

**SELF-CONCEPT AS A CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG  
JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABIA STATE**

**By**

**OJIKE Michael Ofoma**

**And**

**N. P. OGBUOKIRI, Ph.D.**

**Department of Psychological Foundations**

**Faculty of Education**

**Abia State University, Uturu**

**ABSTRACT**

*The study investigated self-concept as a correlate of academic performance among junior secondary school students in Abia State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. The study population consisted of 8,919 Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students in 212 public secondary schools in Abia State, while the sample comprised 892 students selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data for the study were collected using a researcher-developed instrument on a four-point Likert scale titled “Self-Concept and Academic Performance Questionnaire (SCAPQ)”. The response options were structured as: Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by three experts in Education from the Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu, and reliability was established using 30 JSS II students from a secondary school outside the study area, yielding reliability coefficients of 0.88 for self-esteem and 0.81 for self-awareness. Linear regression analysis was used to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic associated with regression was employed to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance for acceptance or rejection. The findings of the study revealed that self-esteem has a high positive relationship with the academic performance of students, while self-awareness also has a high positive relationship with students’ academic performance. The study concluded that self-concept, particularly self-esteem and self-awareness, plays a significant role in enhancing students’ academic performance. The study recommended among others that schools should incorporate confidence-building activities into teaching and learning processes, and that teachers and guidance counsellors should help students develop better self-understanding to improve their academic outcomes.*

**KEYWORDS: Self-concept, Self-esteem, Self-awareness, Academic Performance**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Education is universally acknowledged as a vital instrument for personal development and national growth. The effectiveness of any educational system is largely determined by students' academic performance, which indicates the extent to which instructional objectives are achieved (Adeyemo, 2019; Ojo & Adebayo, 2018). Academic performance reflects the knowledge, skills, values, and competencies acquired by learners through formal schooling and is often measured through examinations, tests, and continuous assessment processes (Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2021). At the junior secondary school level, academic performance is particularly crucial because it lays the foundation for higher education and future career development. However, persistent reports of

fluctuating and, in some cases, declining academic performance among secondary school students in Nigeria have raised concerns among educators, policymakers, and researchers (Nnamani & Ofoegbu, 2020; Ugwoke & Odo, 2022).

Academic performance is influenced by a wide range of factors, including environmental, socio-economic, instructional, and psychological variables (Obeten, 2021; Eze & Obasi, 2020). While environmental and instructional factors such as school facilities, teacher quality, and curriculum delivery have been extensively studied, there is increasing recognition of the role of psychological constructs in shaping students' academic outcomes (Onongha, Alebiosu, & Gbadamosi, 2020). Among these psychological variables, self-concept has been identified as a significant determinant of students' behaviour, motivation, and academic achievement (Marsh & Martin, 2011; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003).

Self-concept refers to the perception, beliefs, and evaluations individuals hold about themselves, which develop through interactions with their environment and significant others (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976; Rogers, 1951). It is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various aspects of an individual's self-perception, including academic, social, emotional, and physical domains. In the context of education, academic self-concept plays a critical role in influencing students' engagement, persistence, and performance in learning tasks (Marsh & Craven, 2006). Students who possess a positive self-concept are more likely to approach academic challenges with confidence and determination, whereas those with a negative self-concept may exhibit low motivation, anxiety, and avoidance behaviours (Harter, 2012).

A key dimension of self-concept relevant to academic performance is self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the overall value or worth individuals place on themselves and their abilities (Rosenberg, 1965). It reflects the degree to which individuals feel confident, capable, and worthy of success. In the school context, students with high self-esteem are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, persist in the face of difficulties, and achieve better academic outcomes (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003). Conversely, low self-esteem has been associated with poor academic performance, lack of confidence, and reduced motivation to learn (Pullmann & Allik, 2008). Studies in Nigeria have also supported the significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance among secondary school students (Adeyemo, 2019; Gidado, Apeh, & Soronnadi, 2023).

