

Learners' Perception of Academic Self-Concept and Intrinsic Motivation: Evidence from Senior High School Students.

Seth Sunu

Department of Education.

St. Teresa's College of Education, Hohoe, Ghana

ssunu@teresco.edu.gh



Abstract – This study aimed at examining students' perception of academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation among Senior High Students in the Shai-Osudoku District. Descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from a sample of 346 students within the Shai Osudoku District through a multistage sampling technique. The results revealed that most of the students had positive perceptions of their academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation. It was further recommended that educational psychologists and counsellors in various schools should be more proactive and innovative in designing comprehensive educational programmes for their students to improve on their academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation which will enhance their study habits.

Keywords – Self-Concept, Intrinsic Motivation.

Introduction

The ultimate wish and aspiration of most parents is to see their ward excel academically (Laryea, Saani & Dawson-Brew, 2014). Parents in general are concern about their children's academic achievement because it could influence their children career choices and opportunities (Adu-Mensah, 2018). In view of this, viable actions have been taken by stakeholders to ensure high academic performance among students (Ghana Education Service, 2012). Amongst these actions include infrastructural development, teacher motivation, supply of teaching and learning resources and the implementation of educational policies such as Free Senior High School and the School Feeding Program (Ankomah et al. 2005; Ghana Education Service [GES], 2012; Quist, 2003).

Notwithstanding the tremendous efforts by stakeholders, it appears students' academic performance continue to fall below the belt in some specific subjects (WAEC, 2012). For instant, the Chief Examiner's reports in 2013, 2014 and 2015, reported that students' performance in core subjects (i.e., Mathematics, English Language and Integrated Science) in Shai-Osudoku District was abysmal. In the quest of researchers exploring this phenomenon, several factors such as social, economic, religious and psychological variables have been suggested to be contributing factors (Dorleku, 2013; Ghanney & Aniagyei, 2014; Osei-Mensah, 2012; Saani, 2012). One of the significant factors that is less explored in Ghana is students' academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation (Affum-Osei, Asante, Barnie & Kwarteng, 2014).

Affum-Osei, Asante, Barnie, Kwarteng (2014) have examined the effect of academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation on students' academic performance at the secondary level. In addition, studies conducted such as Dramanu and Balarabe (2013) and Laryea et al., (2014) looked at the variables separately and focused on the Junior High Schools (JHS). To add to this discourse,

this study examines students' perception of academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation with respect to their academic performance. To achieve the stated objective, the study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How do Senior High School students perceive their academic self-concept?
2. How do Senior High School students perceive of their intrinsic motivation?

Literature Review

Academic Self-Concept

Academic self-concept is one of the facets of general self-concept. The most important component of general self-concept for a teacher is academic self-concept, the part that deals with people's beliefs of their ability as students. Academic self-concept refers to how well we perform in school or how well we learn. Cokley (2000) defined academic self-concept as the attitudes, feelings and perceptions relative to one's intellectual or academic skills. According to Ahmad (2006), it is the student's attitude and feelings with regards to their abilities and academic potential.

Academic self-concept and school performance strongly interact. Children enter expecting to learn and do well, but as they progress their activities and achievements change this anticipation. There are two levels: a general academic self-concept of how good we are overall and a set of content-related self-concepts that describe how good we are in specific subject. Academic self-concept enhances when learning experiences are positive, but it suffers when they are negative (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). Students develop academic self-concept as they form self-perceptions of their academic efficacy through experiencing the classroom environment and through evaluations by significant others. Academic self-concept predicts the extent of diligent and persevering effort that students will devote toward their academic work.

Academic self-concept is an effective variable for predicting students' learning behaviours. According to Dambudzo (2009), the academic self-concept deals with perceptions of causes of academic performance which figure prominently in theories of achievement motivation and have important implications for the behaviour of individuals in academic situation. In other words, academic self-concept has to do with beliefs about one's ability, effort, performance, intelligence and behaviour in general and in specific situations such as subject areas or specific tasks. Craven et al. (2000) emphasise the point that a positive academic self-concept is linked to academic effort and consistency, coursework selection, educational ambition, completion of high school and following university attendance. The way learners feel about their abilities may impact their academic performance.

