

SELF-ESTEEM, PEER INFLUENCE AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE

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Abstract

Adjustment to school experiences, challenges and demands is a phenomenon that is inevitable in human life. The stress, pain and anxiety caused by poor academic adjustment from one stage of life to the other cannot be over-emphasized, especially, among high ability learners who are expected to perform excellently in school. This study, therefore, examined self-esteem and peer influence as predictors of academic adjustment among high ability learners in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of correlate type. The purposive sampling technique was used to select one hundred participants from two senior secondary schools in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State. The participants were screened using Slosson Intelligence Test and School Academic Record. Three research instruments used were: self-esteem scale, peer influence scale and Academic Adjustment Scale. Three research questions were raised and answered. Data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression at 0.05 level of significance. There was relationship between independent variables (self-esteem and peer influence) on dependent variable (Academic adjustment) of high ability learners ($r=0.547$, $p<0.05$). Self-esteem and peer influence determine the academic adjustment of high ability learners. There was composite contribution of self-esteem and peer influence on academic adjustment of high ability learners ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.05$). There was relative contribution of self-esteem and peer influence on academic adjustment of high ability learners ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.05$). Self-esteem and peer influence determined academic adjustment of high ability learners. Therefore, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders should be enlightened on the nature and needs of high ability learners and how they can help to meet with the needs. It is also to assist such individuals in the acquisition of vital knowledge and skills required for their social and emotional well-being.

Keywords: Self-esteem, Peer influence, Academic adjustment, High ability learners.

Introduction

Adjustment to school experiences, challenges and demands is a phenomenon that is inevitable in human life span. The stress, pain and anxiety caused by poor academic adjustment from one stage of life to the other cannot be over- emphasized.

Hence, effective learning and acquiring of knowledge require adjustment. Nwoke (2010) contends that adjustment is an innate psychological disposition to cope with difficulties confronting one in any given situation or environment and the innate

strength to accommodate any possible outcome or changes. Thus, poor adjustment could result in severe maladjustment among students, making them to manifest behaviours such as truancy, stealing, social and poor academic performance; low self-esteem, negative attitude to school dropout, disobedience and involvement in other anti-social behaviours.

During the last 50 years, two conflicting views prevailed. The first is that high ability learners are generally better adjusted than low ability peers; that high ability protects children from maladjustment. This view hypothesized that the high ability learners are capable of great understanding of self and others due to their cognitive capacities and therefore, cope better with stress, conflict and development dysynchrony than their peers. Studies supporting this view report that high ability children demonstrate better adjustment than their average peers when measured on a variety of factors (Neihart, 2001). The second view is that high ability learners are more at risk for adjustment problems than their low ability peers, that high ability increases a child's vulnerability to adjustment difficulties. Supporters of this view believe that high ability learners are at greater risk for emotional and social problems, particularly, during adolescence and adulthood. Their hypothesis is that the high ability learners are more sensitive to interpersonal conflicts. They experience greater degrees of alienation and stress than their peers as a result of their cognitive capacities. People with high achievement motivation are high academic achievers and, they are always set for a high level of aspirations and adjust well to school challenges. Adjusting into middle school is a process that has been very tasking and in most cases, exposes students to adjust to the

demands of school at times turn into overt extreme behaviour where students may exhibit lower performance in grades and poorer social skills (Turner, 2007).

High ability learners' interest in schooling serves as indices of social adjustment that could consistently predict students' academic adjustment across different types of outcomes (for example, self-esteem, school liking, parents' and teachers' rating of adjustment). Adjustment is also the psychological process through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It connotes conformity; it deals with the way an individual adapts to his environment and demand of life; how he relates to others (interpersonal) and how he deals with his responsibilities and inner feelings. Academic adjustments are modifications of how students participate in classes and activities. These modifications allow students to meet standards, but do not change them. Academic

For the purpose of this study, self-esteem and peer-influence are the key factors the researcher is interested in as it relates to the academic adjustment of learners with high ability. Self-esteem plays a key role on academic adjustment of high ability learners, as it is the perception an individual holds about the type of person he or she thinks he or she is, an overall evaluation of an individual's perception of him or herself, including feelings of general happiness and satisfaction. These perceptions are at the heart of self-esteem and they affect how high ability learners feel about and value themselves. It is a component located in the sphere of an individual's self image, situated in both psychological and sociological paradigms, particularly, since it has been shown to affect one's psyche and social well-being. One thing that has been

established is that self-esteem is not static and fixed, as beliefs about oneself can change throughout one's life as a result of circumstance and experience. Feldman (2001) noted that the concept was developed through the social interactions with individual's environment while Lane and Kyprianou (2004) gave credence to this, asserting that it is culturally as well as socially determined. For instance, value and norms that are defined in one culture may differ in other cultures.

