

STUDENT EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT AS A CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN CIVIC EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EBONYI STATE

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Abstract

Education enables people acquire knowledge and skills that help them solve their problems, and as well become responsible members of their society. The growth of any nation's economy, political and social values mostly depend on the level of quality and quantity of education the nation could offer on its citizens. This underscores the need for the right kind of education which will in turn produce people who are adequately prepared: for useful living with the society. The aim of this study is to determine the emotional engagement of students with their academic achievement in Civic Education in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. One research question composing of 15 item questionnaire titled "Students Emotional Engagement Questionnaire (SEEQ)" and one null hypothesis were formulated to carry out the research work. The findings show that all the questionnaire items were accepted as relevant emotional engagement of students to enhance their academic achievement in civic education. In this study, it is being recommended that teacher counsellors should adopt appropriate therapy techniques geared towards the enhancement of emotional engagement of all students in the schools of their jurisdiction to boost their chances of doing better in their studies. Recommendations were made, which include among others, that teachers and other stakeholder in the school should ensure friendly learning environment to enhance the emotional status of the student thereby improving on their academic achievement, appropriate teaching should always be adopted by teachers which ensure a greater participation of student for a wholesome teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Emotion, Achievement and Education

Introduction

Education enables people acquire knowledge and skills that help them solve their problems, and as well become responsible members of their society. Of course, the growth of any nation's economy, political and social values mostly depend on the level of quality and quantity of education the nation could offer on its citizens. In Nigeria, for instance, the importance of education as a major part of development agenda cannot be over emphasized. Furthermore, education is seen as an instrument for individual and social development. The future of any nation depends to a very large extent on the products of its educational system. This underscores the need for the right kind of education which will in turn produce people who are adequately prepared: for useful living

with the society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004:18).

For student to be adequately prepared for useful living within the society and for the secondary school students to advance into institution of higher learning there must be an acceptable level of academic achievement on the part of these students. For there to be an acceptable level of academic achievement (performance), there must be meaningful learning and for meaningful learning to take place the students must be fully engaged. In other words, if students are to live happy and productive lives in the complex world of the 21st century, students need to achieve a wide range of schooling outcomes. Achievement is likely to be enhanced if students are engaged and motivated to learn (Education

Review Office. n.d). The term student engagement refers to “a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest and investment and effort student expend in the work of learning” (Marks, 2000:153).

Students are engaged when they are involved in their work, persist despite challenges and obstacles, and take visible delight in accomplishing their work. There are three types of engagement: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. Anderson, Christenson, and Lehr (2004:65) stated that.

Engagement is much more than time students spend on task rather, students' engagement with school and learning includes their behavior (e.g. attendance and participation), cognition (e.g. value of education, relevance to future, self-regular), and psychological/interpersonal experiences (e.g. feeling that he or she belongs at school, relationship with teachers and peers).

Students' engagement with school represents a common term to describe student relationships with school. It is one of the terms and variable used to measure student and school relationships. Other related terms to student engagement in health and education literature include school attachment, school bonding, school climate, school involvement, school engagement, teacher support and school connectedness (Libbey, 2004). All these terms are used to describe students who are intellectually, socially, and emotionally engaged with school. Student engagement is used to discuss students' attitude toward school while student disengagement identifies withdrawing from school in any significant way (Willms, 2013). Student engagement has been identified by promoting completion. Lack of engagement with school is seen as a cause for early school leaving and reduces the likelihood of going on to further educational credentials (academic achievement) or acquires the basic skills needed to function in the society which increases

dramatically the risk of unemployment, poverty, poor health, and involvement in crime. In educational institution, success is measured by academic achievement or how well a student meets set standards. In other words, a student's success is generally judged by examinations performance while the best criterion of performance is the sum of the students' performance in all subjects taken. Academic achievement is commonly measured by examination or continuous assessment tests. But there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important. The pattern of grading students in the Senior School Certificate Examination is such that Distinction is represented by A1, B2 and B3. The Credit grade is represented by C4, C5 and C6; the ordinary Pass is represented by D7 and D8, while the Failure grade is represented by F9 (WAEC, 2006).

