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# Emotional Intelligence, Self-Esteem, Age and Gender of Learners as Correlates of Academic Self-Efficacy of Secondary School Students from Ibadan, Nigeria

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, age and gender of learners on the academic self-efficacy of secondary school students. Five hundred and sixty-seven students from Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria responded to a set of questionnaires consisting of measures of emotional intelligence (EI), self-esteem (SE) and academic self-efficacy (ASE). Hierarchical regression analyses conducted for each dependent variable showed that emotional intelligence, self-esteem and age predicted students' academic self-efficacy. This research indicates that counselling psychologists and teachers should focus on teaching emotional intelligence as a strategy to develop academic self-efficacy and attitudes of students in all the Nigerian educational institutions. When students are educated to be emotionally and socially intelligent, their general performance can be improved.

**Keywords:** Academic self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, age, gender, Nigeria.

## Introduction

Observation has revealed that academic success can be traced to students' academic self-efficacy. This is evident in the increased confidence expressed in academic pursuit which essentially determines the academic output. In Bandura (1997), academic self-efficacy is referred to as a confidence a student has in his ability to achieve a desired outcome in an academic given task. Self-efficacy on the other hand, refers to individual's belief in his ability to produce desired results (Wigfield, Byrnes and Ecdes, 2006), to learn and perform in a given task (Bandura, 1997). Bandura emphasizes in social cognitive theory, the concept of self-efficacy and its impact on learning, as the belief in one's ability influences activities selected and effort put in (Shunk and Zimmerman, 2007), engagement in the behaviours that are necessary to attain goals (Thomas, 2005) academic interest and motivation (Bandura, 1997, 1986) as well as growth of cognitive competencies and accomplished achievement (Zimmerman, 2000; Pajares, 1996b; Pintrich and Degroot, 1990).

Self-efficacy consistently predicts academic achievement (Bong, 2008) due to its effect on effort and persistence, because students who demonstrate greater sense of self-efficacy are more likely to put forth necessary effort and persist longer when facing academic challenges (Schunk and Zimmerman, 2006). Thus, academic self-efficacy is a research after the heart of educational psychologists in an attempt to investigate the belief of students' ability and effort to produce desired result in their academics.

The term Emotional intelligence has been related to several factors such as life satisfaction, psychological well-being, occupational success, and job performance (Adeyemo and Adeleye, 2008; Bar-On, 2005, 1997; Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Emotional Intelligence has also been found to be related to students' academic achievement, behaviour and attitudes (Salami and Ogundokun, 2009; Tagliavia, Tipton, Giannelti and Mattei, 2006; Salami, 2004; Wong and Wong Chau, 2001).

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), emotional intelligence involves the abilities that are categorized into five domains: self-awareness, managing emotions, motivating one-self, empathy, and handling of relationship which has implications on students' performance in tertiary institutions. It is likely that emotional intelligence assists students experiencing high level of happiness, satisfaction, as well as high level of depression in order to develop appropriate behaviour and altitudes in respect of their academic work. Mayer and Salovey (1997) also postulated further that emotional intelligence involves the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion, the ability to access and or generate emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotion to promote emotional and intellectual growth.

Goleman (1995) asserted that success depends on several intelligence and on the control of emotion. Specifically, he stressed that Intelligence Quotient (IQ) alone is no more the measure of success. According to him, intelligence accounts for only 20% of the total success, and the rest goes for emotional and social intelligence. Abisamra (2000) then queried that if this is found to be so (i.e. if emotional intelligence is considered nowadays for success), why have teachers failed to teach its component to students in schools? He then concluded that if emotional intelligence affects students' achievement, then it is imperative for schools to integrate it in their curricula and thereby raising the level of students' success.

Examining the effect of gender on the academic self-efficacy was also a major component of this study. When the moderating role of gender in relation to academic self-efficacy was investigated, gender plays a crucial role in moderating the direct effects on academic self-efficacy of students. Gender had a significant effect on the academic self-efficacy, favouring male students that is, on average, male students had higher level of academic self-efficacy compared to their female counterparts (Negasi, 2009; Ajiboye and Telia, 2006; Mustofa, 2006; Demewez, Mehadi and Tesfaye, 2005; Kifle, 2004). On the other hand, with regard to gender differences in academic self-efficacy, some studies have shown that there are no significant differences among female and male students in their academic self-efficacy (Sheard, 2009; Castagnetti and Rosti, 2009; Adeyemo, 2007; Woodfield, Jessop and McMillan, 2006). Age as a socio-demographic variable for this study has little association with academic self-efficacy. Previous research has produced mixed results between age and academic self-efficacy (Wlodkowski, Mauldin, and Gahn, 2001; Chartrand, 1992). According to Ng and Feldman (2008) there are three most cited