A student's level of self-esteem is believed to affect his or her degree of confidence (Phan, 2005) in the achievement of whatever task he or she sets out to achieve. Self-esteem could either be high or low. A student with high self-esteem will display a normal or constant disposition often because of the perception that he can achieve whatever tasks that lies ahead of him or her. On the other hand, a student with a low self-esteem will have a negative evaluation of him or herself in the achievement of the task before him or her. He or she tends to perpetuate the circle of low self-esteem, due to the perception of self negatively (Feldman 2001), thus creating a negative expectation about his or her ability. He went further to say that a student with low self-esteem can overcome this by learning of facing his or her fears, and by learning from his or her previous experience, especially, where he or she had performed better. According to Yusefi and Moradi (2013), self-esteem is literally defined by how much value people place on themselves. It is the evaluative component of self-knowledge. High self-esteem refers to a highly favourable global evaluation of the self. Low self-esteem refers to an unfavourable definition of the self. Thus, high self-esteem may refer to an accurate, justified, balanced appreciation of one's

worth as a person and one's successes and competencies.

One way of helping students achieve academic success is to have positive self-esteem. Self-esteem seems to affect a child's ability to learn and behave in class. Self-esteem also seems to affect motivation. Unfortunately, there is evidence that suggests students with exceptional needs have a greater risk of developing low self-esteem (Lyons, 2012). It is important to understand how self-esteem affects learning and behaviour for students, especially, those with exceptionalities. It is also important to find a way, or ways, of raising self-esteem to inspire learning. Students with exceptionalities often demonstrate excellently to a greater degree than those students without exceptionalities (Heward, 2005). Learning can also be affected by a student's self-esteem. Students with higher self-esteem are more inclined to taking active part in their education than students with low self-esteem, although other factors also contribute to lower class participation (Phillips, Smith, and Modaff, 2004). Students who participate in class have higher success rates than those who do not (Turner and Patrick, 2004). Students with a positive view of themselves, along with other factors, have greater motivation to participate more in class than those who have a negative view of themselves. Self-esteem is not a process that comes to maturity and stays in place. It is a process that is ever-changing unlike a physical trait, such as eye colour. Because self-esteem is not a fixed characteristic, it can be constantly in flux. Parents, teachers, and success can help students develop high self-esteem. The flip side is that parents, teachers, and failures can make students develop low self-esteem. Self-esteem, not only plays a role in behaviour and learning; it can also play a role in motivation for

success. According to Marzano (2003), motivation of any type is affected by emotions which are not easily controlled, yet very powerful.

The second independent variable or factor considered in this study is peer influence on the academic adjustment of students with high ability. The members of peer group are likely to influence the people who have similar interest, age background, social status, belief and behaviour. A peer group contains hierarchies and distinct patterns of behaviour. Eighteen years old are not in peer group with fourteen years old even though they may be in school together, just as teachers do not share students as a peer group. During adolescence, peer groups tend to face more time with their peers and have less adult supervision. Adolescents' communication shifts during this time as well. They prefer to talk about school and their careers with their parents and they enjoy talking about sex and other interpersonal relationship with their peers. Children too join peer groups which accept them even if the groups are involved in negative activities; children are less likely to accept those who are different from them. Peer groups make use of different ways or methods to influence people to change his or her attitudes, values in order to conform with groups' norms. While most educators believe that peer pressure has an influence on children's academic adjustment, peer groups are important socialisation agent.

Pfeiffer and Stocking (2000) suggested that some high ability learners become socially or emotionally maladjusted because of difficulties associated/encountered in identifying a peer group with similar abilities, disparity between the instructional environment and the capabilities of the high ability learner or unrealistic expectations on the part of

parents or teachers. This can lead to defiant behaviours, depression or hopelessness, academic under achievement or substance abuse. Some high ability learners may be target of peer bullying. Peterson and Ray (2006) conducted a national survey of 432 eighth-grade students identified as high ability, to determine the prevalence rates of bullying among high ability learners. The prevalence of being bullied at some time during kindergarten through the eighth grade was 67%. Name-calling was the most prevalent type of bullying, followed by teasing about appearance, intelligence and grade. Students reported that the greatest emotional impact of bullying occurred in the fifth grade, although emotional distress related to being bullied persisted between the fifth and eighth grades.

Many peer groups can be a positive influence on their friends as well. It is thought that intelligent learners help their peers to boost their grades. Likewise, girls with good friends who are considered intelligent tend to do better in school. Another group of high ability learners exhibit peer difficulties because of unusually large discrepancies between social and cognitive development. In fact, they may be less mature than age peers in some respects, yet far ahead intellectually. In addition, many exhibit inappropriate behaviours that elicit ridicules and rejection from peers. According to Castrogiavanni (2002), a peer group is a small group of similarly age, fairly close friends, sharing the same activities. Adolescent spend twice as much time with their peers than with parents or other adults. It is important to study the influence that peer groups place on others, especially, on their academic adjustment. Peer influence is when people's age mates encourage or urge them to do something or keep from doing something else, no matter if you personally

want to do it or not (Ryan, 2000). Participating in peer group activities is a primary stage of development and adolescents' identities are often closely associated with that of their peers (Scantor, 2000).