It's important to mention that the distinction and credit grades represent quality pass and are the only acceptable grades for admission into Nigerian universities. The minimum entry requirement is credits in five subjects including English Language (JAMB, 2008). Civic Education as a subject is therefore considered appropriate in this project because it is a core subject (compulsory) that every student in secondary school is expected to offer and that it is not seen as a difficult subject students have phobia for.

Based on the discourse above, certain facts can logically be arrived at. First, education centres on the individual and perhaps the greatest indication of the quality of education is the quality of output which is the individual. Academic achievement and success are indications of the quality of the output. Student engagement is a pre-requisite for students' academic achievement and success. For students to learn and be successful, they need to be engaged in their school.

Engagement is ensured if students appreciate and put forth effort in their schoolwork, engagement is heightened when students follow

rules and regularly attend all their classes. It is therefore crucial for student engagement surveys to be carried out and for information pertaining to academic achievement of students to be obtained so that their academic achievement can be compared against their engagement levels.

Engagement is seen as a disposition towards learning and functioning within the school that is an important outcome of schooling, given its influence on post school learning. It is believed that the more engaged a student is, the more effectively he learns. It is for this reason that researchers have shown great interest in the effect of student engagement on achievement and attendance to school.

Student engagement also refers to a student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in and be successful in the learning process (Bomia et al., 1997). The term is also increasingly used to describe meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment including students' participation in curriculum design, classroom management and school building climate (Fletcher, 2005). It is also defined as 'the students' psychological investment in an effort directed towards learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills or crafts that academic work is intended to promote (Newmann, 1992 p. 12). Student engagement with school can be seen as an important aspect of their current lives and an influence on their future. Skinner and Belmont (1993) defined engagement as the intensity and emotional quality of children's involvement in initiative and carrying out learning activities. Writing further, Skinner and Belmont, (1993 p.572) stated that:

Children who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally

positive emotions during ongoing actions including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest (p. 572).

Emotional Engagement

Emotional Engagement includes students' positive and negative reactions to school, teachers, peers and academics, influencing willingness to become involved in schoolwork. It is the enthusiasm for learning activities. Emotional engagement can be assessed by how happy, withdrawn, sad, bored, frustrated a student, feels. Emotional engagement also involves a sense of belonging and looking forward to school and getting on well with teacher; This has also been shown to positively influence academic achievement in school. It is true that research has shown that of the three aspects of engagement that the emotional aspect is the least connected with achievement. However, emotional engagement is important for good academic achievement. If a student is not emotionally involved in his work, it is unlikely he will perform well. If they do not like their teachers, or peers or have no interest in what they are taught, they become bored, passive, depressed, withdrawn and disaffected. This leads to poor academic achievement. As has been pointed out earlier the three aspects of engagement are interdependent and overlapping. The coming together of these three facets leads to students feeling good, thinking hard and participating in schoolwork leading to an overall engagement with school which in turn has been shown to be critical to students' academic achievement.

Academic achievement has been defined as the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment (Adeyemi, 2011). This scholastic standing could be explained in terms of grades obtained in a course or group of courses. It is also the level of attainment of a person in an examination, that is, how an individual can demonstrate his or her abilities in an examination (AI-Methen & Wilkinson, 1992). Achievement is a measure of output and the main outputs in education are expressed in terms of learning, that is, changes in knowledge, skills,

and attitudes of individuals because of the experience within the school system.

Civil education by way of definition is that form of education which is primarily designed and organized in content and function to produce good and useful people who know the happening and events within the country and globally. This means that civic education is a result of careful decision of the government to lead its citizens in different geographical and political communities to acquire knowledge, facts, skills, abilities, values, virtues, attitudes, and behavior that are acceptable in the society and useful in building a balance and great nation (Ukaegbu et al., 2010).

