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PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AS A CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ANAMBRA STATE

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Abstract

Using correlational research design, this study sought to establish the relationship betweenpsychological capital and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra State. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study consisted of all the 12, 172 Senior Secondary School (SS2) students in the 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. The sample for the study consisted of 750 SS2 students drawn from the population of the study using multi-stage random sampling technique. Two sets of questionnaire 'Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) and 'Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ)' were used for data collection. The instruments for data collection were validated by 3 specialists in Education (2 from Educational Psychology and 1 from Measurement and Evaluation). The reliability of the instruments was established using Cronbach Alpha Method and the alpha co-efficient got were 0.78 for PCQ and 0.82 for AEQ.Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination for answering the research questions while regression statistical analysis was used for testing the hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that gender notwithstanding, there is a high positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra state. Also correlation between optimism and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra state varies with gender. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that Government should prioritise teachers' welfare to engender their zeal and passion so as to ignite the needed psychological capital in the students, thus positively impacting their academic engagement.

Key Words: Psychological capital, adolescents and academic engagement

Introduction

Secondary education is a six-year form of education, the second tier of Nigerian educational system which children receive after primary school before proceeding to the tertiary level of education. Among the broad aims of secondary education are: preparing for useful living within the society and preparation for higher education (NFR, 2013). The importance of secondary school education is highly rated given that it takes in the products of primary schools and produces candidates for tertiary education in the nation (Abdulrahaman, 2014). The age range of secondary school students is mostly 10-18 yearswhich also categorizes them as adolescents.

Adolescence is a period of physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes; a period of self-discovery, where it is normal for teenagers to experiment with friendship, activities, substances, and sexuality (Palminteri, Kilford, Coricelli, and Blakemore, 2016). By virtue of their being in school, they are referred to in-school adolescents.

In-school adolescents contextually cover adolescents who are engaged in schooling activities. This implies that the term does not cover other adolescents outside the secondary school system. By virtue of the demands of school and academic activities, in-school adolescents are required to engage in logical reasoning, abstract thinking, increased understanding, ability to generalized facts and increased dependent decision among others. Apart from making efforts to meet the demand of school and academic responsibilities, in-school adolescents socialize with peers, which in one way or the other could determine their lifestyles, attitude and behaviours.Peers definitely could have either a positive or negative influence on one another. The desire to be accepted or remain in friendship with peers could make in-school adolescents to engage in activities and behaviours that could distract them from studies and academic activities. For instance as a result of socialization with peers, some in-school adolescents get involved in cultism, cybercrimes, yahoo, gambling, and substance abuse. Many students get addicted to social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Tiktok and Facebook or become addicted to watching movies

and playing games. These distracting activities could lead in-school adolescents' intodeveloping passive attitude to school and possibly affect their engagement in academic activities.

Academic engagement is a multidimensional construct that refers to students' involvement and commitment to learning activities especially as it pertains to teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Oluremi, 2014). It involves student's commitment and active participation in academic and non-academic activities.According to Anierobi (2021), academic engagement involves behaviours that signal serious psychological investment in class work such as being sensitive in class, doing the assigned works, taking initiatives to raise a hand and ask questions, partaking in group activities and regular attendance to class.Within the literature, academic engagement is perceived as a meta-construct comprised of the cognitive, emotional and behavioural domain.

Cognitive engagement refers to students' personal investments and efforts in understanding the content of what they are exposed to in the classroom, acquiring the necessary academic skills demanded of them in the classroom and employing self-regulatory strategies in their learning processes (Fredricks *et al.* in Alrashidi, Phan and Ngu, 2016).Cognitive engagement refers to the students' personal investment in learning activity which is usually seen in his commitment to mastery learning and the use of studying strategies (Truta, Parv and Topala, 2018).

Emotional engagement on the other hand encompasses the affective factors of engagement including enjoyment, support, belonging and attitudes towards teachers, peers, learning and school in general (Watt, 2014). Emotional engagement attributes an array of students' emotions and feelings which could be either positive or negative associated with the institution, teachers, peers, and classroom tasks(Fredricks *et al.* in Alrashidi *et al.* 2016). This reveals that the indicators of emotional engagement revolve around the presence of interest, enthusiasm and happiness and a sense of belonging to the school.

