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LOCUS OF CONTROL AND ACADEMIC INTEREST AS CORRELATES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN MATHEMATIC IN DELTA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship among locus of control, academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in mathematics in Delta State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlation survey research design. The population for the study comprises of 3125 (male 1404, female 1721) secondary school students from 13 secondary schools in Oshimili South in Delta State. The sample for the study comprises 355 SS 2 secondary school students. This was determined using Taro Yamane sample determination formula. For data collection, the study adopted the Trice's academic locus of control scale and students' academic interest scale developed by Althoff (2010). Research questions 1 and 2 were answered using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient, while research questions 3 and the null hypotheses raised were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The hypotheses postulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings from the study revealed among others that; the correlation between locus of control and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics was moderate and positive, the correlation between academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics was high and positive. The relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school

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students in Mathematics was significant. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that Guidance Counsellors should work together to structure stimulating and engaging activities in secondary schools to boost the students' locus of control and academic interest.

Keywords: Locus of control, academic interest, correlates, academic achievement and mathematics

Introduction

Academic achievement among students has remained a source of concern to educators, the society and researchers, particularly as the academic achievement of secondary school students is deemed to be declining. As reported by Olufemi (2021), only 39.82% made credit in five subjects including Mathematics. The result indicates a decline in the achievement to students from examination records of the previous years, this state of affairs raises concern among some parents and caregivers. According to Akunne and Anyamene (2021), the West African Examination Council (WAEC) reported the May/June WAEC examinations stating that 786,016 candidates representing 49.98 per cent obtained credits and above in a minimum of five subjects including Mathematics. This further revealed fluctuation and decline in the performance of students when compared with that of 2016 which was 52.97 per cent, and in 2017 which was 59.22 per cent. This has prevailed in many states of the federation and among secondary schools in Delta state as well.

In the same vein, the WAEC Chief examiner's reports reveal that candidate's performance is on the decline in mathematics subject as compared to those of the previous years. The public persistent outcry over the declining state of education particularly in Delta state is most prominent following the annual release of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) results (Anyamene, Nwokolo and Akunne, 2017). Anyamene et al. (2017) further stated that the academic achievement of secondary school students in Anambra state is measured through examinations conducted at the National level. They are, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO) with a criterion-reference score required of students in each subject being C6 (minimum) to A1 (maximum) in at least five subjects, including Mathematics. In secondary schools in Delta state, every classroom

plays host to different personality types of learners who come into the classroom differently prepared with a uniquely set characteristics that determine their levels of aspirations within the same classroom environment. These personality types could determine their level of academic achievement in Mathematics.

However, the attitude of secondary school students in Delta state towards Mathematics is unpredictable, this has further led to low academic achievement in this subject. Most particularly in Delta state, academic achievement in mathematics is a matter of great interest to researchers, and of great concern to parents, teachers and educational administrators. Buttressing further, Mathematics as a subject taught and regarded as the most important subject in the school curriculum worldwide. Yusuf and Araba (2019) asserted that mathematics is seen as the subject that has direct correlation with other subjects, particularly with science and technology. This also implies that mathematics is seen as the analytical tool for the rationalization and development in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Furthermore, the subject cuts across primary and secondary levels of education and has remained one of the most difficult subjects in school as perceived by students (Yusuf and Araba, 2019). They went further to reiterate the general impression that mathematics is difficult by its very nature and because of this impression, majority of students have phobia for it and has led to low achievement. The low academic achievement of students in mathematics has been a cause of concern to mathematics educationist all over the world and evident in secondary schools in Delta state. Many reasons are usually given for this poor performance which include: students' factor, teachers' factor, parental factor, schools' factor, government factor, language problems, infrastructural problem, instructional strategy adopted by the teacher and many others. This has prevailed despite its place as one of the core subjects recommended in the National Policy on Education (Eduwem, Umoinyang and Otu, 2017).

According to Okafor (2020), academic achievement is an indicator to measure the degree of success and failure of a learner especially at the end of a learning process. Academic achievement is the outcome of an educational process which serves as measure to the extent a student, teacher or institution has achieved a set of objectives or goals and which is commonly measured by continuous assessment or examination. Okafor (2020) further stressed that academic achievement of student can be graded as high or low (good or poor). It

implied that academic achievement is said to be poor when the achievement falls below the expected standard. On the other hand, an achievement that is equal to or above the standard expected of a student can be termed high academic achievement. Teachers in secondary schools measure the academic achievements of students with the aim of achieving desired educational goals and objectives. The realization of such objectives is the touchstone for any system, hence if the achievement corresponds to the objectives, the system has justified its existence.