Theory of Engagement

The fundamental idea underlying engagement theory as propounded by Kearsley and Shneiderman (2000) is that students must be meaningfully engaged in learning activities through interaction with others and worthwhile tasks. Although this theory is not directly derived from other theoretical framework for learning, it has most in common with many such frameworks. For example, it is very consistent with constructivist approaches in its emphasis on meaningful learning. It can also be aligned with Situated Learning Theories because it emphasizes collaboration among peers and a community of learners. It is also similar in nature to Theories of Adult Learning in that it focuses on experiential and self-directed learning.

Statement of the Problem

Student emotional engagement is central to academic achievement and success. It is seen as an important aspect of school achievement and attendance and is essential for students to learn and be successful (NCSE, 2006). A lack of engagement leads to poor academic achievement and such acts of indiscipline as truancy, tardiness, bullying, cultism, risky sexual behavior, substance use and ultimately dropping out of school. The more engaged a student is, therefore, the better he performs at school. There is also a body of evidence showing

the relationship between behavioural engagement and achievement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004).

Students are more likely to be engaged if they have support from adults at school, challenging and interesting tasks, adequate structure, support for autonomy, opportunities to learn with peers, and opportunities for active learning (Lippman & Rivers, 2008). Unfortunately, however evidence show that levels of engagement are declining and that these engagement levels are particularly low among boys. Furthermore, there is generally very poor-quality output, which is evident in the rate of failure, especially in external examinations conducted by WAEC, NECO, NABTEB and JAMB. Statistics obtained from WAEC (2008) shows that only 188,442 candidates out of 1,369,142 representing 13.76% obtained credit in English Language, Mathematics, Economics and 2 other subjects to qualify for university admissions.

Students of Ebonyi State are not excluded from the poor academic achievement witnessed in the country. Commenting on the poor achievement of students in May/June 2007, the Chief examiners of WAEC reported that achievement was unimpressive in most subjects and attributed this to students' poor command of English Language and unpreparedness for the examination. This general poor achievement has led to students' lacking confidence in their abilities and resorting to all forms of examination malpractices. This is an indication that schools are not achieving their set goals as spelt out in the National Policy on Education. Furthermore, this poor achievement is more evident in some subjects than in others.

The problem of this study therefore is, to establish the relationship between student emotional engagement and their academic achievement in civic education in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to compare the

emotional engagement of students with their academic achievement in Civic Education in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to determine if: Students' emotional engagement relates to their academic achievement in Civic Education in Ebonyi State.

Scope of the Study

The study will be carried out in the public senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria. It concentrated on finding out the students' emotional engagement levels of both male and female students in relation to their academic achievement in Civic Education in the state. The students' emotional engagement levels will be correlated in line with their academic achievement based on school type and by gender.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study.

How does students' emotional engagement determine their academic achievement in Civic Education in Ebonyi State.

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of Significance

There is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in their emotional engagement and academic achievement in Civic Education in Ebonyi State.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a correlation design in which the level of students' emotional engagement as compared to their academic achievement in civic education in secondary schools in Ebonyi State. A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. A correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative. Correlational research is a non-

experimental research method which studies the relationship between two variables with the help of statistical analysis. Correlational research does not study the effects of extraneous variables on the variables under study.

Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Ebonyi State, southeast Nigeria. There are thirteen (13) local government area councils and three (3) education zones with a total of 198 government-owned secondary schools. Ebonyi state, being one of the educational developing states in the South-east Nigeria. The state is considered appropriate for this study on how students' emotional engagement correlates with the academic achievement in a selected subject area.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised the seventeen thousand one hundred and thirty-four (17,134) students (8,942 males and 8,192 females) of senior secondary school offering Civic Education in Ebonyi state secondary school system.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher used purposive and stratified sampling technique to select 4000 students for the study. Some 2000 students were selected from 20 single boys' schools and another 2000 from 20 single girls' schools. The schools sampled for the study cut across the entire 13 local government area councils of the state. In qualitative research, stratified sampling is a specific strategy for implementing the broader goal of purposive sampling. The most common reason for using a stratified approach to purposive sampling is to do systematic comparisons between the categories that define the basis for stratification. It can be described as samples within samples and suggests that purposeful samples be stratified or nested by selecting units or cases that vary according to the conditions specified. A stratified purposive sample captures major variations, although these may also emerge in the analysis.