Behavioural engagement refers to the active participation and involvement of the students in social groups, classroom interaction, studies – both at school and home – and extracurricular activities related to school (Siu, Bakker, and Jiang, 2014).Behavioural dimension explains the observable and overt dimensions of engagement especially as it pertains to classroom activities such as: adhering to the classroom norms, refraining from engaging in disruptive behaviours, participation in classroom learning, discussion, asking questions, paying attention, exhibiting persistence and putting forth effort. As such, the emotional, cognitive and behavioural components of school engagement have been suggested to capture the related but separately developing dimensions contributing to a student's active involvement in school (Wang and Eccles, 2011)

In the light of the foregoing, academic engagement could thus be said to be of great essence to students especially in the attainment of educational objectives. Students' academic engagement is necessary for learning, maximal performance and academic success, which is the desire of educational stakeholders (Anierobi, 2021). This implies thatacademically engaged students would fully concentrate on their studies, be enthusiastic in academic learning, and persist when encountering obstacles and challenges. Academic engagement is by this considered the hallmark for academic success among students.Consequently, teachers make efforts to ensure students' active engagement in their studies by deploying pedagogical strategies such as take home assignment, use of stimulus variation,instructional materials and question and answer method for maximal success.

Despite the efforts of teachers in ensuring students' active engagement on learning for maximal success, some secondary school students seem disinterested and lack the required engagement in academic activities.This is evidenced by students' poor reading habit, students' inclinations to their cell phones, students' late attendance to school and students' expression of social withdrawal (Mbanuzuru, Mbanuzuru, Udigwe and Adogu, 2021). Moreover, students' performance in external examinations keeps showing of people battling academic engagement. According to

Edeh (2021), 75% of students who enrolled for WAEC and Joint Admission Matriculation Board examinations in special centres around the country came out in flying colours courtesy of fraudulent malpractices. Even though one may argue that poor performance in external examinations is not limited to a factor or the other, literature seems to finger academic disengagement as a prominent factor in students' poor performance (Veiga, Burden, Appleton, Taveira and Galvao, 2014; Siu, Bakker, and Jiang, 2014; You, 2016; Ahmadu, Don and Hamzat, 2016; Truta, Parv, and Topala, 2018). In addition to this, the researcher is worriedthat most of the students seem not toshow enthusiasm in coming to school, join or participate in school academic and social clubs (Mbanuzuru, Mbanuzuru, Udigwe and Adogu, 2021). Consequently, attention should be given to factors which could reposition secondary school students towards engaging actively in academic activities in their schools and one of such factors is psychological capital.

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a construct of positive psychology aimed at guiding people towards being more productive and satisfied.Psychological capital covers one's positive outlook on a given situation and the likelihood of the person's success based on perseverance (Luthans, Avolio, Avey and Norman as citied in You (2016). Luthans et al added that, unlike other personality traits, psychological capital remains flexible making it possible for it to be improved or developed.According to Avey, Luthans,Smith and Palmer as cited in Rani and Chaturvedula (2018), psychological capital represents an individual's positive psychological state of developmentwhich is characterized by: (1) Self-efficacy (having confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks). (2)Optimism (making a positive attributionabout succeeding now and in the future), (3) Hope (persevering toward goals, and when necessary redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed) and (4) Resilience (when besetby problemsand adversity, sustaining andbouncing back and even beyond to attain success). Self –efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience,therefore,form the components of psychological capital but this research work is limited to self-efficacy and optimism.

Psychological capital plays a huge role in students' attainment of the desired objectives of secondary school education. Some researchers and authors includingMartinez, Youssef-Morgan, Chambel and Marques (2019); Anokye (2018); Datu and Valdez (2015); Sihag and Sarikwa (2014) has linked components of PsyCap to the academic outcomes of students. As stated inEzurike, Ngwoke and Ossai (2019), self-efficacy was pointed out as a factor that enables students to confront challenging tasks to acquire knowledge for success instead of perceiving the tasks as threats to shy away from. Similarly, Jafri (2017) noted that optimistic individuals have a positive outlook, and expectations of positive outcome enhance their willingness to put more efforts into academic activities. This implies that optimistic students have positive expectations of their capability, efforts and success and these expectations should keep them engaged in academic activities. In view of these considerations, psycap could impact academic engagement in adolescents.

