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The Relationship Between Locus of Control and Academic Performance in English Language in Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between locus of control and academic performance in English among senior secondary school students in Anambra State of Nigeria. Two hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H01: There is no significant relationship between locus of control and students performance in English language.

H02: The relationship between locus of control and academic performance does not differ significantly among secondary school students due to sex differences.

A total of 800 senior secondary II and III students were randomly selected in Enugu and Nsukka urban schools. The students' performances in terminal continuous assessment examinations and the Nigeria adapted inventory for measuring locus of control formed the instruments for the study. Pearson correlation coefficient and $X^2$ were used to analyze the data.

It was found that (a) there is significant relationship between student performance in English and locus of control, (b) male students' performance is less predictable than that of their female counterparts.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

There are variations in the academic performance of students. Students' academic performance can be determined by a number of factors. People also perceive the reasons for their academic performance variously. They therefore attribute the cause of the outcome of their performance to different sources.

Students tend to attribute their performance in examinations to one thing or the other. This affects their performance in subsequent examinations. To one individual, failing an examination may mean the result of his non-serious, or his careless attitude towards preparation for the examination. To another, it may mean an end result of factors totally external to him, the teacher's hatred for him or it may be that luck has turned against him.

A good number of studies have been done on academic performance and factors that influence it. These factors include in native ability (cognitive) and non-cognitive factors like
attitude, socio-economic status and other external or environmental factors. Very little attention has been paid to locus of control as one of the non-cognitive factors that can affect academic performance. Among the studies done in locus of control as a variable that affects academic performance include the studies of Condall, Katkovsky and Crandall (1965), Achievement Responsibility (ARS); Weiner (1972), Internal-External Locus of control (I-E) scale (Rotter, 1966), Locus of responsibility (Eys, 1985), Diagnosing test anxiety in counselling for academic achievement (Nwabuisi, 1989), Locus of control as a predictor of test anxiety (Nwabuisi, in press).

According to Condall, Katkovsky and Crandall (1965) "the same reinforcement in the same situation may be perceived by one individual as within his own control and by another as outside his influence" p.92. Locus of control can be used in predicting various behavioral patterns (Eys, 1978, Rotter, 1966, Nwabuisi, 1989). Specifically Nwabuisi (1989) pointed out that Internal-External control scale can be used in predicting test anxiety.

The performance of students in secondary school has been the concern of parents, teachers and students alike. Students' success or failure in their secondary school examinations in Nigeria determine the economic and social status of many Nigerians in their later life. English language is one of the two compulsory subjects in the Nigerian school system. English language is the only subject that every student entering a Nigerian tertiary institution must have at least a pass level. In most of the institutions, especially universities, a student must pass English at a credit level before he can enter the institution. Many students find it extremely difficult to attain that level of pass in the English examination. The cause of mass failure in English language in our secondary school examinations has been a problem to many people in Nigeria. This is why the researcher has embarked on this study to find out the relationship between locus of control and senior secondary school students' academic performance in English language. Is a person's causal attribution a factor in his academic performance?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses formed the basis for the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between locus of control and students' performance in English.
2. The relationship between locus of control and academic performance in English does not differ significantly among secondary school students as a result of sex differences.

Method

This study was carried out in Enugu and Nsukka urban areas of Anambra State.

Design

The study is a correlational one.

Sample:

Students in senior secondary year two (SS2) form the population of the study. While Nsukka has 13 secondary schools, Enugu urban has 19. A total of eight schools participated in the study. By stratified random sampling, four schools were selected from each of the two urban areas. One boys', one girls' and two coeducational schools were randomly selected for the study.

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Random sampling was also used to select one hundred students from each school. In the coeducational schools, fifty female students were sampled from each school. The age range of the students is 15 - 18 years.

Instruments
Two instruments were used for the study. The first one is the Internal and External Locus of Control measure originally designed by Cramondall (1965) entitled Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire (IAR) and adapted by Eyo (1985) for Nigerian use. The second was proposed to be the scores of the students in their Junior Secondary School West African Examination Certificate. It was not possible to use the result of this examination because the raw scores of the students were not available. It became necessary therefore, to use the students’ terminal continuous assessment results.

