

IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL DISORDER ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTH CENTRAL STATES, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of emotional disorder on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The study adopted ex-post facto survey research design. The population of the study consists of 96, 972 public secondary school students in North Central States (States Ministry of Education 2024). The sample of the study consist a total of 398 secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. Five instruments were adapted and used for the study. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, a trial test was carried out on a sample of 20 students from Government Day Secondary School, Bwari-Abuja. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha coefficient to estimate the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.80, 0.82, 0.81, and 0.78 were obtained. The study used descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study revealed that depression has impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The study also revealed that anxiety among students can negatively affect their academic achievement. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that students' emotional disorder play a crucial role in shaping their academic achievement. The study recommended among others that Schools should establish confidential school-based counselling services where students experiencing symptoms of depression can receive regular psychological support, screening, and appropriate referrals to mental health professionals.

Keywords: Emotional disorder, Academic Achievement, Secondary school, Students.

Introduction

Academic achievement is the end product of the efforts of the teacher in the classroom. It is called learning outcome and it can be assessed in different ways. It is seen as the degree at which a student is able to replicate or transfer what he/she has learnt in a learning process. It is the end product of the whole schooling process. It serves as a way of judging both the effectiveness of the teacher and the ability of the students to learn. According to Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto (2020), academic achievement is the ability of

students to replicate what they have been taught either in written or oral form. This shows that academic achievement is objective-based. That is, academic achievement is measured based on the learning experience in which the learner is exposed to. Academic excellence of students is a desirable achievement of every education institution. Thus, a lot of efforts are put in place to facilitate learning, and to ease the teaching and learning process to enhance effective learning among the students. This is why instructional media of different types are developed and used for teaching and learning such as YouTube audiovisual documentaries, digital multimedia instructional packages and many others (Azor, Asogwa, Ogwu&Apeh, 2020). According to Obumse and Egenti (2021), the desire for high academic achievement put a lot of pressure and task on students, teachers and education institutions. This shows that every system of education revolves around students' academic achievement.

Anxiety is seen as a complex psychological construct that leads to numerous emotional disorders. For this reason, anxiety is seen as an emotional state where by an individual is very nervous, restless, and fearful about something. According to Akinade (2019), anxiety is the state of feeling unease and tensed up over some situations without actually a known cause. Anxiety is also seen by Chikwendu (2021) as the emotional state in which a person feels unnecessarily tensed, shaking, loosing temporary mental and physical coordination and developing some sense of temporary loss of memory. Some symptoms of anxiety in the classroom could be unnecessary sweating, frequent urination and uneasiness especially when questions are asked or during test and examination. Anxiety is actually what causes stage freight which negatively affects the comportment of people while they are talking to the crowd or while they are in the crowd. Many authors such as Chikwendu (2021) and Bowras and Holt (2020) are of the opinion that in virtually all that one does; little anxiety is needed. This is because; anxiety is what makes people human, being afraid of challenge at its first stage. However, anxiety becomes a problem when it is excess in the individual. Therefore, anxiety is an emotional disorder that its complexity makes one to become either tensed up, afraid, restless, worried or become nervous when faced with different situations. In the education sector, anxiety among students could inhibit their learning process (Agbor, Otakpo&Ukoima, 2020). When a child could easily forget an answer to a question asked by the teacher due to fear or nervousness in the classroom either in an examination or in a test, such student's performance will be jeopardized. Therefore, for students to do well in their studies, they need relaxed minds to be able to comprehend what they read. Moreover, anxiety leads to truancy in school and even prevents students from participating actively in the class activities. Secondary school students with social phobia may tend to drop out of school without finishing. However, there are other emotional disorders like depression which could also inhibit learning.

Depression is the emotional state of being fed up with life. It is a psychological state of showing that one is sad, not in the mood to socialize. According to Animba and Obika (2020), depression is a mood disorder that has to do with feeling of sadness, anger and restlessness which infuse into the daily activities of an individual. According to Tus (2021), depression is the mental state of lack of interest in daily life and how one works in school, work place and generally. It is the state of being sad with life and feeling dejected and less important, thus, one tries to hibernate from public functions or does not function effectively in some public activities that one had been very much active in. According to Miller (2017),

