implication for the work of teachers, counsellors, educational psychologists and other stakeholders in education to note that they need to develop a greater awareness and understanding of the various interaction involving variables that predict the academic performance of students. Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that teachers and counselling psychologists should encourage the development of a strong achievement motivation in the students through the provision of appropriate counselling intervention programmes and enabling environment. By so doing, the academic performance of the students could be improved barring all other teaching-learning obstacles.

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