Buttressing this, Oguzie, Nwokolo, Mokwelu and Ezunu (2019) stressed that students' academic achievement occupied a vital position in the educational system as well in the learning process. Hence academic achievement is very important for students, teachers, parents, government and other stakeholders. This is why the government, teachers, psychologist, school-counsellors, parents and examinations bodies are greatly concerned with and are working very hard to unravel the mystery behind the poor academic achievement among students. The concern of improving academic achievement among secondary school students has increased in recent years. However, the reason for this concern can be attributed to the high percentage of low academic achievement recorded in recent times.

Reacting to the prevailing low academic achievement among secondary school students, Ozuome, Oguzie, Mokwelu and Anyamene (2020) emphasized the concern of every stakeholder about how best to improve the academic achievement of students. This probably is because educational attainment is highly fundamental to the realisation of the scientific technological socio-economic and political development of any nation as well as the total empowerment and transformation of the citizens. Other attributive factors to low academic achievement are not limited but include, school environment, home background, economic, political, and intellectual capability, social and entry qualification as well as personality traits. In the opinion of Anyamene, Nwokolo and Akunne (2017), academic achievement of students can be improved upon if these factors are adequately addressed. In addition, academic achievement is associated with other socio-psychological variables such as locus of control, academic interest among others.

Locus of control is a personality characteristic that determines the degree

with which an individual believes they are in control of life events. The concept of locus of control has been originally developed by Julian Rotter, and can be generalized into basic dichotomy which is internal and external locus of control. The term locus of control refers to the site of a cause, that is, whether or not the outcome of an event is attributed to something inside (internal to) or outside (external to) the person involved (Atibuni, Ssenyonga, Olema and Kemeza, 2017). They further affirmed that locus of control relates to people's attitudes, emotions, health, and motivation, as well as behaviour in organizations and educational institutions. The generalized locus of control scale has been adapted to measure attributions in various settings. These settings include work locus of control and health locus of control. In the opinion of Esonwanne, Nduanya, Obichina and Onyebueke (2018) locus of control is defined as a persons' tendency to see events as being controlled internally or externally. It is an individuals' personal belief that event which occur in their life are either as a result of personal control and efforts or outside forces such as fate and luck. Furthermore, Choudhury and Borooah (2017) stated that an individual's belief regarding the reasons of his or her experiences and the factors to which that person attributes success or failure is referred to as locus of control. In other words, it can be said that locus of control is the generalized expectation regarding where control over events resides of an individual, this can either be internal or external. People with internal locus of control attribute the causes of their successes or failures to their own abilities and skills. They consider themselves to be responsible for their own destiny. However, Success or failure attributed by students in the course of learning could be based on student's academic interest.

Academic interest most likely could be another variable which could hamper academic achievement among secondary school students. According to Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto in Agwuma, Ochogba and Agwuma (2018), academic interest is the affective reaction triggered by specific or appealing stimuli in the learning environment. Academic interest is said to be enhanced through the manipulation or modification of certain aspects of the learning environment and contextual factors such as teaching strategies, task presentation and structuring of learning experiences. Similarly, academic interest denotes a positive or negative predisposition towards schooling and every other activity in the school environment which could be cognitive, emotional, or behavioural (Agwuma, et

al., 2018). Lack of academic interest in school activities discourages students from staying in class and working hard to achieve optimum grades in their academic, prevents them from being enthusiastic and taking the class seriously. This scenario has its anti-social dimension, loss of academic interest leads students into engaging in unlawful activities such as cultism, kidnapping, robbery and truancy among other vices. Lack of academic interest among school students could be due to daunting self-esteem among students which although has received attention from researchers, but still seem to affect students' academic interest. Matsum (2018) found that student's interest statistically impacted their economic accomplishment. In the case of big general education classes, Kalaf-Hughes (2019) reported that students' participation with course material may be based on their interest in the subject. Operationally, academic interest is measured as student's interest in school activities. Academic interest can also be described as a self-determined zeal which is linked with students' achievement in the subject being learned.

Interest is often thought of as a process that contributes to learning and academic achievement. That is being interested in a subject is a mental resource that enhances learning. Sanda (2018) in its findings revealed that academic interest leads to better performance and achievement. Therefore, academic interest is the decision to engage or not to engage in school activities, the desire to persist and the degree of effort and time put into school activities are mainly judged by the level of interest shown by students.