Consequently, academic achievement may not merely be an expression of the learners' abilities but also of their self-concept ability which when positive helps them feel confident and able, but when negative causes them to feel hesitant and uncertain (Hamachek, 2005). In addition to being related to promoting students' interest in learning, academic self-concept can be used to promote students' motivation for further learning (Byer, 2000). According to Hamachek (2005), learners at various grade levels have experienced successes and failures. Those experiencing success tend to project a more positive academic self-concept than those with more failure experiences. Academic self-concept is further differentiated and refined with growing age. Students may have varying self-concepts in various school subjects depending upon the impressions of teachers, class fellows and parents about the student's competence in a specific subject, particularly the student's own performance in the subject (Santrock, 2007).

Learners who believe in their academic competence tend to work harder and take school work more seriously than learners who feel that they are less competent. Higher self-concept learners are less likely to absent themselves from classes, and more likely to complete homework assignments and spend more time studying. This may be because learners with positive self-concepts attribute higher performance and see more clearly the relationship between the effort they put into their work and their success. Since success has been linked to high self-concept and academic achievement, failure would also contribute to a low self-concept and future failure in academic situations. Academic self-concept tends to improve significantly and commensurately with high academic achievement for higher school learners (Collins, Hanges, & Locke, 2004).

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is manifested through individuals' engagement in an activity for the sake of the activity itself and for the satisfaction inherent in performing the activity. Intrinsic motivation often derives from person-activity interaction in activities that people find interesting, optimal challenging, or aesthetically pleasing (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation refers to being engaged in an activity for itself and for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from participation. Intrinsic motivation is widely concerned to mirror the highest level of motivation, as the place of behaviour is completely internal (Grolnick, 2002).

This internalization is considered by some researchers as the base of human learning (Vansteenkiste, 2006) and it has been defined as "the process of transforming external regulations into internal regulations and, when the process functions optimally, integrating those regulations into one's sense of self. Intrinsic motivation as a function is showed when the function is carried out of interest, enjoyment, or inherent satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002). It is intrinsic motivation that drives an individual to do something in order to attain certain goals. There is a self-perpetuating energy behind intrinsic motivation that can function in the complete absence of extrinsic motivation (Sikhwari, 2004) or any external rewards.

Intrinsic motivation can be divided into three parts, intrinsic motivation to know, intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments, and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation, which are ordered of decreasing self-determination. Intrinsic motivation to know is that which reflects to a need or desire to understand and learn. Intrinsic motivation toward accomplishments is that which is performed to gain a sense of achievement and capability, and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation includes participating in a function for pleasure or sensations (Cokley, Bernard, Cunningham, & Motoike, 2001). People are intrinsically motivated to do some activities and not others, and not everyone is intrinsically motivated for any task (Ryan & Deci 2000). Students with a profound cognitive need to obtain knowledge and understand their environment, or with a positive sense of respect for themselves and what they are doing, are intrinsically motivated (Crous, Roets, Dicker, & Sonnekus, 2000).

When someone performs certain activities for internal interest and satisfaction, is termed as intrinsic motivation Brown, (2007). Intrinsic motivation is type of motivation in which student is motivated internally by him/herself. We can say that the student has genuine and primary interest in an activity or subject. Students who are accomplishing the task based on their internal satisfaction are intrinsically motivated (Fulk, 2004). The students who are intrinsically motivated are keenly employ themselves to attain their objectives, goals and aims without taking into account the rewards. Dev (1997) had studied that students who do not need any kind of awards for accomplishing their tasks are intrinsically motivated. These types of students are more careful about the completion of the task by taking exception of the quality of the job.

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive cross-sectional survey design base on the relatively short period that the survey covered. The design was appropriate because it is recommended by Amin (2005) for studies which involve a cross section of respondents or subjects with almost similar characteristics. The researcher collected information from a cross-section of respondents (students) at once without repetitively visiting them.