High ability students may experience difficulties in constructing their identities; this may lead to low self-esteem. Difficulty with identity development may result from any of the following: Lack of understanding of higher abilities and their implications, feeling different from one's same-age peers, behaviour that is inconsistent with gender role expectations (e.g., sensitivity in gifted boys, assertiveness in gifted girls), being identified as learning disabled as well as having high abilities and cultural or linguistic differences. High ability children are frequently accustomed to doing well and may need guidance in developing healthy attitudes toward competition with others because of their advanced vocabulary, increased intensity and different interests. They, however, may experience difficulty in interacting socially with the same age peers, in that they may feel stressed from perceived expectations and demands from others.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated and tested to guide the study:

- 1) What is the relationship between independent variables (self-esteem and peer influence) on dependent variable (academic adjustment) of high ability learners?
- 2) What is the composite contribution of independent variables on dependent variable of high ability learners?
- 3) What is the relative contribution of independent variables on

dependent variable of high ability learners?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design of the correlation type was used for this study because the researcher is not interested in the manipulation of any variable in the study. The population for this study comprised all high ability students in five secondary schools in Ibadan Metropolis of Oyo State. The schools are: Ajibode Grammar School, Ajibode, Ibadan, Francis "M" College, Bodija, Ibadan, City of Faith Group of Schools, Bodija, Ibadan, Immanuel College High School II, Orita, University of Ibadan, Orogun Grammar School, Orogun, Ibadan.

The sample comprised of one hundred (100) high ability learners in selected senior secondary schools. Senior Secondary Two (SS II) students were randomly selected from five secondary schools in Ibadan metropolis of Oyo state. Purposive sampling technique was adopted in selecting one hundred high ability learners as participants for this study. In doing this, the researcher considered teachers' recommendations on individual student's merits supported with verifiable evidence such as performance in formative and summative tests and Slossons' intelligence test.

The instruments used for this study include: Slosson's Intelligence test, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Peer Influence Scale (PS) constructed by Adeyemo and Torubeli (2008), Academic adjustment Scale (AAS) developed by Menroe (2002).

Data collected from this study was analysed, using Multiple Regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlations to denote coefficient of prediction between independent and dependent variables in the study.

Results

Three research questions were answered using correlation and multiple regression analysis. The summary of the findings are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the pattern of relationships that exist among peer influence and self esteem on academic adjustment of high ability learners?

Table 1: Summary of Correlation Matrix showing the Relationship between the Independent and Dependent variables among Respondents.

	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3
Peer influence	24.33	8.19	1.000		
Self-esteem	31.59	6.84	0.764**	1.000	
Academic adjustment	37.98	9.13	0.547**	0.625**	1.000

N.B: ** Significant at $p < 0.01$

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

The results from the table above show that academic adjustment of high ability learners had significant correlation with self-esteem ($r = 0.547$, $p < 0.05$) and peer influence ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.05$) of the respondents.

The table above shows that the prediction of all the two independent variables to the dependent variable. That is, academic adjustment of high ability learners correlated positively with the two predictor variables. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.547 and a multiple r square of 0.625. This means that 37% of the variance in the academic adjustment of high ability learners is accounted for by all the two predictor

variables, when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution was tested at $p < 0.05$ using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom ($df = 2/97$). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for regression yielded an F-ratio of 32.602 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Question 2: What is the joint contribution of peer influence and self-esteem on academic adjustment of high ability learners?

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis of the combined Prediction of Academic Adjustment among Participants by the Two Independent variables

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.634	0.402	0.390	8.54606

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remark
Regression	4762.176	2	2381.088	32.602	0.000	Sig
Residual	7084.414	97	73.035			
Total	11846.590	99				

The table above shows that the prediction of all the two independent variables to the dependent variable. That is, academic adjustment of high ability learners correlated positively with the two predictor variables. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.634 and a multiple r square of 0.402. This means that 40.2% of the variance in the academic adjustment of high ability learners is accounted for by all the two predictor variables, when taken together. The

significance of the composite contribution was tested at $p < 0.05$ using the F-ratio at the degree of freedom ($df = 2/97$). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for regression yielded an F-ratio of 32.602 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of peer influence and self-esteem on academic adjustment of high ability learners?

