

Evaluation of Psychosocial Variables Prevalence on Academic Performance of Pupils in Literacy Skills in Public Primary Schools, Lagos State

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Abstract

The study investigated psycho-social variables prevalence on academic performance of pupils in literacy skills especially in public primary schools in Lagos State. Two objectives were formulated to guide the focus of this study as survey research design of correlation approach was employed. This design type seeks to determine the relationship and association between dependent and independent variable. Population comprise all Pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State while target population was Basic 5 pupils in public primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area of the State. A sample of 300 pupils was selected through multi-stage sampling procedure in selection of sample. Two instruments Teacher Made Achievement Test on Literacy Skills (TMATLS) and self-designed Evaluation of Psycho-Social Variables on Academic Performance of Pupils in Literacy Skills Questionnaire (EP-SVAPPLSQ) was used in data collection. The instruments were validated by two experts in the Department of Early Childhood Care Education and Primary Education, in Lagos State University of Education, Lagos State. Suggestions, comments and observations were effected to ensure content validity as reliability of the instruments determined using Cronbach Alpha, reliability form with index value of 0.807 and 0.890 which shows internal consistency achieved. Data generated was analysed through correlation analysis and tested at 0.05 significant level. The study revealed that test anxiety and pupil-teacher interaction are predictors of academic performance. It concluded that in order to improve on pupils' academic performance their anxiety level should be reduced by exposing them to less difficult items.

Keywords: Evaluation, Psycho-Social Variables, Performance, Literacy Skills, Pupils

Introduction

Evaluation is a term used to justify conveyance of value or determination of the worth of a thing or programme. Evaluation is very important because it helps in the execution of sensitive decisions when faced with alternatives choices to make. Nigeria educational system is confronted with diverse degree of challenges which ranges from psycho-social challenges like family problems, socialization, underachievement and poor academic performance, test anxiety, self- efficacy, poor communication network, examination malpractice, low self-esteem, peer group pressure, emotional instability, poor motivation, poor socio-economic background of parents, poor level of pupil-teacher interaction, poor nutrition among others. At the primary school level, these psycho-social variables if not well managed have the likelihood of affecting pupils' performance negatively (Mafikuyomi, Udofia & Busari, 2023).

The act of learning to read and write is a basic skill that unfortunately not all children in the world learn sufficiently. In a time when societal change puts increasing demands on individuals' competence in using written language it is important that schools are able to teach such skills to all children. In many countries major problems include too little time spent in school and lack of teachers. But even in countries where children go to school many years and have teachers, there are problems. The "information society" in practice means a huge rise in informational activities due to the internet and other ICT (Information and Communication Technology) related activities. More people in the world need enhanced literacy skills to be able to find, select, interpret, analyze, and produce information. According to Mullis, Martin, Foy and Drucker (2012), the recommended international benchmark on literacy skills includes four levels, low (locate and retrieve information),

intermediate (make straightforward references), high (make inferences and interpretations with text-based support), and advanced (integrate ideas and information across texts to provide reasons and explanations). The information society requires that more people acquire skills towards the high end of this scale. In Mullis, *et. al.*, (2012) benchmark, even the highest performing countries only barely achieve a score of 20% in the "advanced" category (Mullis *et. al.*, 2012) and just over 60% in the "high" category. So, every country improvement in literacy skills is important.

Psycho-social variable are relative depending on the condition and prevalent study undertaken. According to Meera (2015) Psycho-social variables are conditions that comprises of a range of factors relating to an individuals' psychological state and social environment which potentially have either positive or negative consequences for health and behavioural outcomes. Psycho-social variables consist of psychological risk factors, social and psychological resources. Psycho-social variables can be categorised into two groups of psychological tributes like hostility, depression and hopelessness which exists at the individual level and are likely to be the process of socialization; as the second category is more structural in nature and work conditioned.

On the paradigm of teaching and learning, Ali, Jusoff, Ali, Mokhtar and Salamat (2009) noted that psycho-social variable include self-esteem, emotional state of mind, pupil-teacher interaction level, attitude, disposition, behaviour, self-discipline, test anxiety and self-efficacy (Ali, *et. al.*, 2009). Interaction between teacher and pupil or pupil-pupil plays an important role in determination of pupils' academic performance. The degree of interaction plays a very significant role in the measurement of productivity and performance. Interaction of teacher's with pupils in primary schools goes a long way to enhance good performance due to exchange of ideas, influence of thought and x-ray of opinions with others. Following interaction process, teachers listening skills, communication and professionalism becomes enhanced significantly in an effort to know the world of pupils, which can be envisaged in pupils' academic performance. A study conducted by Fan (2012), established that there exists a significant and positive relationship between teacher-pupils interaction and academic performance. Fan (2012) maintained that pupils who establish mutual bond with their teachers or peers are always bound to have an improved performance than their counterparts who keep to themselves.