Another important dimension of self-concept is self-awareness, which refers to an individual's ability to recognise and understand their own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and behaviours (Goleman, 1995). Self-awareness enables students to realistically evaluate their academic abilities, identify areas for improvement, and adopt appropriate learning strategies. Self-aware students are more likely to regulate their learning behaviours, set achievable goals, and take responsibility for their academic progress (Zimmerman, 2002). This capacity for self-regulation and reflection has been linked to improved academic performance in various educational contexts (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). In Nigerian secondary schools, self-awareness has been identified as an important factor influencing students' study habits, classroom engagement, and overall academic success (Eze & Obasi, 2020; Onongha et al., 2020).

The development of self-esteem and self-awareness among students is influenced by several factors, including parental support, teacher expectations, peer relationships, and prior academic experiences (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Positive reinforcement and supportive learning

environments can enhance students' self-perception, whereas negative feedback and repeated academic failure may weaken it (Harter, 2012). In many secondary schools, students are exposed to various academic and socio-cultural challenges that may affect how they perceive themselves and their academic abilities. These challenges make it necessary to examine the psychological factors that may influence their academic performance.

Some empirical studies have been done in this area, such as Kathryn (2016), who researched the influence of self-esteem and task performance on the academic performance of adolescents' work carried out in a public secondary school of Agege L.G.A., Lagos State. The results indicate that self-esteem significantly influences adolescent academic performance; however, the hypothesis was not supported, as there was no significant difference in the academic performance of adolescents based on self-esteem or task performance. Also, Vacalares, Ocliaman, Maglangit, and Ledesma (2023) investigated self-esteem and academic performance in purposive communication classes at the tertiary level. The correlation analysis revealed a weak correlation between self-esteem and academic performance, rejecting the null hypothesis. Again, Oba-Adenuga, Ezeribe, and Oba-Adenuga (2022) examined the relationship between self-awareness and task performance among academic students in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study revealed that self-awareness had a significant relationship with the task performance of students. Finally, Musinguzi, Aheisibwe, and Ahabwe (2024) examined self-awareness as part of socio-emotional learning and its implications on academic achievement among O-level students in secondary schools in Kyabugimbi Sub County, Uganda. The study findings show a strong positive significant relationship between self-awareness and students' academic achievement among O-level students in secondary schools.

In Abia State, concerns have been raised regarding the academic performance of junior secondary school students, particularly at the JSS II level, where students are expected to consolidate foundational knowledge and skills. Despite efforts by educators and government agencies to improve educational outcomes, variations in students' academic achievement persist. Previous studies have largely focused on external factors such as teaching methods, school environment, and socioeconomic status (Obeten, 2021; Ibrahim & Mohammed, 2021), with relatively little attention to internal psychological variables, such as self-concept, especially among junior secondary school students. Furthermore, while studies have examined the influence of self-concept on academic performance in general, there is a paucity of research that specifically investigates the individual contributions of self-esteem and self-awareness as distinct components of self-concept among JSS II students in Abia State. This gap in the literature underscores the need for a more focused investigation.

Against this background, this study examines self-concept as a correlate of academic performance among Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State, with particular emphasis on self-esteem and self-awareness. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the extent to which self-esteem and self-awareness relate to the academic performance of JSS II students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of students' academic performance has continued to attract considerable attention among educators, researchers, and policymakers due to its critical role in determining the effectiveness of the educational system. At the junior secondary school level, academic performance is particularly important because it forms the foundation for subsequent educational

attainment and future career opportunities. However, despite various efforts aimed at improving the quality of education in Nigeria, reports from internal school assessments and external examinations have continued to reveal inconsistencies and, in some cases, unsatisfactory academic performance among students. This situation is also evident among Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students in Abia State, where variations in academic achievement persist across schools.

Self-esteem, which reflects the value students place on themselves and their abilities, may influence their confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in academic tasks. Students with high self-esteem are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities and persist in the face of academic challenges, whereas those with low self-esteem may exhibit self-doubt, anxiety, and avoidance behaviours that hinder learning. Similarly, self-awareness, which involves students' understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs, plays a crucial role in enabling them to regulate their learning, set realistic goals, and adopt effective study strategies. A lack of self-awareness may result in poor study habits, low academic engagement, and ultimately poor academic performance.

