

## SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTOR OF ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN ENUGU STATE

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### Abstract

*The study determined the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents. The study was conducted in six education zones in Enugu State. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The design of the study was correlation survey. The population of the study was 26,130 SS II school adolescents in Government owned secondary schools in Enugu state. The sample of the study was 1,350 secondary school adolescents which was drawn through multi-stage sampling technique. Two sets of questionnaires were used to collect data for the study while data collected were presented using mean, standard deviation and Pearson product moment. Simple linear regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 probability level. The study found out among others that the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents is positive but low. It was recommended that government, school administrators, religious groups, and nongovernmental organizations should organize seminars, retreats, workshops and conferences regularly for the students to create awareness on self-esteem and the negative consequences on achievement orientation.*

**Key words:** *self-esteem, achievement orientation, and in-school adolescents*

### Introduction

The trend about low achievement orientation of in-school adolescents seems to be on the rise. Most of the secondary school adolescents dodge classes, do not attend school regularly, feel reluctant to study, see schooling as a burden, enjoy going late to school, indulge in examination malpractice to make a good grade, and do not care about paying school fees. In line with this, (Adama, 2007) is of the view that most of the secondary school adolescents may prefer short-cuts to achievements a mindset they may have acquired through the unique family socialization process.

Self-esteem refers to the extent to which one likes, accepts, and approves of oneself (McLeod 2008). According to Ugwu and Ugwuele (2006), self-esteem is the extent to which one values oneself. Self-esteem is the feeling of self-worth and self-satisfaction about oneself. The self-esteem describes the unique make-up of an individual that exist inherently and is informed by harmonious identification and incorporation of parent's attitude and traits (Firestone, 2011). Self-esteem supposed to be an especially important issue for adolescents. In this study, self-esteem is one's value and acceptance in ones social group.

Adolescent's self-esteem is the positive and negative appraisal of adolescent's own worth. Adolescent's self-esteem can be low or high. Low self-esteem is a debilitating condition that keeps individuals from realizing their full potential. Adolescent with low self-esteem feels unworthy, incapable, and incompetent. In fact, one with low self-esteem feels so poorly about oneself. When it is low, adolescents have negative view of themselves and this may lead to lack of confidence, want to be like someone else, and always suspicious of others. High self-esteem is the type that gives one the strength and flexibility to take charge of one's life and grow from one's mistakes without the fear of rejection. When it is high, adolescents have positive view of themselves and it tends to lead to confidence in adolescents' abilities, self-acceptance, not worrying much about what others think and say. Firestone (2011) added that when adolescents feel good about themselves, they are much better able to extend this positive sense of self to their achievement. They can engage in activities, relates to and offer themselves support from a place of confidence and ease. On the other hand, when adolescents have negative view of themselves, it is equally easy for them to extend these negative feelings to their achievement. Operationally, adolescents' self-esteem describes the way adolescents think and feel about the self and also present themselves to others.

The negative thoughts adolescents harbor towards themselves can lead to self rejection, neglect or hostility. Parents' negative self-esteem also serves as an example for their adolescents. When parents hear their children comment on their performance in the school or call themselves stupid, parents may wonder where the children got such ideas about themselves. But parents can certainly recall many times they criticized themselves for being lazy or stupid in front of their children (Firestone, 2011).

Adolescents with negative self-esteem may not have good relationship and may not show love and care towards their wellbeing and as a result, these adolescents may be low in cultivating new skills. Positive adolescent's self-esteem could breed high accomplishment of goals. Adolescents with high self-esteem could set high standard for themselves and take their time in school related tasks.

