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SELF-EFFICACY AS A PREDICTOR OF STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ONITSHA EDUCATION ZONE

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ABSTRACT
Students' academic performance remains an important indicator of educational progress and a continuing concern among educational stakeholders. Students' beliefs in their capabilities may significantly influence their academic outcomes. This study investigated self-efficacy as predictors of students' academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone. Three research questions guided the study, and one null hypothesis was formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a predictive correlational research design. The population comprised 5,747 SS2 students in urban public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone, from which a sample of 1,000 students was drawn using multistage sampling. Data were collected using two adopted instruments, the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES) and Academic Performance Rating Scale (APRS). Aggregate scores and percentages were used to answer Research Questions 1–3, simple linear regression for Research Questions 3. The findings revealed that academic self-efficacy significantly predicted students' academic performance. It was recommended that school counsellors should implement programmes that enhance students' academic self-efficacy, educational authorities should also strengthen policies that support students' academic self-efficacy.
Keywords: Self-efficacy, Predictor, Academic Performance.

Introduction
Modern education increasingly recognizes that students' academic performance is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by psychological and environmental factors that shape learning outcomes. Students with similar intellectual abilities often perform differently due to variations in their beliefs about their capabilities. These beliefs about oneself strongly affect how students think, feel, and participate in learning activities. This is what Albert Bandura refers to as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to organize and execute the actions required to attain specific goals (Bandura, 1997).

As proposed by Albert Bandura within Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy plays a central role in shaping individuals' motivation, learning behaviours, and

performance outcomes. In educational contexts, it influences how students think, feel, and act when faced with academic tasks. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to engage actively in learning, persist in the face of challenges, and achieve better academic outcomes, whereas those with low self-efficacy often avoid demanding tasks and demonstrate poor academic performance (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2020). Conversely, Low self-efficacy has also been associated with maladaptive behaviours such as procrastination and academic disengagement. Self-efficacy influences emotional and coping behaviours. Students with strong self-efficacy exhibit lower levels of anxiety and better emotional control during tests or challenging academic tasks.

Self-efficacy is context-specific and varies across tasks and subject areas. In this study, emphasis is placed on academic self-efficacy, which refers to students' beliefs in their ability to successfully perform academic tasks. Academic self-efficacy has been defined by Burns, Sitzmann and Yeo (2023) as a student's faith and assurance in their capabilities to succeed in classroom and school activities. It is boosted by having a successful experience of mastering a topic or task, seeing others succeed and through persuasion. Empirical evidence indicates that students with high academic self-efficacy demonstrate greater persistence and achieve higher academic outcomes than their low-efficacy counterparts (Okafor-Agbala and Okigbo, 2021). Self-efficacy affects self-regulated learning behaviours. High self-efficacy students are more likely to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning. They set academic goals, manage their time effectively, and use appropriate learning strategies such as note-taking, revision, and practice. These behaviours directly improve academic performance because they promote deeper learning and retention.

Academic performance refers to the extent to which a student achieves educational objectives as measured through assessments such as test scores, examinations, continuous assessment, grades, and overall academic records. It represents the observable and measurable outcome of students' learning experiences within a formal educational setting. Academic performance is commonly used by researchers, educators, and policymakers as an indicator of the effectiveness of teaching, learning processes, and educational systems (York, Gibson, and Rankin, 2015).

Academic performance is influenced by a wide range of factors, including cognitive, behavioural, motivational, social, and environmental variables. Cognitive factors such as intelligence and prior knowledge play an important role; however, Academic performance is strongly influenced by students' behavioural patterns, as effective study habits, regular attendance, discipline, and healthy lifestyles significantly enhance academic outcomes (Aljaffer et al, 2024; Suleiman et al., 2024). Chaturvedi (2016) noted that academic performance can be measured using various types of tests, either verbal or written. Given its role in selection, promotion, and recognition in different spheres of life, academic performance holds significant importance. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), academic performance encompasses not only students' measurable

outcomes but also their ability to apply knowledge, engage in learning activities, and adapt to academic demands. Similarly, recent empirical studies highlight that students' academic success is shaped by a combination of learning behaviours, motivation, and cognitive competencies (Nacua et al, 2024).

In this regard, self-efficacy and parental motivation emerge as critical factors. Despite students being enrolled in school, many continue to face challenges related to low self-efficacy.These challenges appear to contribute to the persistent poor performance of students within the Onitsha Education Zone. However, there is a dearth of recent empirical studies that have examined the relationship between self-efficacy, and students' academic performance in this area.

Therefore, arising from these observed gaps and persistent academic challenges, the researcher is motivated to investigate self-efficacy as predictors of students' academic performance in the Onitsha Education Zone.