Despite the recognised importance of these psychological variables, there appears to be limited empirical evidence on the extent to which self-esteem and self-awareness relate to the academic performance of JSS II students in Abia State. Most existing studies have either examined academic performance in relation to external factors or focused on other psychological constructs such as self-efficacy and emotional intelligence, with little emphasis on self-concept dimensions among younger secondary school students. This gap in the literature makes it difficult for educators and policymakers to develop targeted interventions that address students' internal dispositions toward learning. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates self-concept as a correlate of academic performance among JSS II students in Abia State, with particular focus on self-esteem and self-awareness.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does self-esteem relate to the academic performance of Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State?
2. To what extent does self-awareness relate to the academic performance of Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between social self-awareness and academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a correlational research design. A correlational design is appropriate for this study because it seeks to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between students' self-concept (self-esteem and self-awareness) and academic performance without manipulating any of the variables. This design enables the researcher to establish the direction and

magnitude of relationships among the variables of interest. The study was conducted in Abia State, one of the five states in the Southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The choice of Abia State was informed by growing concerns over students' academic performance and the need to examine psychological factors, such as self-concept, that may influence learning outcomes among secondary school students. The population of the study comprised 8,919 Junior Secondary School II (JSS II) students in 212 public secondary schools in Abia State. JSS II students were considered appropriate for the study because they are not new entrants into the secondary school system and are not yet examination classes. It is assumed that they have developed a reasonable level of self-awareness and self-esteem, as well as sufficient academic exposure relevant to the study. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select the sample for the study. In the first stage, all three education zones (Aba, Umuahia, and Ohafia) were included. In the second stage, a proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of students selected from each zone based on their population. In the third stage, students were selected using simple random sampling by balloting with replacement. This process yielded a total sample size of 892 students, representing approximately 10% of the population, which was considered adequate for the study. Data for the study were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled "Self-Concept and Academic Performance Questionnaire (SCAPQ)". The instrument was structured on a four-point Likert scale with response options of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Low Extent (LE), and Very Low Extent (VLE). The questionnaire consisted of two sections: Section A elicited information on respondents' personal data, while Section B contained items measuring the variables of the study, specifically self-esteem, self-awareness, and academic performance. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in education. To establish the reliability of the instrument, a trial test was conducted on 30 JSS II students from a secondary school outside the study area. The internal consistency of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach's alpha method, which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.88 for self-esteem and 0.81 for self-awareness, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the assistance of three trained research assistants. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Linear regression analysis was used to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic associated with the regression was used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. A p-value less than 0.05 led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, while a p-value greater than 0.05 resulted in its acceptance.

## Results

### Research Question One:

To what extent does self-esteem relate to the academic performance of Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State?

**Table 1: Linear Regression to Explore Relationship between Self-Esteem and Academic Performance of Junior Secondary Students**

Model	R	r Square	r square x 100	Adjusted r Square	Remarks
1	.625 <sup>a</sup>	.391	39.1%	.390	High positive

**a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Performance**

Table 1 presents the simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between self-esteem and academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State. The result showed that there is a high positive relationship with an r value of .625. The result also showed the coefficient of determination to be  $r^2=.391$ , which implies that 39.1% of junior secondary school II students' academic performance is contributed to by self-esteem. The result indicates that self-esteem has a positive relationship with the academic performance of Junior Secondary II students in Abia State.

**Research Question Two:**

To what extent does self-awareness relate to the academic performance of Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State?

**Table 2: Linear Regression to Explore Relationship between Self-Awareness and Academic Achievement**

Model	R	r Square	r square x 100	Adjusted r Square	Remarks
1	.620 <sup>a</sup>	.385	38.5%	.384	High Positive

a. Predictors: (Constant), Academic Performance

Table 2 presents the simple linear regression analysis of the relationship between self-awareness and academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State. The result showed that there is a high positive relationship with an r value of .620. The result also showed the coefficient of determination to be  $r^2 \times 100 = 38.5\%$ , which implies that 38.5% of junior secondary students' academic performance is contributed to by self-awareness. The result indicated that self-awareness relates positively to a high extent to the academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State.