Adolescence according to World Health Organization (WHO, 2016) is the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood before adulthood, from ages 10 to19. Most researchers do not agree on specific age at which adolescence begins and terminates (Oladele, 2004). Thus, the National Adolescent Health Policy considers ages 10-24 years as a more appropriate range for adolescence in Nigeria. Chronologically, frequently cited span of adolescence is between 12 and the early 20. Adolescence period is a time of transition from childhood into adulthood. Adolescence is a time of change for individuals, as they deal with the physical, cognitive and social changes that occur during this developmental period. Adolescents are individuals found in the period bounded by childhood and adulthood (Ben & Aminu 2013). Adolescents are neither kids nor adults. The author further stressed that adolescents are expected to be out of secondary school at 18 years. In this study, adolescent refers to young people between the ages of 11 and 18 years. Adolescents are secondary school age teenagers that are passing through the

transitory period in their growth from childhood to adulthood. Those still in school are called secondary school adolescents. The secondary school adolescents are spread across the country, thus, how they orient themselves towards life achievement is a subject of interest.

Achievement has been viewed as the progressive realization of predetermined valuable goal (Ukah, 2008). Ukah added that it is a journey that is on “going” but it is not an event. Achievement is the attainment of a worthwhile goal (Santrok, 2005). Achievement is something that somebody has succeeded in doing usually with efforts. It implies the act or process of finishing something successfully. Achievement has been viewed as something which has been accomplished profitably especially by means of exertion, skill, practice or perseverance Anekwe (2006). In this study, the researchers define achievement as the attainment of personal success according to social standard.

Achievement orientation means the attitudes and behaviour of the individual towards success and failure. Achievement orientation is what motivates an individual to work hard in order to achieve success and avoid failure. Achievement orientation has been shown to be associated with individual’s academic achievement, adjustment, and well-being. According to Johnson (2009), achievement orientation has two dimensions which include high achievement orientation and low achievement orientation. Achievement orientation could also be positive or negative.

Adolescent with high achievement orientation may have improved self-awareness and performance of life goal; whereas adolescent with low achievement orientation may be prone to poor self-awareness and performance of life goal. Reports from Examination Bodies in Nigeria indicate that the school achievement of in-school adolescents appears to be declining annually. In this regard, Taiwo (2014) revealed the reports from the Examination Bodies that in 2012, about 61 percent of the students who enrolled and sat for the WAEC examination failed, rising up to 63 percent failure in 2013 and over 70% in 2014. In 2015, 65% failed (Abah & Adebayo, 2015). Adesulu (2014) revealed that while parents are blaming the Examination Bodies for the decline in students’ achievement, the Examination Bodies feel that unseriousness on the part of the students is the cause of the mass failure, yet the students believe that the Examination Bodies intentionally fail them. Thus, it seems that less is known within the Nigerian context whether self-esteem predicts the achievement orientation of the students.

Secondary school adolescents’ achievement orientation has three types of goal which include mastery orientation, performance orientation, and avoidance orientation. Mastery orientation is defined as a desire to improve one’s competence, to master a skill and to understand the learning materials (Kaplan, Middleton, Urdan & Midgley, 2002). Performance orientation represents students’ desire to demonstrate ability, while avoidance orientation represent students’ aim to hide the demonstration of lack of ability (Kaplan, Middleton & Midgley, 2002). Typically, high levels of mastery orientation in adolescent is thought to be associated with intrinsic motivation which in turn, is related to positive motivational outcomes, such as more effort and persistence to more effective learning strategies and better achievement. Performance

avoidance orientation has been consistently associated with maladaptive patterns of learning behaviour and negative effect, whereas performance-approach orientation has been found to be more positive than performance avoidance orientation, often related to positive outcomes and unrelated to negative ones. More specifically, recent research shows that performance approach goals can have positive effect on intrinsic motivation for students who are achievement oriented (Efklides & Dina, 2007; Barron, Printrich, Elliot & Trash, 2002.).

In the context of this study, achievement orientation is the attachment of importance to success and failure, positive and negative outcome of one's effort to succeed in life. The value and worth one places on success and failure may be positive or negative. Operationally, secondary school adolescents' achievement orientation refers to the ways the schooling adolescents interpret and respond to tasks which influence their motivation for learning and achievement. Recently in Enugu state the researchers found out through the help of the teachers and school counselors that secondary school adolescents' low achievement seems to be increasing and some of these students indulge in examination malpractice, bullying, truancy, fighting, secret cult activities, and other violent acts and offences. For a secondary school adolescent to cope and deal with the challenges that exist in school environment, secondary school adolescent need to be supported firstly at home by their parents, caregivers and this may enable the secondary school adolescent to study hard and achieve success.