Test anxiety another psycho-social variable plays a multi-dimensional role in determination of academic performance of pupils. Test anxiety is a psychological feeling that individuals go through especially when not prepared for such an exposure. It happens when a person feels powerless when exposed to an event or planned activity. Anxiety is sparked in pupils when they think that the evaluating situation, like an examination, is about their level of intelligence, drive, and social abilities. This weakness may sometimes arise due to ill preparation, lack of pre-knowledge on an event, fear of academic failure, difficulty of test items among others. However test anxiety, is the term used to describe the excessive levels of distress that learners experience when it negatively impacts their examination performance (Kendra, 2020). According to Kitsantas, *et. al.*, (2008) test anxiety is characterized by trembling, stress and worrying over potential failure or poor performance during an examination or test. There are many factors that can contribute to learners developing test anxiety, prominent includes phobia of failure, procrastination, past experiences and beliefs, students' poor study habits, inadequate subject knowledge, persistently poor performance and lack of confidence in one's abilities (Kendra, 2020). In a study conducted by Chapell, *et. al.*, in Myrna and Aida (2015). They claimed that anxiety in test is a significant contributor to poor academic performance. They noted that naturally when learners are exposed to examination or test of any kind, they may feel worried, anxious, apprehensive, or uneasy. But the ability of the teacher to calm the nerves of the tensed pupils plays a very significant role in their outcome. In a relative study, Myrna and Aida (2015) learners who are less nervous when taking a test are better able to concentrate on the activities that are necessary for them, whereas learners who are more worried when taking a test tend to pay more attention to their inner selves and worry they experience.

Early age learning is crucial as previous studies of Akin (2010) and Makinde (2020) shows that children who lag behind in early years' reading and writing development encounter considerable difficulties in following education later on in life as (text formation) sentence construction get longer and more complicated thereafter. Given this situation and circumstances, there is a need for identification of other psycho-social variables relationship to academic performance of pupils with respect to literacy development. Drawing on a critical social practice view on possible contributors to performance of pupils, this work is out to investigate notable psychosocial variables as a determinant of academic performance of pupils in literacy skills development especially in public primary schools in Lagos State Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past one decade about 44.1% of public primary schools in Lagos State have witnessed a steady decline in the academic performance of pupils in most standardized literacy examinations (External examiner report, 2023). The prevalent factors often associated with this poor academic performance includes test anxiety, poor teaching methodology, poor development of literacy skills, low self-esteem, lack of interest and motivation, poor interaction relationship between pupil-teacher, unstable government policies, non-use of instructional materials among others. Previous studies by Akim (2010) and Makinde (2020) revealed that prevalent factors of poor development of literacy skills, test anxiety and motivation contributed significantly to poor academic performance. However, failure to identify test anxiety and lack of pupil-teacher interaction in classroom may likely lead to loss of interest by pupils, demotivation, development of phobia for word formation among others which would further compound the worsened poor academic performance of pupils in literacy skill. Hence this research seeks to establish the extent of significant relationship that exists between test anxiety (psychological variable) and pupil-teacher interaction (social variable) to academic performance in literacy skills.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of Psycho-social variables on academic performance of pupils in literacy skills especially in public primary schools in Lagos. The specific objectives include:

- identify how psychological variable (test anxiety) academic performance of pupils in public primary schools
- state how social variable (pupils to teachers interaction) relates with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools.

Research Hypotheses

H₁: Test anxiety does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in literacy skills development in public primary schools

H₂: Pupils-Teachers interaction does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools

Methodology

Survey research design of correlation approach was used for the study. This design type seeks to determine the nature of relationship that exists between the independent variable (psycho-social variables) and the dependent variable (academic performance in literacy skills) of pupils in public primary school. Population was all Pupils in public primary schools in Lagos State while target population was mainly Basic 5 pupils in public primary schools in Badagry Local Government Area of the State. A sample of 300 pupils was used for this study as multi-stage sampling process was adopted in the selection of sample for this study. First, Badagry Local Government area of Lagos State was identified for the study. The choice of this local government lies on the premise that it is one of the oldest existing local government in the state and also has all the properties (high and low rates of pupils) expected of pupils to exhibit in a given classroom situation. Moreso, it is this same local government where primary school was first established in Nigeria. Secondly, the researcher then introduced stratified approach to stratify the local government into six sections where random sampling technique was also introduced to select six public primary schools from each of the stratified 6 Zones of the local government. Through simple random sampling method fifty pupils were selected from each of the selected schools to account for a total of 300 pupils respectively. Two instruments Teacher Made Achievement Test on Literacy Skills (TMATLS) and a self-designed Questionnaire on Evaluation of Psycho-social Variables on Academic Performance of Pupils in Literacy Skills was used for data collection (QEPVAPPLS). The achievement test was developed with the aid of table of specification as 20 multiple choice objective items were developed using 4-options format. Items in the Questionnaire contained 16-items with pupils expected to respond using 4-likert format of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The instruments were scrutinized and validated by experts in the Department of Early Childhood Care Education and Primary Education, in Lagos State University of Education, Epe, Lagos State. Reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach Alpha a reliability form. An index value of 0.807 and 0.890 was derived on 20 pupils in one of the public primary