Relative contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable (Test of significance of the Regression coefficients).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	13.224	2.914		4.539	0.000
Self-esteem	0.522	0.128	0.498	4.089	0.000
Peer influence	0.166	0.121	0.167	1.368	0.174

The table reveals the relative contribution of the two independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The partial correlation coefficients of self-esteem and peer influence have positive relationship with the academic adjustment of high ability learners. The positive value of the effects of self-esteem and peer influence is actually determined by positive reinforcement of these two variables. Using the standardised regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the explanation of dependent variable, self-esteem ($\beta = 0.522$, $t = 4.089$, $p < 0.05$) is more potent contributor to the prediction and finally followed by peer influence ($\beta = 0.166$, $t = 1.368$, $p > 0.05$) in that order.

Discussion

The first research question states the relationship between self-esteem and peer influence on academic adjustment of high ability learners. The result of the study shows significant correlation between academic adjustment on self-esteem and peer influence of the respondents. The result clearly indicates the significant correlation between the variables. From this result, academic adjustment of high ability learners had significant correlation with self-esteem and peer influence. This corroborates the findings of a study by Kirk (2000) which discovered that self-esteem determines high ability learners' academic adjustment and success. According to the study outcome, self-esteem enhances academic adjustment and earned continued empirical attention.

The findings of this study also corroborate another study by Richardson (2012) which stressed the efficiency of self-esteem with very significant effects in the reduction of stress, distraction, anxiety and undesirable school behaviour. The study affirms the influence of peer groups in

enhancing academic adjustment among high ability learners. The participants in the study reported the effectiveness of peer groups on academic adjustment which has a substantial influence on various aspects of school and academic achievement. In line with this study, Ullman and Tatar (2001) stressed that peer influence is suitable and effective for enhancing interpersonal relationship of academic adjustment. The study also agrees with the outcome of a study by Phan (2011) that established peer influence as effective variable which is capable of managing various maladjustment behaviours including anxiety or stress among high ability learners.

The second research question states "What is the joint contribution of peer influence and self-esteem on academic adjustment of high ability learners? The result of the findings reveal that the prediction of all the two independent variables to dependent variable, that is, academic adjustment of high ability learners, correlated positively with the two predictor variables. This agrees with the studies by Turner (2007), who affirmed that self-esteem has been found to predict academic adjustment. This is very much in line with the study by Chen (1998) which has shown that 90% of success in the ability of learners depends on self-esteem. The reason has to do with the fact that positive relationship exists between self-esteem among high ability learners and academic adjustment of high ability learners. This has a positive influence on their personal adjustment to academic and negative relationship to psychological distress.

The finding in this study is in line with the work of Chemers, Martin, Hu, Litze (2001) who discovered that the effect of academic self-esteem and optimism on students' academic performance, stress, health and commitment to remain in school.

The result reveals that academic self-esteem is strongly related to performance and adjustment both directly on academic performance and indirectly through expectations and coping perceptions on classroom performance, stress, health and overall satisfaction and commitment to school work.

Another research question states the relative contributions of independent variables on dependent variables of high ability learners. The result indicated that the partial correlation coefficients of self-esteem and peer influence have positive relationship with the academic adjustment of high ability learners. The positive value of the effects of self-esteem and peer influence is actually determined by positive reinforcements of the two variables. This agrees with the studies by Phinney and Haas (2003), which stressed that self-esteem, affects adjustment through their influence on the students' goals setting, persistence and emotional adaptation. The outcome of the research work by Williams (2010) also established that a strong sense of self-esteem helps individuals to set personal goals and deals with challenges of reaching these goals. Shatter (2008) stressed that the quality of a child's friendship is important for his or her adjustment and the developmental outcomes. Having supportive friendships will increase their involvement with school activities.

Conclusion

In this study, the researcher examined the two independent variables (self-esteem and peer influence) on one dependent variable (academic adjustment) of high ability learners. In the process of researching these variables, the researcher realised that the independent variables have influence on the dependent variable.

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that peer influence and self-

esteem are correlated with high ability learners and have significant influence on high ability learners' academic adjustment in senior secondary schools within Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state. These results are vital information for all stakeholders in educational administration and parents of high ability learners to support their wards academically by providing the right and favourable environment to enhance better academic performance through appropriate academic adjustment.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researcher thus recommends the following:

There is a need for curriculum enrichment for high ability learners. This would make potential teachers to be aware of the needs of high ability learners and it will also be of help to high ability learners in order to realise their full academic potential.

The study points to the importance of understanding adjustment problems among high ability learners in relation to specific challenges that they face and appropriate interventions (social, emotional and academic) supports that could be used to improve student outcomes.

General and special education teachers should be sensitised and updated on how to improve students' self-esteem. Conferences, seminars, workshops should be regularly organised for training of regular teachers, special educators, school management officials, and others involved in the education of high ability learners so they can better assist such individuals in acquisition of vital knowledge and skills necessary for their social and emotional well-being.

Parents, siblings, peers and others should be enlightened on the influence of peer groups on the nature and needs of high ability learners and how they can help to meet their needs.

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