Statement of the Problem

The persistent fluctuation in the academic performance of secondary school students, particularly in external examinations, according to the statistics released by West African Examination Council (WAEC), as cited in Omisakin (2025), remains a major concern for educators, parents, and policymakers. Despite efforts by the government to improve educational quality through the provision of instructional materials, the recruitment of qualified teachers, and teachers continuously apply improved instructional strategies and utilize relevant teaching materials, yet, students' performance especially in core subjects continues to fall below expected standards.

This situation suggests that factors beyond instructional quality and school resources may be influencing students' academic performance. Evidence indicates that many students still perform poorly despite improvements in teaching and learning conditions, pointing to the possible influence of psychological and home-related factors. Students with low self-efficacy often exhibit poor confidence, reduced persistence, and limited engagement in academic tasks, while inadequate parental motivation may result in weak academic support, poor study habits, and low commitment to learning. These conditions can negatively affect students' academic outcomes.

This raises the question of whether self-efficacy significantly predict the academic performance of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine self-efficacy as predictor of students' academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone of, Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study aims to Determine;

1. Academic self-efficacy scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone.
2. Academic performance scores in of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone.
3. Predictive value of secondary school students' academic self-efficacy towards their academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone.

Research Questions

1. What are the academic self-efficacy scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone?
2. What are the academic performance scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone?
3. What are the predictive value of secondary school students' academic self-efficacy towards their academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone?

Hypothesis

Secondary school students' academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of their academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone.

Methodology

This study adopted a predictive correlational research design to examine the extent to which self-efficacy and parental motivation predict students' academic performance. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to investigate relationships among the variables and determine their predictive contributions without manipulating them in their natural educational setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in Onitsha Education Zone, Anambra State, Nigeria. The zone comprises three Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely Onitsha North, Onitsha South, and Ogbaru, with 32 public secondary schools, of which 22 are urban and 10 are rural. The population comprised 5,747 Senior Secondary II (SS II) students enrolled in the 22 urban public secondary schools during the 2025/2026 academic session. The population figure was obtained from the Post-Primary Schools Service Commission, Onitsha Education Zone (2025). A sample of 1,000 students was selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Purposive sampling was used to select two urban LGAs, while proportionate stratified random sampling was employed to allocate the sample across schools according to their student populations. Simple random sampling was subsequently used to select students from the sampled schools. Data were collected using two instruments: the Morgan-Jinks Student Self-Efficacy Scale (MJSES), and the Academic Performance Rating Scale (APRS). The MJSES, developed by Morgan and Jinks (1999), was adopted to measure students' academic self-efficacy. It consists of 30 items rated on a four-point response scale ranging from "Really Agree" to "Really Disagree," with a maximum score of 120. The APRS, developed by DuPaul et al. (1991), was adopted to assess students' perceptions of their academic performance. The original 19-item instrument was used as a self-report measure, with responses rated on a five-point scale and total scores ranging from 19 to 95. Seven items (12, 13, and 15–19) were reverse-scored to ensure that higher total scores indicated more positive academic performance. The MJSES and APRS were adopted in their original forms. Before data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary identification and official permission letters from the relevant university and education authorities. Three research assistants were briefed on the purpose of the study and the administration procedures. The questionnaires were administered directly to SS II students in the sampled schools. The data collected were compiled and analysed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS), to answer the research questions and the hypothesis. The research questions

were answered using mean range of scores, percentage and simple linear regression while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using simple linear regression. The null hypotheses were rejected when the p-value was less than or equal to 0.05 and not rejected when the p-value was greater than 0.05.

Results and Discussion

In this chapter, the data collected from the field for this study were analyzed and the summaries were presented in tables to highlight the findings. This was followed by the discussion of the results.

Research Question 1: What are the academic self-efficacy scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone?

Table 1: Academic Self-efficacy scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone.

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
30 – 74	398	40.0	Low Academic self-efficacy
75 – 120	596	60.0	High Academic self-efficacy

Table 1 reveals that 398(40.0%) of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone with the scores ranging from 30 to 74 have low Academic self-efficacy, while 596(60.0%) others who scored between 75 and 120 have Low Academic self-efficacy. The findings of the study revealed that a greater number of secondary school students in Onitsha Education zone have high Academic self-efficacy. This implies that majority of the students in Onitsha Education Zone have strong confidence in their ability to successfully perform tasks and overcome challenges. It could also suggest that the students believe in their capacity to learn, understand and excel through sustained effort and perseverance.

The findings further imply that the students are confident in completing their Assignment, participating actively in classroom activities, handling, difficult topics and achieving good academic results. They are likely to remain motivated when faced with challenges and persist in their in efforts until they attain their learning goals.