**H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic performance of Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State.**

**Table 3: t-test Statistic Associated with Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Self-Esteem and Academic Performance**

(Constant)	B	Std. Error	Df	$\beta$	t-cal	t-crit	Sig.
1	1.075	.056				1.96	
Self-Esteem	.679	.017	891	.625	19.174		0.00

**a. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance**

Data presented in Table 3 shows the summary of t-statistics associated with regression analysis of a significant relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in junior secondary school II students in Abia State. The result indicated df to be 891 ( $\beta$ , .625) and a calculated t-value of 19.174 and a t-crit of 1.96 with a p-value of 0.00, which is the result of the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value is less than the criterion significance level and t-calculated is higher than the t-critical, this led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, and an alternate hypothesis was established; thus, there is a significant relationship

between self-esteem and academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between self-awareness and academic performance in Junior Secondary School II Abia State.**

**Table 4: t-test Statistic Associated with Regression Analysis of Significant Relationship between Self-awareness and academic performance**

(Constant)	B	Std. Error	df	$\beta$	t-cal	t-crit	Sig.
1	1.501	.063				1.96	
Self-Awareness	.595	.021	891	.620	23.931		0.00

**a. Dependent Variable: Academic Achievement**

Data presented in Table 4 shows the summary of t-statistics associated with regression analysis of a significant relationship between self-awareness and academic performance in junior secondary school II students in Abia State. The result indicated df to be 891 ( $\beta$ , .620) and a calculated t-value of 23.931 and a t-crit of 1.96 with a p-value of 0.00, resulting from the null hypothesis at a 0.05 significance level. Since the p-value is less than the criterion significance level and t-calculated is higher than the t-critical, this, therefore, led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, and an alternate hypothesis was established; thus, there is a significant relationship between self-awareness and academic performance in junior secondary school II students in Abia State.

**Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the first research question, which investigated the extent of the relationship between self-esteem and the academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State, showed a strong positive relationship between self-esteem and academic performance in the area studied. The corresponding hypothesis also indicates a significant relationship between self-esteem and the academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State. This finding is an indication that self-esteem can contribute to students' attainment in class. The findings from the study are in agreement with those of Kathryn (2016), who researched the influence of self-esteem and task performance on the academic performance of adolescents' work carried out in a public secondary school of Agege L.G.A., Lagos State. The results indicate that self-esteem significantly influences adolescent academic performance; however, the hypothesis was not supported, as there was no significant difference in the academic performance of adolescents based on self-esteem or task performance. However, the finding from the study also disagrees with that of Vacalares, Ocliaman, Maglangit and Ledesma (2023), whose study investigated self-esteem and academic performance in purposive communication classes at the tertiary level. The correlation analysis revealed a weak correlation between self-esteem and academic performance, rejecting the null hypothesis.

The finding from the second research question, which investigated the extent of the relationship between self-awareness and academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State, showed that there is a high positive relationship between self-awareness and academic performance in the area studied. The corresponding hypothesis also shows that there

is a significant relationship between self-awareness and the academic performance of junior secondary school II students in Abia State. This finding is an indication that self-awareness has to do with students' concentration in class and therefore their performance. The finding from the study is in agreement with that of Oba-Adenuga, Ezeribe and Oba-Adenuga (2022), whose study examined the relationship between self-awareness and task performance among academic students in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study revealed that self-awareness had a significant relationship with the task performance of students. The finding also agrees with that of Musinguzi, Aheisibwe, and Ahabwe (2024), whose study was on self-awareness as part of socio-emotional learning and its implications on academic achievement among O-level students in secondary schools in Kyabugimbi Sub County, Uganda. The study findings show a strong positive significant relationship between self-awareness and students' academic achievement among O-level students in secondary schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the findings of this study have clearly demonstrated that self-concept, particularly in terms of self-esteem and self-awareness, plays a significant role in shaping the academic performance of Junior Secondary School II students in Abia State. The study established that self-esteem is meaningfully related to students' academic performance, indicating that students who possess a positive sense of self-worth are more likely to perform better academically. This suggests that confidence in one's abilities enhances motivation, engagement, and persistence in learning tasks.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were made;

1. Schools should incorporate confidence-building activities into their teaching methods.
2. Guidance counsellors and teachers should help students identify their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles, allowing them to develop personalised study strategies for better academic outcomes.

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