Some of the secondary school adolescents exhibit nonchalant attitude towards their task in the school and at home as well and this may be attributed to their low self-esteem. Adolescents may consider going to school more seriously when there is positive self-esteem. It is therefore in the light of these expositions that the researchers deem it necessary to find out the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents in Enugu state.

Records of performance from National Examination Bodies seem to suggest that many in-school adolescents in the state have low school achievement. As a result, most of the in-school adolescents seem to be dodging classes, do not attend school regularly, feel reluctant to study, see schooling as a burden, enjoy going late to school, indulge in examination malpractice to make a good grade, and do not even care about paying school fees. Obviously, most of the in-school adolescents may prefer short-cuts to achievements. But it is unclear whether the secondary school adolescents' self-esteem accounts for such achievement orientation.

Possibly, it may be that the secondary school adolescents' achievement orientation is as a result of their self-esteem. This is because most of the secondary school adolescents seem to be very much preoccupied with thoughts and feelings that they cannot do anything right, they are worthless in their homes, in their school and outside their homes which may make them not to be very familiar with their academic needs. In other words, some of the secondary school adolescents may have parents who seem to be very busy with the pursuit of income for daily up-keep of the family, and as a result do not give sufficient time to monitor their children's school work and achievement. Thus, these situations are worrisome to the researchers.

Although, several studies have been carried out on the secondary school adolescents' achievement orientation, however, there seems to be paucity of literature ascertaining whether self-esteem may account for the achievement orientation of the secondary school adolescents despite the fact that these secondary school adolescents exhibit low achievement orientation. Therefore, the problem of this study in question form is: would self-esteem predict the achievement orientation of the secondary school adolescents in Enugu state?

The study specifically sought to determine the:

1. types of secondary school adolescents' self-esteem.
2. relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents.

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the type of self-esteem of secondary school adolescents?
2. What is the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents in Enugu state?

This null hypothesis was formulated and was tested at 0.05 probability level ( $p < 0.05$ )

$H_0$ : Self-esteem does not significantly predict achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents.

## **Method**

The design adopted for this study is correlation survey design. The study was carried out among senior secondary school class 11 students in Enugu state totaling 26130. The sample of the study consisted of 1350 senior secondary II adolescents in Nsukka education zone and Obollo education zone. The sample for the study was drawn using multi-stage sampling techniques to draw one-third of the zones, one-third of the schools, one-third of the classes and one-third of the students.

This was because the schools do not have equal number of classes. Two research instruments were developed by the researchers for data collection, Secondary School Adolescents' Self-Esteem Questionnaire (SSASEQ). The instrument contains 20 items. It sought to elicit information from secondary school adolescents on their self-esteem. Secondary school Adolescents' Achievement Orientation Questionnaire (SSAAOQ) contains 30 items. The questionnaires were rated on 4-point scale in which the respondents state their degree of agreement to each of the item statements structured as follows: strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points, and strongly disagree (SD) 1 point. Negative item statements were reverse scored. The research instruments were sent to three experts. Two experts were from educational psychology and one expert from educational measurement and evaluation, all from the University of Nigeria Nsukka in order to comment on its appropriateness and acceptability. The validated instruments were trial tested using 30 senior secondary class two (SSII) students taken from GSS Abakpa in Enugu zone which is outside the main study area. The data obtained from trial testing were used to determine the internal consistency of the

generated items. Cronbach’s Alpha method was used to determine the reliability estimates. The Secondary School Adolescents’ Self-esteem Questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The Secondary School Adolescents’ Achievement Orientation Questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.73. The instruments were administered and collected on the spot by the researchers and the research assistants in order to ensure high rate of compliance and return.

The data collected was analyzed using mean, standard deviation, pearson product moment correlation and Simple linear regression.

**Results**

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation analysis showing the relationship between the types of secondary school adolescents’ self-esteem.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Decision
<b>High self-esteem</b>	1350	3.86	.29	.150*	Positive
<b>Low self-esteem</b>		3.48	.23		

*r*=Pearson Correlation Coefficient, *N*=total number of respondents (secondary school adolescents).