schools in Alimosho LGA. Internal consistency was achieved as data generated was analysed through the use of Pearson product moment correlation analysis and tested at significant level of 0.05 respectively.

Results

H₁: Test anxiety does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in literacy skills development in public primary schools

Table 1
Correlation between Test anxiety and Academic Performance in Literacy Skills

Variables	N	R	Sig.(2 -tailed)	Decision
Test anxiety	330	.893	.018	Significant
Academic Performance				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 1 reveals that with r-value of 0.893, it shows that there exists a positively strong relationship between the independent variable (test anxiety) and the dependent variable (Academic performance in literacy skills). At r-value of .893 and *p*-value of 0.018, *p*-value is greater than the alpha level hence the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative which states that test anxiety does have a significant relationship with academic performance of pupils is retained.

H₂: Pupils-Teachers interaction does not have any significant relationship with academic performance of pupils in public primary schools

Table 2
Correlation between Pupils-Teacher interaction and Academic Performance in Literacy Skills

Variables	N	R	Sig.(2 -tailed)	Decision
Pupil -Teacher Interaction	330	.871	.021	Significant
Academic Performance				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 2 reveals that with r-value of 0.871, it shows that there exists a positively strong relationship between the independent variable (pupils-teacher interaction) and the dependent variable (Academic performance in literacy skills). At r-value of .871 and *p*-value of 0.021, *p*-value is greater than the alpha level hence the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative which states that pupils-teachers interaction does significantly have a relationship with academic performance of pupils is retained.

Discussion of Findings

From hypothesis 1, the result revealed that there is a positively strong relationship between test anxiety and academic performance of pupils in literacy skills. This implies that sudden pronouncement by the teacher to conduct test or examination contributes significantly to their performance in school related academic tasks. The outcome of this work corroborates with that of Wubbels, Hayman and Grints (2013) who noted that test anxiety is a psychological term used to show a state of imbalance of organism when confronted with set of activities. Exposures to conditions not favourable, ill preparation, wrong timing, lengthy test items, difficulty of items, among others are drivers of test anxiety. Moreso, Wubbels, *et. al.*, (2013) further stated that when pupils are taken unawares on test administration, they become unprepared and unready for such an exercise which in turn shows on their response pattern to the test, Test anxiety in pupils is reduced when they are pre-informed on future tasks and exposure to tests or examination because the anxiety level of pupils is positively correlated to their achievement.

From hypothesis 2 the result revealed that there is a positively strong relationship between pupil-teacher interaction and academic performance of pupils. Pupil-teacher interaction is a social variable that shows how pupils-teacher relationship is related to academic performance of pupils. Interaction relationship between

teacher-pupil is a form of relationship that is symbiotic in nature and can be between teacher versus learner or pupil versus pupil respectively. When learner's interaction level with peers and teacher is not cordial, there is a likelihood that it could lead to poor academic performance. The outcome of this study is in consonance with that of Ahmed and Ahmed, (2018) who revealed that pupils who establish a cordial relationship with teachers or contemporaries always perform better in their academic tasks because they tend to learn from their mistakes, personal deficiencies identified and corrected thereby serving like a feedback mechanism for personal assessment.

Conclusion

The study concluded that in order to improve on pupils academic performance, their test anxiety level must be very low effortlessly by designing items that are moderate for pupils of that age bracket and establish good interaction between teacher and pupils at all time. Psycho-social variables if not well managed by the teacher would contribute negatively towards academic performance of pupils.

Recommendations

This study recommended that:

- Teachers across all levels should introduce the use of motivation technique in the course of teaching because it goes a long way to improve the quality of learning in classrooms.
- Pupils should be conditioned to interact effectively with peers and teachers as it would enhance cross pollination of ideas, concepts and learning.
- Curriculum developers should revise the curriculum once in every ten years so that adequate studies can be carried out in order to allow for proper evaluation studies viz-a-viz time frame.

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