Based on these studies, the relationship existing between locus of control, academic interest and secondary school student's academic achievement seems not to have been empirically established. Particularly, in Delta state, where the unstable state of academic achievement as highlighted earlier is appalling and calls for measures to refurbish the system where students' achievement could be optimal and acceptable. Based on the foregoing, the need to examine psychological indices like locus of control and academic interest in relation with academic achievement among secondary school students becomes paramount.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the relationship among locus of control, academic interest and secondary school student's academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state. Specifically, the study determined;

1. The correlation between locus of control scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in Mathematic in Delta State
2. The correlation between academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state.
3. The joint correlation of locus of control scores, academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement scores in Mathematic in Delta State.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between locus of control scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in Mathematic in Delta State?
2. What is the correlation between academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state?
3. What is the joint correlation among locus of control scores, academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement scores in Mathematic in Delta State?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant correlation between locus of control scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in Mathematic in Delta State.
2. There is no significant correlation between academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state.
3. There is no significant joint correlation among locus of control scores, academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement scores in Mathematic in Delta State.

Method

Correlation survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Onah and Anamezie (2022), a correlational research design seeks to establish relationship between two or more variables as well as predict the relevance of a variable over the other. Correlational survey design is more suitable for this study because it seeks to observe the values of variables such as locus of control and academic interest in order to examine the relationship existing among these variables under study and secondary

school students' academic achievement in Mathematics.

The population for the study comprises of 3125 (male = 1404, female 1721) secondary school students from 13 secondary schools in Oshimili South in Delta state. The sample for the study comprises 355 SS 2 secondary school students. This was determined using Taro Yamane sample determination formula.

For data collection, the study adopted the Trice's academic locus of control scale was employed for the study. It was developed by Asthon Trice in 1985, but was revalidated in Nigeria by Osuji (2008). The locus of control scale was also adopted by Akunne and Anyamene (2021). In the same vein, the students' academic interest scale was adopted for this study. The scale was earlier adapted from the academic interest scale, a self-report 30-item inventory developed by Althoff (2010) to measure the academic interest of secondary school students in Delta state. The instruments have been standardized and as such were validated and tested reliability.

In collecting data, the administration of the instrument was done through direct delivery approach. By this method, copies of the questionnaires were distributed personally to the respondents by the research assistants who are regular mathematics teachers in the sampled schools.

Data relating to research question 1 and 2 were analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient while research question 3 and the null hypotheses were attended to using multiple regression analysis.

Results

Research question 1: What is the correlation between locus of control scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in Mathematics in Delta State?

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation between locus of control scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in Mathematics in Delta State.

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Table 1: Pearson r on locus of control and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics

Source of Variation	N	Locus of control r	Mathematics r	df	Cal.t	Pvalue	Remark
Locus of control	355	1.00	0.58	353	3.38	0.001	Moderate +r
Mathematics	355	0.58	1.00				

In Table 1 it was observed that moderate positive relationship of 0.58 exists between secondary school students' locus of control and their academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state.

Again, at 0.05 level of significance and 353df, the calculated t-value 3.38 with P-value 0.001 which is less than 0.05, the first null hypothesis is not accepted. Therefore, the relationship existing between locus of control and academic achievement of secondary school students in mathematics in Delta State is significant.

The findings for this study reported a moderate positive correlation between locus of control and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics in Delta state. the hypothesis tested revealed a significant relationship existing between locus of control and academic achievement of secondary school students in mathematics in Delta State. This finding contradicts the finding of Nwanneka and Okoli (2021) as they found and reported a significant negative correlation between locus of control and academic achievement, a non-significant negative correlation between the male and female external locus of control and their academic achievement. There was a non-significant positive correlation between the male and female internal locus of control (Nwanneka and Okoli, 2021). Furthermore, these findings align with that of Chinedu and Nwizuzu (2021) which revealed a significant relationship between locus of control and academic achievement of male students. They further reported a significant relationship between locus of control and academic achievement of public-school students.

Research question 2: What is the correlation between academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state?

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant correlation between academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state.

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Table 2: Pearson r on academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics

Source of Variation	N	Locus of control r	Mathematics r	df	Cal.t	P-value	Remark
Academic interest	355	1.00	0.65	353	15.95	0.001	High Positive r
Mathematics	355	0.65	1.00				

Table 2 reveals that there is high positive relationship of 0.65 existing between secondary school students' academic interest and their academic achievement in mathematics.

Also, at 0.05 level of significance and 353df, the calculated t15.95 with Pvalue 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the second null hypothesis is not accepted. Hence the relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in mathematics in Delta State is significant.

The finding of this study showed a high positive correlation between academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics. This agrees with the findings of Ezike (2018) which revealed a significant relationship between classroom environment and academic achievement, students' academic interest and achievement in Chemistry. The findings also revealed that composite contribution of classroom environment and academic interest was significant. However, classroom environment better predicted achievement than students' academic interest (Ezike, 2018). Furthermore, the findings of the study supports' that of Onah and Anamezie (2022) which revealed that academic interest relatively and significantly contributed 18% to the prediction of academic achievement of secondary school Physics. The finding also agrees with the findings of Adekunle and Femi-Adeoye (2016) which showed a significant relationship in student's interest in Biology and student's performance. The study further showed a significant relationship in students' attitude to Biology and students' academic performance in Biology. Furthermore, the finding of this study is in agreement with that of Okafor (2020) who found that student interest predicts about 57% of academic achievement scores of secondary school students in physics among others STEM related subjects.