The reason for this finding could be explained by the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura which emphasizes that Individual's beliefs in their capabilities influence their motivation effort, persistence and performance. Students with high self-efficacy tend to approach academie tasks with confidence and are more likely to achieve positive learning outcomes. The reason for this finding could be explained by Okonkwo, Egolum, and Samuel (2023) which revealed that students with higher levels of self-efficacy performed better in Chemistry, leading to the recommendation that teachers should integrate strategies that promote self-efficacy in classroom instruction. The reason for this finding could also be explained by the study conducted by Asanre et al (2024) and revealed that students with high self-efficacy and better study habits achieved better academic outcomes.

Research Question 2: What are the academic performance scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone?

Table 2: Academic performance scores of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
19 – 56	418	42.1	Poor academic performance
57 – 95	576	57.9	Good academic performance

In table 2, it was observed that 418(42.1%) of secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone with scores ranging from 19 and 56 have poor academic performance, while 576(57.9%) others who scored between 57 and 95 have good academic performance. The findings of this study showed that a very good number of students at secondary education level in Onitsha education zone have at least good academic performance. The reason for this finding could be explained by Ojeleye et al (2022) who revealed that students who demonstrate persistence in the face of academic challenges and possess strong belief in their abilities tend to achieve better academic performances. This could also be explained by Okonkwo et al (2023) who Indicate that students' academic performances are Influenced by both psychological factors and learning preferences. Hence, good academe performance should be expected among these students who have been found to possess high self-efficacy. This is because students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more confident in their ability to understand and complete tasks and they are likely to persist in the face of academic challenges. As a result, such students tend to engage more effectively in learning activities which ultimately enhances their academic performance.

Research Question 3: What is the predictive value of secondary school students' academic self-efficacy towards their academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone?

Null Hypothesis 1: Secondary school students' academic self-efficacy is not a significant predictor of their academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone

Table 3: Regression analysis on the predictive value of Secondary school students' academic self-efficacy and their academic performance in Onitsha Education Zone.

Variable	N	BETA	Cal. t	Df	Pvalue	Remark
Academic self-efficacy	994	0.981	161.36	992	0.000	S

Table 3 shows the summary of simple regression analysis with academic self-efficacy as a predictor of students' academic performance in Onitsha education zone. It shows that secondary school students' academic self-efficacy had a Beta of 0.981. This indicates that secondary school students' academic self-efficacy had contributed to 98.1 percent for the students' academic performance in Onitsha education zone. This means that, holding other predictors constant, an increase in students' academic self-efficacy is associated with a corresponding increase in their academic performance. positive beta value ($\beta = 0.981$) further indicates that the predictive relationship is positive and very strong. Thus, students with higher academic self-efficacy tend to demonstrate better academic performance.

Table 4 Again, shows Test of Significance of Simple Regression Analysis with Academic self-efficacy as Predictor of students' academic performance in Onitsha education zone, at 992 df and 0.05 level of significant, the calculated t=161.36 with P-value 0.000 which is less than the 0.05, the first null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore, Secondary school students' academic self-efficacy is a significant predictor of their academic performance in Onitsha education zone.

The study disclosed that secondary school students' academic self-efficacy in Onitsha Education zone had contributed to 98.1% for academic performance of the students. It also revealed that secondary school students' Self-efficacy is associated significant predictor of their academic performance. This is in contrary to Lugard and Osuafor (2024) found that self-efficacy, though accounting for a small percentage of variance, the relationship was statistically significant. The researcher is of the belief that high self-efficacy led to an increase in academic performance. In the same vein Asanre et al (2024) found that self-efficacy significantly predicted students' achievement.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that secondary school students in Onitsha Education Zone generally possess high academic self-efficacy and good academic performance. Academic self-efficacy was found to be a strong and significant predictor of students' academic performance, indicating that students who believe in their academic abilities are more likely to perform better in school.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several implications for students, teachers, school counsellors, parents and school administrators.

The significant influence of academic self-efficacy on academic performance implies that students need to develop confidence in their academic abilities to achieve better learning outcomes.

Teachers should adopt instructional strategies that promote students' confidence, persistence, and belief in their ability to succeed academically.

School counsellors should organize guidance programmes aimed at strengthening students' self-efficacy through mentoring, goal setting, and positive reinforcement.

Recommendations

1. Students should be encouraged to develop confidence in their ability to overcome academic challenges.
2. School counsellors should design and implement programmes aimed at enhancing students' academic self-efficacy through career guidance, mentoring, and motivational activities.
3. Teachers should provide regular positive feedback, encourage active classroom participation, and create learning experiences that help students build confidence in their academic abilities.
4. Educational authorities should formulate policies that strengthen programmes that enhance students' academic self-efficacy.

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