quantitative reviews of this literature: one researcher found a moderate positive relationship between age and performance (Waldman and Avolio, 1986). Witt-Rose (2003), on the other hand, found age stronger relationships between self-efficacy and performance for high school and college students than for younger students, while Sturman (2003) found that the age and performance relationship took an inverted-U shape. A dynamic relationship exists between self-esteem and academic achievement. It is a relationship where on the other side of the equation increases at a parallel rate to the other side. As a child improves in academic achievement, his self-esteem improves. The caring and concerned givers must come to realize that positive self-esteem is both a pre-requisite and a consequence of academic success (Richard, 2000).

Self-esteem is generally considered as evaluative component of the self-concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioural aspect as well as evaluative or effective ones (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1991). While the construct is most often used to refer to a global sense of self-worth, narrower concepts such as self-confidence or body esteem are used to imply a sense of self-esteem in more specific domains. It is also widely assumed that self-esteem is an extremely popular construct within psychology, and has been related to virtually every other psychological concept or domain, including personality (e.g. Shyness), behavioural (e.g., task performance), cognitive (e.g., attributional bias), and clinical concept (e.g., anxiety and depression) (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1991). While some researchers have been particularly concerned with understanding the nuances of the self-esteem construct, others have focused on the adaptive and self-productive functions of self-esteem (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1991).

Self-esteem construct is recognized today to be a major factor in academic efficacy (Lawrence, 1987). Research has consistently shown a positive correlation between how people value themselves and the level of their academic confidence (Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharar and Kumar, 2009). Some researchers investigated the relationship between self-esteem and academic self-efficacy and found that high self-esteem facilitates academic self-efficacy (Pullmann and Allik, 2008).

Studies have attempted to investigate the direct relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement which suggested that prior self-esteem has positive effect on subsequent educational attainment (Marsh and O'Mara, 2008). It has also been revealed that a significant causal influence was found between self-esteem and academic self-efficacy (Bachman and O'Malley, 1977).

One aspect that has often been forgotten in research that relates to self-esteem and school achievement is the motivation to maintain or enhance positive self-evaluation (Skaalvik, 1983). In fact, some studies reveal the absence of significant differences in self-esteem when students who suffer from low academic achievement are compared with those who do not (Alves-Martins, 1998; Senos, 1996; Robinson and Tayler, 1991, 1986). The

explanations for this lack of differences between the self-esteem felt by students with different levels of achievement normally involve self-esteem protection mechanisms that are activated when a person's self-esteem is threatened.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The present study sought to investigate the relationship among emotional intelligence, self-esteem, age and gender of learners on the academic self-efficacy of secondary school students.

### **Hypotheses**

Taking into consideration, the set objectives of this study, it was hypothesized that emotional intelligence and self-esteem would have positive correlation with academic self-efficacy (H1). It was further hypothesized that age and gender would respectively be potent predictors of academic self-efficacy (H2 and H3). Lastly, it was hypothesized that age and gender would moderate the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-esteem and academic self-efficacy (H4).

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a survey research design in order to explore the prediction of academic self-efficacy from emotional intelligence and self-esteem of students.

### **Participants**

A total of 567 secondary school students (males = 348, 61.38 per cent, females = 219, 38.62 per cent) randomly selected from Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria participated in the study. A total of 580 were originally taken as the sample size for this study. A stratified random sampling technique with a ratio of 3:1 allocation was employed in selecting 435 students from government-owned school and 145 from private-owned school. Fifteen schools randomly sampled from the five local governments, 32 students were randomly selected from each government-owned school while 20 students were randomly selected from each private-owned school. A total of 480 students were randomly selected from government-owned schools while a total of 100 students were randomly selected from private-owned schools involved in the study. This gave a total of 580 students. The students were randomly selected using dip hand method for each type of school, their age ranged between 14 and 19 years with a mean age of 16.94 years and standard deviation of 1.22. Of the 580 original copies of the questionnaire distributed, 13 copies were not properly filled and were discarded and were not used for the analysis; 567 were used for analysis.

### **Measures**

Demographic information was collected from participants regarding their age, gender and their class. The participants completed the three questionnaires: Academic Self-efficacy Scale (ASES) by Owen and Froman (1988) Emotional

Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ) by Goleman (1995) and Self- Esteem Scale (SES) by Rosenberg (1965).

**ASES:** by Owen and Froman (1988) measured the academic self-efficacy belief of students. It was made up of 22 items rated on a 4 points modified likert scale of Not at all = 1, Half of the Time = 2, Sometimes =3, Most of the time =4. Lower scores indicate low level of academic self-efficacy in students. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale after three weeks was found to be .79.