depression is a mental state where by one judge less of oneself, disvalues oneself, has less self-worth and is unable to cope with ones' daily life and tries to be left alone in solitude. Depression is more eminent among secondary school students than adults. In the academic environment, Fosterling and Binser (2020) state that high level of depression is associated with low academic achievement of students. That is to say, that depression affects the academic achievement of student in a way that students that are depressed tend to take their studies less serious. This is because of their feeling of dejection and rejection; hence they lose interest in attending to their academic activities which could have adverse effect on academic success of students. From the foregoing, the study investigated the impact of emotional disorders on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Academic achievement is a key indicator of students' success in the educational system, particularly at the senior secondary school level, as it shapes their future educational and career opportunities. While various factors contribute to academic achievement, the roles of emotional disorders and social adjustment are critical, yet often overlooked aspects that can significantly influence students' academic outcomes. Emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression, may impede students' cognitive functioning, self-regulation, motivation, and overall engagement in school activities. These issues are becoming increasingly prevalent in North Central States, Nigeria, where a combination of socio-economic disparities, environmental stressors, and diverse student backgrounds may exacerbate these challenges.

Senior secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria may be facing a variety of stressors, including academic pressure, family expectations, and peer-related challenges, which could be emotional struggles and eventually hinder their academic potential. Emotional disorders are often linked to a range of behavioral and psychological issues, such as low self-esteem, poor concentration, reduced motivation, and difficulty coping with school demands, which ultimately affect academic performance. In addition, the ability to adjust socially to the school environment, which involves forming positive peer relationships, managing interpersonal conflicts, and adapting to the social norms of school life, plays a crucial role in students' overall well-being and academic success. Students' who struggle with social adjustment, including difficulties in peer relationships or a sense of belonging, may experience feelings of isolation, alienation, and frustration, further contributing to poor academic outcomes.

Although there is a growing body of literature on the effects of emotional disorders and social adjustment on academic performance, the specific context of senior secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria seems to have received limited attention. This gap in knowledge necessitates an investigation into how emotional disorders impact the academic achievement of students in the region. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the impact of emotional disorders on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of emotional disorders on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.
2. Determine the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria?
2. What is the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated to be tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Depression has no significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.
2. Anxiety has no significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted ex-post facto survey research design. The population of the study consists of 96, 972 public secondary school students in North Central States (States Ministry of Education 2024). The sample of the study consist a total of 398 secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. Five instruments were adapted and used for the study. To ascertain the reliability of the instruments, a trial test was carried out on a sample of 20 students from Government Day Secondary School, Bwari-Abuja. Data collected were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha coefficient to estimate the internal consistency of the instruments. The reliability coefficients of 0.77, 0.80, 0.82, 0.81, and 0.78 were obtained. The study used descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, while t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria?

The results that support the above question are provided below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Academic Achievement	398	50.721	3.265
Depression	398	14.313	2.536

Cluster Mean/SD	32.517	2.900
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Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The table reveals the cluster mean of 32.517 with a corresponding standard deviation of 2.900. Since the cluster mean of 32.517 is above the benchmark of 2.50, it implies that all the respondents agreed that depression has impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria? The results that support the above question are provided below.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria

Variable	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Academic Achievement	398	50.721	3.265
Anxiety	398	13.816	1.924
Cluster Mean/SD		32.268	2.594

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The table reveals the cluster mean of 32.268 with a corresponding standard deviation of 2.594. Since the cluster mean of 32.268 is above the benchmark of 2.50, it implies that all the respondents agreed that anxiety has impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Hypothesis One: Depression has no significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

The table below provides answer to the above hypothesis.

Table 7: t-test Analysis of the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	α	t-cal	P-value
Remarks							
Academic Achievement	398	50.721	3.265				
				397	0.05	215.301	0.000
Rejected							Ho
Depression	398	14.313	2.536				

t-cal = 215.301, df=397, P=0.05>0.000

Table 7 shows t-test analysis of the impact of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The table reveals a calculated value of $t = 215.301$ at $df = 397$ and $P = 0.000$. Since $P < 0.05$, the result is significant therefore, the null hypothesis which states that depression has no significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria was rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld. This implies that depression has a significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Anxiety has no significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. Table 8 provides answer to the above hypothesis.

Table 8: t-test Analysis of the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria

Variables	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	df	α	t-cal	P-value	Remarks
Academic Achievement	398	50.721	3.265					
				397	0.05	302.651	0.001	Ho Rejected
Anxiety	398	13.816	1.924					

t-cal = 302.651, df=397, P=0.05>0.001

Table 8 shows t-test analysis of the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The table reveals a calculated value of $t = 302.651$ at $df = 397$ and $P = 0.001$. Since $P < 0.05$, the result is significant therefore, the null hypothesis which states that anxiety has no significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria was rejected and the alternative hypothesis upheld. This implies that anxiety has a significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are discussed based on the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study.