Population

The accessible population for the study were form two and three students made up of 3275 of which Ghanata was 1831 and Osudoku was 1444.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

A sample of 346 students was selected from the two public schools. This comprises 193 students from Ghanata SHS and 153 students from Osudoku SHS. This sample size was determined and calculated using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table at 95 confidence level and 5% margin of error. A multi-stage sampling technique (purposive, proportionate allocation and simple

random sampling techniques) was employed. The first stage was purposive selection of the two public SHS because there are only two public SHS. The second stage was proportionate allocation of the students from each school and their respective classes or forms and the third stage was the random selection of the students from each school. Concerning students, proportional allotment was used to determine and allocate the total number of students from the population to each school. The students were selected using the simple random sampling technique.

Data Collection Instrument

An adapted Academic Self-Concept scale by Liu and Wangs (2005) and a questionnaire developed for intrinsic motivation were used for the data collection purposes. The questionnaire was developed using five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5)”. For the purpose of analysis, strongly disagree was coded 1; disagree was coded 2; undecided 3; agree 4 and strongly agree 5.

Data Collection Procedures

The necessary rapport was established with the head teachers at the selected schools and permission was sought from them for the administration of the questionnaire to the participants. In order to ensure clarity of how the questionnaire was completed, the purpose of the study and the procedure for responding to the questionnaire were explained to the respondents after identifying them. The respondents were then given some time to respond to the questionnaire. This was after they have given their consent and the issues of confidentiality and anonymity and assurance of the fact that they could decide to discontinue with their participation in the study, have been clearly explained to them.

Results and Discussion

Perception of Senior High School Students on academic self-concept

The objective was to assess students’ views concerning academic self-concept as a factor that contributes to their academic performance. The results were analysed and discussed using means and standard deviation. A mean of 3.00 indicates respondents’ neutral responses (Undecided), a mean of 3.10 and above indicates respondents’ positive perception of academic self-concept statements while a mean of 2.99 and below indicates respondents’ negative perception of academic self-concept constructs. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Students’ Perception of their Academic Self-Concept

Statements	Mean	SD
I follow teaching easily in class	3.63	0.97
I help my friends or classmates in academic work	3.70	0.98
I often do my assignment and home work with critical thinking	3.65	1.28
If I work very hard in academic work, I can get good grades	4.65	0.72
I pay attention to teachers when they are teaching	4.20	0.81
I am smarter than most of my classmates	3.42	1.25
I study very hard for my class tests and exams	4.37	0.79
My teachers and classmates feel that I am good academically	4.02	1.12
I am interested in all my subjects	3.39	1.24
I easily remember what I learn	3.45	1.21

I do my best to pass all the subjects	4.24	0.86
I get encourage when teachers ask me questions	3.65	1.24
I never give up when faced with difficult questions in the class	3.52	1.24
I do better than my friends in all the subjects	2.99	0.95
I am willing to put in more effort in all my studies	4.70	0.63
Mean of Means/SD	3.84	1.04

From Table 1, most of the respondents homogeneously agreed ($M=3.63$; $SD=0.97$) with the statement that they followed instruction easily in class. This means that, respondents paid attention in class during instructional process. In relation to the statement, majority of the respondents agreed ($M=3.70$; $SD=0.98$) that they helped their classmates and friends in their academic work. This result implies that most of the respondents had the ability to assist their colleagues in their academic works in schools. Table 1 again reveals that most of the respondents agreed ($M=3.65$; $SD=1.28$) with the statement that they often did their assignment and home work with critical thinking. This result suggests that most of the students did their school works using creativity and innovative ideas and this describes students' positive perception of their academic self-concept.

However, students disagreed with the statement that they perform better than their friends and colleagues in all the subjects ($M=2.99$; $SD=0.95$) because they had interest in the subjects, but they were willing to put much efforts to pass all the subjects ($M=4.70$; $SD=0.63$). Even though students believe that they do not perform better than their friends in all the subjects they are willing to put in much effort.

It is concluded that on average, most of the students agreed with the statements concerning their perception of academic self-concept. It is therefore worth stating that most of the students had positive perception of their academic self-concept. This was evident by the mean of means and standard deviation score ($MM=3.84$; $SD=1.04$). It is reasoned that this students' positive perception of their academic self-concept would significantly influence their academic performance.