**EIQ:** by Goleman (1995) measured the emotional intelligence behaviour of the students. It was made up of 30 items rated on a 4 points modified Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 to Strongly Agree (SA) = 4. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale after three weeks was found to be .81.

**SES:** by Rosenberg (1965) measured the level of students' self-esteem. It was made up of 10 items rated on a 4 point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 to Strongly Agree (SD) = 4. The reported reliability coefficient of the scale after three weeks was found to be .73.

### **Procedure**

The research was conducted in the trimester of the 2012/2013 academic session. The measures were administered to the participants in groups of 30 during 40-minutes class periods. Permission for students' participation was obtained from each of the selected school principals, and students participated voluntarily in the research. Completion of the questionnaires was anonymous and there was a guarantee of confidentiality. Prior to the administration of the measures, all participants were told about the purpose of the study. The researcher with the cooperation of the school Counsellors participated in the distribution and collection of questionnaires from the respondents.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and hierarchical regression analysis in order to establish the relationship between the independent variables (emotional intelligence and self-esteem) and the dependent variable (academic self-efficacy).

### **Results**

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



**Table 1: Intercorrelations between Emotional Intelligence, Self-esteem, Age, Gender and Academic Self-efficacy (N = 567)**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Academic self-efficacy	1.000				
Emotional intelligence	.538**	1.000			
Self-esteem	.165**	.540**	1.000		
Gender	-.041	.026	.020	1.000	
Age	-.101*	.034	-.008	.142**	1.000
Mean	61.5802	97.0635	43.7143	1.3862	16.9436
S.D	11.97672	17.41845	10.89783	.48732	1.22705

The result from the table above shows there was significant relationship among emotional intelligence ( $r = .609$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); self-esteem ( $r = .429$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and age ( $r = -.101$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) on the academic self-efficacy of the students while gender was not significant ( $r = -.041$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 2: Relative Contributions of the Independent Variables to Academic Self-efficacy of Students**

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig
(Constant)	44.108	6.608		6.675	.000
Gender	-1.770	.865	-.072	-2.046	.041
Age	-1.168	.343	-.120	-3.401	.001
Emotional intelligence	.364	.024	.529	15.002	.000
Self-esteem	.100	.039	.091	2.583	.010

Taking emotional intelligence and self-esteem as moderating variables; academic self-efficacy as endogenous variable and age as well as gender as exogenous variables (Table 2): emotional intelligence alone turned out to be the strongest predictor of academic self-efficacy ( $p = .529$ ;  $t = 15.002$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). it was followed by self-esteem ( $p = .091$ ;  $t = 2.583$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); age ( $p = -.120$ ;  $t = -3.401$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and gender respectively ( $p = -.072$ ;  $t = -2.046$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3: Hierarchical Regression Analysis predicting Academic Self-efficacy from Emotional Intelligence, Self-esteem, Age and Gender**

Predictors	R	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	Df	B	T
Step 1 Emotional intelligence (EI)	.538	.290	.288	230.273*	1,565	.538	15.175*
Step 2 Emotional intelligence Age	.550	.302	.300	122.055*	2,564	.540	7.050*
Step 3 Emotional intelligence Age	.557	.310	.306	84.251*	3,563	-.112	-3.181*
						.528	6.341*

Table 3 contd.

Self-esteem							
Step 4							
Interaction terms							
EI × Age						.-111	-3.169
EI × Self-esteem	.561	.315	.310	64.592*	4,562	.089	2.517*
EI × Gender							
						-.120	3.401*
						.091	2.583*
						-.072	-2.048*

Note: N=567, EI = Emotional Intelligence, \* =  $p < 0.05$  (2-tailed test)

A hierarchical regression analysis was performed whereby emotional intelligence, self-esteem, age and gender were regressed on academic self-efficacy. Emotional intelligence alone turned out to be the strongest predictor of academic self-efficacy accounting for 29.0% of the variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .288$ ,  $\Delta F_{(1, 565)} = 230.273$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). This result revealed that hypothesis 1 is confirmed (table 3). Age when added to emotional intelligence slightly increased the prediction to 30.2% of the variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .300$ ,  $\Delta F_{(2, 564)} = 122.055$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); it was also shown that self-esteem when added to emotional intelligence slightly increased the prediction to 31.0% of the variance ( $\Delta R^2 = .306$ ,  $\Delta F_{(3, 563)} = 84.251$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The results also demonstrated that the moderator variables significantly predicted academic self-efficacy in the following order of magnitude: Self-esteem ( $p = .091$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Age ( $p = -.120$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Gender ( $p = -.072$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). These results revealed that hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 are confirmed as the entire moderator variables separately and significantly predicted academic self-efficacy.