Validity of the instruments
The Eyo (1980) version of the IAR has 0.64, p<0.001 df=81 for male subjects and 0.41, p< 0.02 df=31 for female subjects using construct validity. The continuous assessment examination were based on what was taught to students.

Reliability
The 1+ and 1- subscores were computed. They were found to be 0.45, p<0.001, df=04, for males 0.18, df=56 for female subjects, and 0.45, p< 0.01 df=152 for both sexes. According to Eyo these correlations were found to be as high as or even higher than those for twelfth grade students in the original study. Eyo went on to say that the adapted scale was not only internally consistent it was also very faithful to the original one. It has been Eyo’s opinion that the adapted IAR did not only retain all the properties and characteristics of the original, it had also shown its effectiveness and potential usefulness for studying the way Nigerian students attributed responsibility for academic success or failure. The scores on the internal locus of control will be used in the analysis. They will be compared with the academic performance of students. The continuous assessment tests consisted of teacher-made questions. The teachers constructed the questions for continuous assessment on what they taught the students. What each taught in each class has been determined week by week in the syllabus made by the Federal Ministry of Education.

Key
X = Internal Locus of Control Scores
Y = Performance in Terminal Continuous Assessment
HAP = High Academic Performance
LAP = Low Academic Performance
AMP = All Male Performance
AFP = All Female Performance
OSP = Overall Students Performance

Analysis And Discussion
In this study two hypotheses had been proposed:
(1) There is no significant relationship between locus of control and academic performance of senior secondary school students in English.
### Table: Correlation coefficient and regression analysis of internal locus of control and students' academic performance in English Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>X → Y</th>
<th>X → Y</th>
<th>X → Y</th>
<th>X → Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HAP (Gender)</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.942</td>
<td>1.035</td>
<td>2.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAP</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.228</td>
<td>2.784</td>
<td>1.578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.589</td>
<td>3.123</td>
<td>1.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>2.845</td>
<td>4.145</td>
<td>2.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSP</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>3.829</td>
<td>5.246</td>
<td>3.567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **X → Y**: Correlation coefficient
- **X → Y**: Regression coefficient

**Explanation**

- **HAP**: Gender
- **LAP**: Learning Attitude and Practice
- **AMP**: Achievement Motivation Pattern
- **AFP**: Achievement Performance Pattern
- **OSP**: Overall Performance Score

**LR**: $y = 8.344 + 128.8x$  
**y = 17.61 + 1.073x**  
**y = 5.233 + 1.950x**  
**y = 8.66 + 1.55x**  
**y = 38.68 + 0.337x**

The relationship between locus of control and academic performance in English Language does not differ significantly among senior secondary school students due to sex differences.
Table 1 reveals that there is a high positive relationship between locus of control and academic achievement in English among S.S.S. in Nigeria. The functional relationship between the scores of internal locus of control (x) and the Performance (y) as displayed on the table is expressed by the following equations:

\[
\begin{align*}
Y_{HAP} &= 6.344 - 128.8X_{HAP} \\
Y_{LAP} &= 17.61 + 1.073X_{LAP} \\
Y_{AMP} &= 5.363 + 1.682X_{AMP} \\
Y_{AFP} &= 8.660 + 1.550X_{AFP} \\
Y_{OSP} &= 38.68 + 0.337X_{OSP}
\end{align*}
\]

The tests of goodness of fit of the regression equations show that \(Y_{HAP}\) has the regression equation with a goodness of fit of 90.24%, that of \(LAP\) is 90.44% and \(AFP\) 81.16%. These indicate that the regression equations were very accurate predictors in each of the categories concerned.

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis states:

The relationship between locus of control and academic performance in English does not differ significantly among senior secondary school students due to sex differences.
### Table 2: Chi-square Test of the Power of Prediction of AMP and AFP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Score</th>
<th>AMP Observed Performance</th>
<th>Predicted Performance</th>
<th>Internal Score</th>
<th>AFP Observed Performance</th>
<th>Predicted Performance</th>
<th>AMP (O-E)^2</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>AFP (O-E)^2</th>
<th>O</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30.87</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31.93</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31.28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39.69</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47.69</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47.44</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>56.10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>55.21</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 2.69\]  \[X^2 = 0.632\]
The $X^2$ test of the residuals of the two regressional equations shows that the AMP equation has $X^2$ value of 2.69 while that of AFP is 0.832 for the same number of scores. This means that AMP has higher residuals of prediction than the AFP. In effect, AMP is less accurately predicted than the AFP. This fact of difference in prediction between the two variables is shown in the difference in the correlation coefficient of the two variables.