Achieving academic engagement of students has been the desire of educational stakeholders in secondary education. This has become of essence considering that the students in question are at the age of influence and transition.Previous researchers (Ahmadu, Don and Hamzat, 2016; Anierobi and Unachukwu, 2020) fingered among others external factors such as facilities, teachers' factors, poor teaching strategies as factors that could negatively affect students' academic engagement. However, little attention has been paid to the psychological details thatcould impact students' academic engagement. By adopting a psychologicalapproach towards solving the problem of students' academic engagement, the researchers' intends to ascertain how psychological capital correlate with academic engagement of in-school adolescents' in Anambra State.Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 significance level were formulated by the researchers' to guide the study.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state?

2. What is the relationship between optimism and academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between self-efficacyand academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state.
2. There is no significant relationship between optimismand academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state.

Method

Correlational research designwas utilized for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), correlation research design is focused on establishing the existing relationship between two or more variables. The population of the study comprised 12, 172 Senior Secondary School (SS2) students in the 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. The choice of SS2 students is based on the fact thatthey are not at immediate preparation for external exams andwere readily available for the study. Using multi-stage random sampling technique, 750 students were selected for the study.

Two sets of questionnaire were used to collect data for the study. The two sets of questionnaire are titled 'Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ). Psychological Capital components were measured using an instrument titled Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) adapted from the work of Luthans, Avolio and Avey (2007) and revised by Okafor (2014). Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) is a 24-item questionnaire comprising four sub-scales (Self-efficacy, resilience, hope and optimism). It was structured on a six-point Likert scale of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=somewhat disagree, 4=somewhat agree, 5=agree, 6=strongly agree. In adapting the instrument for the present study, the words used in the items were further simplified to suit the level and understanding of the respondents. Additionally, the items were restructured on a four-point scale response of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). Only12 items measuring self efficacy and optimism components of Psychological capital were used since the study was limited to only these two

components. Items 1-6 in the present scale measure self-efficacy while items 7-12 measure optimism. The minimum score for the scale is 24 while themaximum score is 96. Thus scores of 48 and above were considered high PsyCap while scores below 48were considered low PsyCap.

Academic Engagement Scale (AES) used in this study is a 13 item scale and was adapted from the Utrecht WorkEngagement Scale-Student Version by Schaufeli, and Bakker (2003) revised by Commissioning (2020). The scale measures academicengagement on three domains (vigor, dedication, absorption).Participants are to rate the extent to which each scale item for each variable applied to their experiences. Itwas originally developed on a seven-point Likert scale anchored by theresponse options from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). However, in adapting the instrument, the instrument was then placedon a four-point Likert scale response of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3),Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1). An average ofall the three subscales provides a score for general academic engagement.The range of score for positive statements were weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 for SA-SD respectively, while negative statements were weighted 1, 2, 3 and 4 for SA-SD respectively. Higher scores (26 and above) indicate active academic engagement while low scores (below 26) indicatepassive academic engagement.The items were also slightly altered to reflect the studentship level of the respondents and what applies to their academic circumstances.

Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (AEQ) were validated for face and content worthiness by 3 experts in Education.The reliability of the instruments was ascertained through pilot testing by administering the PCQ and AEQ to a similar group of 30 Senior Secondary School (SS2) randomly selected public secondary schools in Enugu State. The Cronbach alpha statistics was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The alpha coefficients got were 0.78 for PCQ and 0.82 for AEQ.