The findings from research question one revealed that depression has impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis to the above research question revealed that depression has a significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. This implies that if depressed students are not properly handled, it will affect their academic achievement negatively. This finding aligns with Bi, Moon and Shin (2023) who studied on the effects of depression on academic performance in Chinese adolescents and revealed that there was significant negative relationship between depression and

academic achievement of students. Moreover, depression led to decline in academic performance due to decreased concentration on learning and increased academic anxiety. The study also agrees with Animba and Obika (2020) who studied the influence of depression on academic achievement of secondary school students in Enugu state Nigeria and showed that depression influences the academic performance of secondary school students negatively. That is, the higher the depression level, the lower the academic performance of students by gender. This finding also tallies with the finding of Muhammad, Terna and Saanyol (2022) that carried out a study on the connection between depression and academic performance of undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria and showed that there is a significant negative relationship between depression and students' academic performance. Khesht-Masjedi, Shokrgozar, Abdollahi, Habibi, Asghari, Ofoghi and Pazhooman (2019) also studied the connection between gender, age, anxiety, depression, and academic achievement of teenagers in Iran and submitted that that very few number of the students 2.9% had severe depression. Majority of the students (57.2%) had normal level of depression, 33.6% had mild depression and 6.3% had moderate depression. There was significant difference in depression scores of students by gender and boys are had more depression level.

The findings from research two revealed that anxiety has impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. The corresponding hypothesis to the above research question revealed that anxiety has a significant impact on academic achievement of secondary school students in North Central States, Nigeria. This implies that anxiety among students can negatively affect their academic achievement. This finding is in consonance with Kaswadi, Malik and Keat (2020) that carried out a study on the influence of anxiety on academic achievement of undergraduate students in Malaysia and submitted that girls have higher levels of anxiety when compared to boys. Majority of the students have moderate levels of anxiety. There was a mild negative relationship was found between anxiety levels and academic achievement. The finding is also in agreement with Dawood, Ghadeer, Mitsu, Almutary and Alenezi (2022) carried a study on the connection between Test Anxiety and Academic Achievement of Nursing Students in College of Nursing, King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences – Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and showed that 50.9% of the students had moderate test anxiety, while 14.4% had severe test anxiety.

There was statistically significant negative relationship between test anxiety scores and undergraduate nursing students' academic achievement. This shows that undergraduate nursing students with less anxiety do have higher academic achievement. There was negative none statistically significant relationship between age and anxiety level of students. This suggests that the older the students, the lesser the test anxiety scores of the students. This finding is also in support of the finding by Syokwaa, Aloka and Ndunge (2019) who conducted a study on the relationship between anxiety levels and academic achievement among students in selected secondary schools in Lang'ata District, Kenya and found that there were high personality anxiety levels and low-normal test anxiety level. Also, there was a correlation between anxiety levels and academic achievement, which showed that the high the anxiety levels, the higher it had a negative impact on academic achievement of students. However, this finding contradicts the finding by Singh (2019) who studied the impact of anxiety on academic achievement of undergraduate students in India and showed that there

was positive correlation between low level of anxiety and academic achievement. Thus, as academic anxiety increases within the limit of low anxiety, academic achievement also increases and when academic anxiety decreases within the limit of low anxiety academic achievement decreases. The more academic anxiety increases within the limit of moderate anxiety, academic achievement also increases and when academic anxiety decreases within the limit of moderate anxiety academic achievement decreases. However, there was negative correlation between high anxiety and academic achievement. That is, the higher the level of anxiety, the lower the academic achievement and vice versa. Also, there was significant difference in the anxiety level of students by gender. Female student had more anxiety level than the male students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that students' emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and school adjustment factors play a crucial role in shaping their academic achievement. Specifically, psychological factors such as **depression and anxiety** negatively influence students' ability to perform well academically.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study and the conclusion reached, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools should establish confidential school-based counselling services where students experiencing symptoms of depression can receive regular psychological support, screening, and appropriate referrals to mental health professionals.
2. Schools should introduce mindfulness training and stress management workshops in the school curriculum to help students develop coping strategies for anxiety, especially in relation to examinations and academic pressure.

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