### Table 3: Measure of Dispersion of Internal Scores and Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HAP</th>
<th>LAP</th>
<th>AMP</th>
<th>AFP</th>
<th>OSP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$x$</td>
<td>25.05</td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>20.26</td>
<td>28.16</td>
<td>25.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$s$</td>
<td>47.17</td>
<td>34.97</td>
<td>48.11</td>
<td>48.11</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 3 the mean ($x$) internal locus of control scores for the HAP is 20.26 and the standard deviation is 4.14. The LAP has a $x$-score of 16.17 and $s$ of 2.72. This suggests that the internal locus of control scores of HAP are more than that of LAP. The AMP has a mean score of 28.16 and $s$ of 2.26 while the AMP has a $x$-score of 20.26 and $s$ of 4.14. This suggests that the pattern of distribution of the scores in these two variables is similar. This is evinced from the closeness of the arithmetic average (Table 3). As the Table displays, the OSP has a $x$ of 25.05 which is close to the means of AMP and AFP. The $s$ for the OSP is 5.21. This high value of $s$ shows that the internal locus of control scores are more widely distributed when all the subjects are taken into account.

In considering the academic performance of the students, it is easy to see that HAP has a mean performance of 47.82% and standard deviation of 2.96, the LAP has a $x$-score of 28.16 and $s$ of 4.14, and the AMP has a $x$-score of 20.26 and $s$ of 2.72. The index (i) of dispersion is 32.125 and 5.34 for HAP and LAP respectively. The AMP has a score of 45% and standard deviation of 7.76 while the performance of AMP has a $x$-score of 48.11% and standard deviation of 8.8. The index of the AMP is 5.21 whereas that of the AMP is 2.26. This indicates similar pattern of dispersion of the performances of these categories of students.

The OSP has a performance mean of 47.82% and standard deviation of 2.96 with the index value of 2.72 thus showing the closeness in the overall students' academic performance.

As can be observed the various measures of dispersion indicate that the students' scores are uniformly distributed in all the categories. The performance in all the categories are dispersed in a similar way thus indicating that the high academic achievers are more internally oriented than students who are externally oriented. This confirms Nwabuisi's (1986) finding which showed that the more a student is external in orientation, the more prone he is to debilitating test anxiety and the less he achieves in academic performance. Conversely, a person who is internally oriented in locus of control is more likely to perform better in academic achievement than an externally oriented person. This finding is in accord with Wellner's (1980) that found that achievement striving, affective reaction, expectation concerning future outcomes are determined in part by student's attributional conclusions concerning
In Nigeria, Maqsud (1980) noted that more externally oriented secondary school students tended to underachieve in school. From the analysis, it can be seen that the performance among male and female students differs. The hypothesis that the academic performance of students did not differ due to sex differences can't stand. The evidence of this is shown in the X2 calculations where the AMP yielded 2.69 and AFP 0.63 values. The AMP has higher residuals than the AFP. The inference is that AMP performance is less accurately predicted than AFP, thus supporting the correlation coefficient where AFP has 0.901 and AMP 0.702 with the explanation 81.16% and 52% respectively (table 1).

Implications for Counselling

It has been documented that locus of control can be used to predict academic performance in Nigerian secondary school (Nwabuisi in press). It has also been established that students who are internally oriented in locus of control achieve more than students who are external in orientation (Nwabuisi, 1986, Weiner, 1980, Maqsud, 1980). This being the case, counsellors and teachers should always bear in mind that students should be helped to take responsibility of their actions. In this way students will be able to attribute the outcome of their actions as being their own making, they will put necessary efforts to achieve higher than they used to achieve before - knowing that whatever they score academically is what they merit and not an outcome of any external forces.

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Nwabuisi, E. M. Locus of Control as a Predictor of Test Anxiety (in press).