The results from the study are entrenched in social cognitive theory which emphasis the exploring contextual aspects of a student's environment as a component of their academic self-concept that would significantly influence their academic performance. Social cognitive theory further emphasis that students learning arrived along with developing a comprehension about how social cognitive factors influence the achievement and self-concept of students.

According to the social cognitive theory, given that internal thought processes and external behaviours/actions are influenced by human interactions (Bandura, 1999), self-image and perceptions during the adolescent period of development are largely affected by individuals' external environment. Exploring the way academic achievement and academic self-concept are derived based on social constructs is essential because adolescents are strongly influenced by their social environment.

The results of the current study confirm the finding of Cokley (2000) who asserted that students' academic self-concept is an evaluation of one's perceived academic abilities. This result is also in agreement with the findings of Ahmad (2006) who found that students had positive attitude and feelings with regards to their abilities and academic potential. Academic self-concept could predict the extent of diligent and persevering effort that students will devote to their academic work. According to Eggen and Kauchak (2007), academic self-concept enhances when learning experiences are positive, but it suffers when they are negative. This lends support to the current findings that academic self-concept is an effective variable for predicting students' learning behaviours.

Moreover, the results of the current study are congruent with the findings of Craven et al. (2000) who concluded that a positive academic self-concept is significantly linked to students' academic effort and consistency. According to them, the way students feel about their abilities may impact their academic performance. Thus, when students have positive self-concept about

their academic work, it helps them feel confident and able, but when they feel negative, it causes them to feel hesitant and uncertain (Hamachek, 2005).

Perception of Senior High School Students on intrinsic motivation

The objective was to examine students' views concerning intrinsic motivation as a factor that contributes to their academic performance. On a five-point Likert scale "strongly disagree to strongly agree" (1-5), the respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement with the statements posed by the researcher on intrinsic motivation. The results were investigated using means and standard deviation. Once again, a mean of 3.00 indicates respondents' neutral responses (Undecided), a mean of 3.10 and above indicates respondents' positive perception of their intrinsic motivation statements while a mean of 2.99 and below indicates respondents' negative perception of their intrinsic motivation constructs. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Perception of their Intrinsic Motivation

Statements	Mean	SD
I am interested in learning and discovering ideas for its own sake.	4.13	1.09
I believed to do well and show good result.	4.62	0.67
I attend school because I have a genuine interest in the subject I am studying.	4.01	1.20
I always study because I actually want to know the material.	3.86	1.06
I feel that I should be recognized when I demonstrate my abilities in the classroom.	4.05	1.15
I often study very hard because I need at least a high-school certificate	4.28	1.11
I always study because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things.	4.19	0.88
I always study very hard because I experience joy and pleasure	4.01	0.89
I study very hard to prove to myself that I am capable of completing	4.37	0.96
I always study very hard for the satisfaction I feel when in accomplishing difficult academic activities	3.94	0.99
When I receive a low grade in an exam, I try not to hide it from others.	4.40	0.96

I feel bad about myself when others do not understand material that is clear to me.	3.08	1.38
I simply learn to discover, create and express meaning in the class	4.10	1.09
I do all that I can to make my assignments turn out perfectly.	4.37	0.80
I feel more accepted by others when I receive good grades in a test or exams.	4.25	1.04
Mean of Means/ SD	4.11	1.03

Generally, it can be observed from the results in Table 2 that most of the students had positive perception of their intrinsic motivation as a factor that influence academic performance. Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents had positive perception ($M=4.13$; $SD=1.09$) by indicating that they are interested in learning and discovering ideas for its own sake. Similarly, they believed to do well and show good result. This is evident by the mean and standard deviation score ($M=4.62$; $SD=0.67$) which means that most of the students have the zeal to learn without any external influence.

Again, majority of the students agreed ($M=4.19$; $SD=0.88$) that they always study because they experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things. With regards to the statement, most of the respondents agreed ($M=4.01$; $SD=0.89$) that “they always study very hard because they experience joy and pleasure when surpassing themselves in the studies”. This indicates that indeed majority of the students learn because of the inner joy they get.