The instruments wereadministered by the researchers' with the assistance of 5 trained research assistants.Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination for answering the research questions while regression statistical analysis was used for testing the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Pearson r on the Relationship between Self-efficacy and Academic Engagement of Male and Female in-school Adolescents in Anambra State

Gender	Source of Variation	N	R	Remark
Male	Self-Efficacy Academic Engagement	266	0.75	High Positive Relationship
Female	Self-Efficacy Academic Engagement	470	0.83	Very High Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows that there is a high positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic engagement of male in-school adolescents in Anambra state. A very high positive relationship exists between self-efficacy and academic engagement of female in-school adolescents in Anambra state.

Table 2: Pearson r on the Relationship between optimism and academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state

Gender	Source of Variation	N	R	Remark
Male	Optimism Academic Engagement	266	0.24	Low Positive Relationship
Female	Optimism Academic Engagement	470	0.44	Medium Positive Relationship

Table 2 shows that there is a low positive relationship existing between optimism and academic engagement of male in-school adolescents in Anambra state while a medium positive relationship exist between optimism and academic engagement of female in-school adolescents.

Table 3: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between self-efficacy and academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state

Gender	Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Male	Self-Efficacy Academic Engagement	266	0.75	0.00	Significant
Female	Self-Efficacy Academic Engagement	470	0.83	0.00	Significant

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic engagement of both male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state. The calculated r (0.75 for male and 0.83 for female) had *P*. values<0.05. The 1st null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Pearson Correlation between optimism and academic engagement of male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state

Gender	Source of Variation	N	r	p-value	Remark
Male	Optimism Academic Engagement	266	0.24	.02	Significant
Female	Optimism Academic Engagement	470	0.44	.00	Significant

Table 4 shows that there is a significant relationship existing between optimism and academic engagement of both male and female in-school adolescents in Anambra state. The calculated r (0.24 for male and 0.44 for female) had *P*.values<0.05. The 2nd null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealedthat self efficacy is a predictor of academic engagement of in-school adolescents' in Anambra state. The findings further affirm that irrespective of gender, a high positive relationship exist between self-efficacy (a component of psychological capital) and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra state. Giving credence to the findings of this study is

Anokye (2018) which affirmed a significant positive relationship between work engagement and psychological capital. Anokye further noted that gender notwithstanding, self efficacy (a component of psychological capital) predicted work engagement more than the other dimensions of psychological capital including optimism, hope and resilience.Also, the findings of the study aligned with Datu and Valdez (2015) that psychological capital positively predicted academic engagement and that students who espouse combination of self-efficacy and other sub-dimension of psychological capital (including hope, optimism, resilience) may actively partake in various classroom tasks (behavioural engagement) and feel good in doing academic activities (emotional engagement).

The findings of the study further divulge that there is a positive relationship between optimism and academic engagementof in-school adolescents in Anambra state. Supporting this assertion is the research work of Sihag and Sarikwa (2014) that employees with optimistic view exhibit higher level of work engagement. The findings of the study further revealed disparity in gender thus: Low positive relationship between optimism and academic engagement of male in-school adolescents and on the other hand medium positive relationship between optimism and academic engagement of female in-school adolescents. The findings of the study however varied with Martínez, Youssef-Morgan, Chambel and Marques-Pinto (2019) that optimism has positive relationship with students' academic engagement.

Conclusion

The researchers' conclude as follows:

1. Gender notwithstanding, there is a high positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra state.
2. There is a positive relationship between optimism and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra state.
3. The correlation between optimism and academic engagement of in-school adolescents in Anambra state varies with gender thus: Low positive

relationship between optimism and academic engagement of male in-school adolescents and on the other hand medium positive relationship between optimism and academic engagement of female in-school adolescents.

Recommendations

1. Teachers' welfare should top the list of Government priority. This is to enhance teachers' interest, zeal and passion required to ignite the needed psychological capital in the students, thus positively impacting their academic engagement.
2. Federal Government should ensure the employment and deployment of counsellors and psychologists to secondary schools. Such a step will help ensure that the psychological needs of secondary school students are attended to especially as it concerns their academic engagement.
3. The employment of teachers should be based on merit and qualification. Such a step will see that qualified teachers will be the ones at the students' disposal in order to help awaken their psychological capital and inwardly their academic engagement.

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