Entering all the four interaction terms as a block in step 4 accounted for a significant increment of explained variance in academic self-efficacy ( $\Delta R = .310$ ,  $\Delta F_{(4, 562)} = 64.592$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). All interaction terms (EI x age; EI x self-esteem and EI x gender) made independent significant contributions to academic self-efficacy. These results indicate that the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-esteem and academic self-efficacy is influenced by age and gender. Students who have higher levels of emotional intelligence, self-esteem and age reported higher academic self-efficacy.

## Discussion

The results of the present study show that emotional intelligence had a significant correlation with academic self-efficacy. This finding reinforces prior evidence linking emotional intelligence with students' behaviours and attitudes (Salami and Ogundokun, 2009; Tagliavia Tripton, Giannetti, and Mattei, 2006; Salami, 2004; Wong, Wong, and Chau, 2001) by showing the salutary effects of emotional intelligence on students' attitudes. Students who had high emotional intelligence i.e. could perceive and understand their own emotions and emotions of others and could manage their emotional behaviour performed

well in their academic work and developed more positive attitude toward learning. In other words, learners' emotional intelligence tends to enhance their beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required for successful performance. This is in accordance with theoretical contentions in self-efficacy literature designating that self- efficacy is under the influence of four factors, one of which is the individual's affective and emotional states.

The findings of the present study also confirmed previous empirical studies. For example, Chan (2007) indicated that individuals who exhibited high emotional intelligence had high self- efficacy. In a similar vein, Villanueva and Sanchez (2007) found that emotional intelligence was positively associated with leadership self-efficacy. This seems plausible since as indicated earlier individual's beliefs about their efficacy can be developed by four main sources including mastery experience, vicarious experience, social or verbal persuasion, and emotional states. According to Bandura (1997), although learners obtain information to judge their self-efficacy from all of these four sources, students' own performances on past tasks and vicarious experience appear to be the most influential guides. So it can be concluded that attempts to enhance learners' beliefs in their capabilities should take into account other prominent factors involved in the development of self- efficacy perceptions.

A significant relationship was found between age and academic self-efficacy as age is a significant factor in learning. In most cases age is an index of maturity and maturity aids learning. This explanation was supported by the work of previous researchers (Ogundokun and Adeyemo, 2010; Naderi, Abdullah, Aizan, Sharir and Kumar, 2009; Sturman, 2003) who found a significant moderating positive relationship between age and achievement. It is believed that older students can more accurately assess and report their levels of self-efficacy.

Self-esteem was found to be a significant contributor to the academic self-efficacy of the students. This lends a good credence to several studies which have shown positive correlations between self-esteem and academic self-efficacy because self-efficacy is one of the precursors to self-esteem (e.g. Bahman, Jamshid, and Soraya, 2012, Thoits, 1995, Gecas, 1982). Solomon (2004) found a sense of belonging; the perception of being loved, valued, and cared for by others; and positive feedback of a person's own self-worth. The possibility remains, however, that self-esteem has indirect effects that are mediated by other factors, such as leadership efficacy. Besides these indirect effects on self-esteem, some additional, direct effects of receiving support on self-esteem are possible. Hence, in terms of self-esteem, an optimal balance of support probably results from a combination of direct effects and indirect effects via academic self-efficacy that possibly holds the middle between balanced and excess support provision.

The results of the present study have also provided evidences that there was no relationship between the two variables in question. The issue of gender

differences in academic self-efficacy has remained an area of controversy among researchers. Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's (2002) study revealed that gender differences do not significantly predict individual's self-efficacy beliefs. In a similar vein, Pajares (2003) postulated that males and females do not differ significantly in their sense of self-efficacy beliefs. In contrast, Coladarci (1992) as well as Ross (1994) found statistical difference between females and males' self-efficacy with the females having higher self-efficacy indices than their male counterparts. One probable explanation for the gap in the academic self-efficacy of students' gender could be a consequence of childhood sex-role socialization patterns in which males receive more attention and encouragement than females to perform effectively in academic endeavours.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal that emotional intelligence, self-esteem and age are predictors of academic self-efficacy but emotional intelligence emerged as the more potent predictor of academic self-efficacy than self-esteem and age. The findings also suggest that counselling psychologists and teachers should focus on teaching emotional intelligence as a strategy to develop academic self-efficacy and attitudes of students in all our educational institutions. When students are educated to be emotionally and socially intelligent, their general performance can be improved.

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