Moreover, majority of students had positive perception ($M=4.37$; $SD=0.96$) with the statement by reporting that they studied very hard to prove to themselves that they can complete their senior high-school. Also, most of them agreed ($M=3.94$; $SD=0.99$) with the statement that they always studied very hard for the satisfaction they felt when they are in the process of accomplishing difficult academic activities. The results indicated that students are not influenced by external motivation to learn but rather their own inner zeal.

Furthermore, Table 2 indicates that, majority of the students agreed ($M=4.40$; $SD=0.96$) to the statement that when they received a low grade in an exam, they tried not to hide it from others. To the statement “I feel bad about myself when others do not understand material that is clear to me”, it was found that most of the students showed empathy towards their colleagues in schools when they find it difficult to comprehend what is being taught in the class. This shows that most of the students had positive perception ($M=3.08$; $SD=1.38$) of their intrinsic motivation.

The results are grounded in the self-theory by Rogers (1951). Self-theory is of the view that self-concept is a collection of beliefs and judgements about one’s own nature, typical behaviour, strengths and weaknesses. The results give evidence to suggest that one’s childhood experiences provide either congruence or incongruence in his or her self-concept. Rogers posited that every individual has within himself or herself the potentialities for healthy and creative growth that will influence their learning.

The findings are further incongruence with Rogers (1959) stands, who maintained that each individual exists in the centre of a phenomenal field and this could influence one’s perception towards his own intrinsic motivation. To him an individual’s behaviour depends on the phenomenal field (subjective reality) and not upon the stimulating condition (external reality). In Rogers’ view, therefore, the subjective experience of reality serves as the basis for all individual’s judgements and behaviour. It is this phenomenological, inner reality rather than external objective reality that plays the key role in determining a person’s behaviour. The human organism’s “phenomenal field” includes all experiences available at a given moment, both conscious and unconscious.

From these results, it is concluded that on average, most of the students agreed with the statements concerning their perception of intrinsic motivation. This therefore implies that most of the students had positive perception of their intrinsic motivation as a factor that contributes to academic performance. This is evident by the mean of means and standard deviation score

(MM=4.11; SD=1.03). It is reasoned that this would significantly influence the academic performance of students in Shai-Osudoku District.

From these results, it is deduced that intrinsically motivated students keenly engage themselves in learning out of interest, enjoyment, or in order to achieve their own scholarly and personal goals, and employ themselves to attain their objectives, goals and aims without considering any external rewards. These results confirm the findings of Brown (2007) who concluded that most of the students perform certain activities for internal interest and satisfaction. The current study is also in agreement with the findings of Fulk (2004) that students who are accomplishing the task are intrinsically motivated. Again, the study supports the findings of Dev (1997), whose study revealed that students who do not need any kind of awards for accomplishing their tasks are intrinsically motivated.

Moreover, Condry and Chambers (2007) had found that when student faced the multifaceted cerebral project, the students with intrinsically motivated use more coherent data collecting and decision-making tactics than those students who are extrinsically motivated. These students do not need any type of reward or incentive to instigate or complete their tasks in the schools (Coon & Mitterer, 2010). Ryan and Deci (2000) stated that intrinsic motivation results in high-quality learning and creativity; therefore, it is especially important to detail the factors and forces that engender and undermines it. They suggest that it is important for learners to be intrinsically motivated in order to make progress in their academic careers, especially in the face of adversity.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, both academic self-concept and intrinsic motivation are important variable that could influence academic performance of students. By implication, psychologists and counsellors are expected to put much premium on these constructs in any attempt to counsel students to overcome their academic challenges.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Services and other Agencies should provide effective and adequate training and development in the areas of students' personal and social competence such as self-concepts, motivation and achievement for teachers. This will help teachers to acquire knowledge about academic self-concept, and about the different types of motivation and strategies to improve them. By implication, MoE/GES, school administrators and educators should give adequate and enough attention to self-concept and academic motivation through periodic in-service training and education.

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