Instrument for Data Collection

The researcher used 15 item-structured questionnaires for the study. The questionnaire is titled "Students Emotional Engagement Questionnaire (SEEQ)". The researcher also used 10 "Civic Education Achievement Test (CEAT)" for the study.

Validation of the Instrument

The Students Emotional Engagement Questionnaire (SEEQ) was psychologically scaled four-point Likert type which was face validated by 5 experts likewise the CEAT. These experts were chosen from the faculty of education, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and department of Educational Foundations, Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo.

Reliability of the Instrument

The SEEQ instrument was administered to 30 students from a selected secondary school in Enugu who were not part of the study. The researcher used factor analysis to determine the reliability of the instrument. This was done using the services of an expert in statistical analysis.

Method of Data Collection

Five research assistants were deployed in the data collection process for the study. Four of the five research assistants covered two local government council areas each, while one covered three. The questionnaires were distributed to selected students in the various schools chosen for the study and directed on how to fill them. After filling the questionnaires, the research assistants collected them and forwarded the researcher for processing.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using aggregate scores and arithmetic mean, while the hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested with z- test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The decision rule was that any item that has a mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted while a mean score below 2.50 is not acceptable but rejected.

Results

Research question

Mean responses of students on their emotional engagement which determine their academic achievement in Civic Education in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

S/N	Responses	Male Students (N = 4000)				Female Students (N= 4000)			
		ΣFX	\bar{X}	S.D	Decision	ΣFX	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1	Classes in my school are not boring	13,600	3.4	1.06	Accepted	14,000	3.5	1.08	Accepted
2	Enjoy the academic work I do in class	13,200	3.3	0.97	Accepted	14,400	3.6	1.23	Accepted
3	Have many friends in the school	12,800	3.2	1.01	Accepted	12,400	3.1	1.16	Accepted
4	I do feel safe and secure in my school	11,200	2.8	0.87	Accepted	13,200	3.3	0.99	Accepted
5	Feel close and accepted to people in my school	11,600	2.9	1.11	Accepted	13,200	3.3	1.02	Accepted
6	It is always fun to be in my school	11,600	2.9	1.07	Accepted	12,000	3.0	1.04	Accepted
7.	My opinions are respected in my school	12,000	3.0	1.17	Accepted	12,400	3.1	1.09	Accepted
8.	Teachers in my school do treat students fairly	13,200	3.3	1.06	Accepted	12,000	3.0	1.14	Accepted
9.	Teacher care about how I am doing in my academics	12,800	3.2	1.01	Accepted	13,200	3.3	1.06	Accepted
10	Working in school gives me excitement	11,200	2.8	1.20	Accepted	11,600	2.9	1.22	Accepted
11	I go to my teachers to discuss my personal problem	10,800	2.7	1.22	Accepted	10,400	2.6	1.18	Accepted
12	I consider it important to attend school everyday	10,400	2.6	1.09	Accepted	11,600	2.9	1.00	Accepted
13	Sometimes feel like staying away from school	11,200	2.8	1.12	Accepted	12,000	3.0	1.20	Accepted
14	Learn a lot from my classes	10,400	2.6	1.14	Accepted	10,800	2.7	1.23	Accepted
15	I don't like skipping classes during school hours	11,200	2.8	1,12	Accepted	12,000	3.0	1.20	Accepted
	Cluster		2.94	1.07			3.02	1.11	

Table 1: Table 1 is used to answer the research question which sought to find out the responses of senior secondary school students in Ebonyi state, southeast Nigeria on their emotional engagement as a correlate to their performances in Civic Education studies. The results on the table show that the items were all accepted as valid points. This is because all the items had mean values above 2.50 for both the male and female respondents. The overall mean value for both male and female students are 2.88 and 3.02 respectively, and each is above 2.50, indicating that the listed items were all accepted.