The findings of the study further revealed that the relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in Mathematics is significant. This also aligns with the findings of Ezike (2018)

which found significant relationships between classroom environment and academic achievement, students' academic interest and achievement in Chemistry. The findings also revealed that composite contribution of classroom environment and academic interest was significant. More so, the present findings support the finding of Okafor (2020) which showed that student interest predicts about 57% of academic achievement scores of secondary school students in physics among others STEM related subjects. Justifying these findings, academic interest being an aspect of knowledge described and measured as students' interest in school activities. It is also described in terms of self-determined zeal which is linked with students' achievement in the subject content being learned. Despite the identification of the two forms of interest such as personal and situational interest. It was affirmed that students can approach a learning situation with or without interest. Situational interest on the other hand, refers to an interest level wherein people acquired by participating in an environmental context. In this study therefore, interest is linked to the student in relation to school. Individuals' interest has been hypothesized to be a relatively enduring predisposition to attend to certain objects and activities, and it associates with positive effect, persistence and learning in Mathematics.

Research question 3: What is the joint correlation of locus of control scores, academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement scores in Mathematic in Delta State?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant correlation between academic interest scores and secondary school students' academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state.

Table 3: Regression analysis on secondary school students' locus of control, academic interest, self-esteem and their academic achievement in Mathematics

N	R	R Square	R^2 Square	Df	Cal. F	Pvalue
355	0.66	0.430	0.429	352	514.79	0.000

Table 3 showed that a high positive relationship of 0.66 exist among secondary school students' locus of control, academic interest jointly with their academic achievement in mathematics in Delta state. In the same vein, at 0.05 level of significance, 3df numerator and 352df denominator, the calculated F514.79 with P-value 0.000 which is less than 0.05, the third null

hypothesis is not accepted. The relationship existing among secondary school students' locus of control, academic interest and self-esteem jointly with their academic achievement in mathematics is significant.

The findings of this study revealed that they exist a high positive relationship among secondary school students' locus of control, academic interest jointly with their academic achievement in mathematics. This finding aligns with that of Okafor (2020) which found that student interest predicts about 57% of academic achievement scores of secondary school students in physics among others STEM related subjects. Although Onah and Anamezie (2022) reported that academic interest relatively and significantly contributed 18% to the prediction of academic achievement of secondary school Physics among other core subjects including mathematics. This could also be likened to factors such as teacher factor, student factor, instructional strategy, Mathematics anxiety and infrastructural problem correlate positively with the dependent measure, while class size and government factor correlate negatively with the dependent measure.

Similarly, the findings of the study revealed that the relationship existing among secondary school students' locus of control, academic interest jointly with their academic achievement in mathematics is significant. The finding further agrees with the findings of Eduwem et al (2017) which showed that students' psychological factors and students' achievement at knowledge and understanding levels are significant joint predictors of senior secondary students' performance in Mathematics at the thinking level, and that such prediction could be done using the equation: Students' performance in Mathematics thinking, interest, attitude, motivation, self-concept, test anxiety, locus of control, knowledge and understanding.

Justifying this findings, academic related beliefs, such as locus of control and academic interest are likely to influence student's decision to engage in activities that enhances academic achievement in Mathematics. Nevertheless, attributions for success or failure, whether internal or external, are one piece of information that students use to make appraisal regarding their academic abilities and build their academic self-esteem. Belief in one's academic ability (academic interest) may cause students to believe they have the ability to be successful, which could deter that student from academically dishonest behaviour and in turn make them achieve

high academically. Often times, secondary school students are most likely to carry forward what they learn during this time in their lives, so it is crucial to their development that they learn how to connect with others, that they are valuable and capable members of society and that they could become successful in their academic.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that a high positive significant relationship exists among locus of control, academic interest and academic achievement of secondary school students in mathematics subject.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were made:

1. Guidance counsellors should work together to structure stimulating and engaging activities in secondary schools. Bearing in mind the needs for students to have a sense of belonging to the school as this would help improve their general academic achievement.
2. In order to improve on student's psychological attributes which in turn makes or mare their academic achievement in core subjects, the school management should ensure that counselling offices are utilized in initiating group interaction between students, the counsellor and other staffs of the school environment. This will enable them maintain a sense of being part of the school such that it could reflect their improvement in academic achievement.
3. The school authorities should endeavour to organize programs like workshops and conferences so that teachers would learn to offer students more individualized attention.

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