From Table 1, it is observed that the mean score of types of secondary school adolescents’ self-esteem on high self-esteem is 3.86 with a standard deviation of .29, and mean score of 3.48 with standard deviation of .23 on low self-esteem of secondary school adolescents. The value of the correlation coefficient (*r*), which is .15, confirms the types of secondary school adolescents’ self-esteem.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation analysis showing the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents.**

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Decision
<b>self-esteem</b>	1350	3.29	.27	.256**	Positive
<b>Achievement orientation</b>		3.38	.32		

*r*=Pearson Correlation Coefficient, *N*=total number of respondents (secondary school adolescents).

From Table 2, it is observed that the mean score of secondary school adolescents on self-esteem is 3.29 with a standard deviation of .27, and mean score of 3.38 with standard deviation of .32 on achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents. The value of the correlation coefficient (*r*), which is .26, confirms that the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation is positive.

**Table 3: Regression analysis showing the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents**

Model	SS	Df	MS	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Beta	Sig.
Regression	8384.358	1	8384.358	93.203			
Residual	121263.45	1348	89.958		.065	.254	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Total	129647.73	1349					

*Predictors: (Constant), self-esteem; Dependent Variable: achievement orientation*

The results in Table 3 shows the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation,  $R^2 = .065$ ,  $F(1, 1348) = 93.20$ ,  $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ . Since the exact probability value (.000) is less than the *a priori* probability value (.05), the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents is rejected. The  $R^2$  value of .65 shows that self-esteem account for 6.5% of the variance in achievement orientation. The Beta ( $\beta$ ) weighting of .25 confirms that for every standard deviation unit change in self-esteem, achievement orientation will rise by .25 (25%).

### Discussion

The result of the study showed that the relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents is positive. Thus, it was further confirmed that there is statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents. The finding is in line with Trautwein (2006) who found that self-esteem significantly predicted achievement orientation of children. The findings also supports Robert (2010) who stated that individuals need to develop high self-esteem which is characterized by tolerance and respect for others, acceptance of responsibility for one's actions, integrity, pride in one's own accomplishments, being self-motivated, willing to take risks, capable of handling criticism, loving, seeking the challenge and stimulation of worthwhile and demanding goals, and taking command and control of one's life. The finding of the study reinforces that of Baumeister (2005) which showed that inflating self-esteem by itself can actually decrease grades of the children. It simply means that high achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents may be accomplished as a result of their high self-esteem. Baumeister (2005) further argued that the benefits of self-esteem can be significantly counter-productive. Thus, achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents depends on the adolescents' self-esteem. This implies that high achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents may be accomplished as a result of their self-esteem.

### Conclusion

The relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents is positive. Thus, it was further confirmed that there is

statistically significant relationship between self-esteem and achievement orientation of secondary school adolescents. Secondary school adolescents need to develop high self-esteem which is characterized by tolerance and respect for others, acceptance of responsibility for one's actions, integrity, pride in one's own accomplishments, being self-motivated, willing to take risks, capable of handling criticism, loving, seeking the challenge and stimulation of worthwhile and demanding goals, and taking command and control of one's life. This also indicates that inflating self-esteem by itself can actually decrease grades of the in-school adolescents. An individual's achievement orientation has a significant impact on his or her cultivation of new skills, and thus has important implications for educators.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that the government, school administrators, religious groups, and nongovernmental organizations should organize seminars, retreats, workshops and conferences regularly for the adolescents to create awareness on self-esteem, and the negative consequences on achievement orientation. This is because, if adolescents have understanding of such consequences as it relates to achievement orientation, they would be able to guide their thought in right direction. Parents are urged to get more involved in the monitoring and supervision of children vis-à-vis on their education. They should give them both moral and material supports to enhance their children's achievement orientation for them to perform better in their academics or in life. Government and other relevant agencies in education should provide necessary funds and other assistance needed to put more effectiveness in research on self-esteem, and achievement orientation of the secondary school adolescents.

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