Testing of Hypotheses

Ho: There is no significant relationship in the mean scores of male and female students in their emotional engagement and academic achievement in Civic Education in Ebonyi State.

Table 2: Z-test the relationship in the mean responses of male and female students in their emotional engagement and academic achievement in Civic Education in Ebonyi State.

Group	N	?	SD	DF	P	z-cal	z-tab	Remarks
Male Students	4000	2.94	1.05	7999	P>0.05	0.79	1.93	Accept Ho
Female Students	4000	3.02	1.12					

The Z-test hypotheses table indicates mean score of 2.94 for male students and 3.02 for female students with the standard deviation of 1.07 and 1.11. With a Z calculated value of 0.79 and tabulated value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance, it therefore indicates that the null hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female students in their emotional engagement and academic achievement in Civic Education in Ebonyi State.

Discussion of Results

Based on the analysis of the data collected, the following findings were obtained and summarized as the emotional engagements which determine their academic achievement in Civic Education in senior secondary schools in Ebonyi State:

- (i) Classes in my school are not boring
- (ii) Enjoy the academic work I do in class
- (iii) Have many friends in the school
- (iv) I do feel safe and secure in my school
- (v) Feel close and accepted to people in my school
- (vi) It is always fun to be in my school
- (vii) My opinions are respected in my school
- (viii) Teachers in my school do treat students

- fairly
- (ix) Teacher care about how I am doing in my academics
 - (x) Working in school gives me excitement
 - (xi) I go to my teachers to discuss my personal problem
 - (xii) I consider it important to attend school everyday
 - (xiii) Staying away from school is the least thing I would consider
 - (xiv) Learn a lot from my classes
 - (xv) I don't like skipping classes during school hours

This study agrees with Wara, Aloka and Odongo (2018) in their research work on the relationship between emotional engagement and academic achievement among Kenyan secondary school students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between emotional engagement and academic achievement among secondary school students of Manga Sub County, Nyamira County, Kenya. The study was hinged on the Self Determination theoretical perspective. The concurrent triangulation design of the mixed methods approach was employed. Qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically. The study revealed that there was a statistically significant moderate

positive correlation($r=.354$, $N=312$, $p<.05$) between emotional engagement and academic achievement among the students, with an increase in emotional engagement occasioning an improvement in academic achievement. The study recommended that teacher counselors should adopt appropriate therapy techniques geared towards the enhancement of emotional engagement of all students in the schools of their jurisdiction to boost their chances of doing better in their studies.

In a related development, Tamban and Bandy, studied students' engagement and their performances in mathematics 6. The study was aimed at determining the relationship between students' engagement (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement) and their performance in Mathematics of grade 6 pupils of Malaban Elementary School. Descriptive correlational method research design was employed in this study. In this study, the instruments used are survey questionnaire of Bivariate Analysis and Chi-square. The results show that the students gave a unifying perception on their level of behavioral engagement (2.90-engage), emotional engagement (2.74-engage), cognitive engagement (2.98-engage) in Mathematics. The mean performance of students in Mathematics was satisfactory with an average of 80.42 median of 80 mode of 76 and standard deviation of 3.77. The researchers concluded that there is significant evidence to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was a moderate, positive relationship between academic performance and behavioral engagement. For the emotional and academic performance there was significant evidence to accept the null hypothesis and conclude that there was no relationship between academic performance and emotional engagement, while there was a moderate, positive relationship between cognitive engagement and academic performance. The researchers recommended to initiate activities that can help boost the students' engagement in Mathematics for it was shown some significant relationship to their mathematics performance.

Recommendations

- (i) In this study, it is being recommended that teacher counselors should adopt appropriate therapy techniques geared towards the enhancement of emotional engagement of all students in the schools of their jurisdiction to boost their chances of doing better in their studies.
- (ii) Both the teachers and other stakeholders in the school should ensure friendly learning environment to enhance the emotional status of the student thereby improving on their academic achievement.
- (iii) Appropriate teaching should always be adopted by teachers which ensure a greater participation of student for a wholesome teaching and learning process.

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