

Counsellors' Attitudinal Skills as Predictors of Academic Achievement Motivation in Secondary Schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated Counsellors' Attitudinal Skills as Predictors of Academic Achievement Motivation in Secondary Schools in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria. The need for the study came as a result of increasing rate of poor academic achievement motivation of secondary school students in the study area to which the researchers sought to find solutions. It was guided by two research questions and two corresponding null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The research design used for the study was correlation survey design. The population of the study comprised the entire five hundred and thirty secondary schools identify from cumulative record folder of SS II students who have performed poor and show lack of interest in schooling in the study area. The entire population of 530 students were used as sample. In this case, there was no sample. This is because the number can be managed. The instrument for data collection were two sets of questionnaire titled "Counsellors' Attitudinal Skills Assessment (CASA)"; and "Academic Achievement Motivation Scale (AAMS)". CASA and AAMS were properly validated by experts in test development and the internal consistency reliability indices of the items estimated at 0.82 and 0.84 respectively using cronbach alpha method. The data collected were analyzed using coefficient of determination (R²) for research questions, while Linear Regression was used in testing the hypotheses at p<0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between listening skill of counsellors and academic achievement motivation of secondary school students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that counsellors should organize seminars on counsellors' attitudinal skills on academic achievement motivation to help motivate secondary school students in schooling.*

KEYWORDS: Counsellors' Attitudinal Skills and Academic Achievement Motivation

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of education as a tool for fine-tuning the social, political and economic development of a nation is inestimable. Educational development in Nigeria is guided by the National Policy on Education, which provides for non-formal as well as formal modes of education delivery (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2014). The aim of education in Nigeria is to equip every citizen with such knowledge, values, attitudes among others that will enable the individual derive maximum benefits from membership of the society. However, the FRN (2014) proposes education to enable the individual or rather student live a fulfilled life and contribute towards the development and welfare of the community. This fulfilled life can only come into play when the individual is motivated to achieve academically.

Unfortunately, academic achievement motivation of Nigerian secondary school students has remained poor over the years (Rohah, 2018). Zoka (2019) have shown that there is a fallen standard in academic achievement of secondary school students in Nigeria. A large number of students year after year sit for General Certificate Examination (GCE) because they could not make it in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE). There have been instances of students sitting for these examinations up to six times without getting the required five credits to gain admission into institutions of higher learning. This poor achievement is attributed to many factors being lack of motivation is the major factor. Ibeh (2019) found out that motivation to excel appears lacking and as a result, students withdraw from federal and state secondary schools to private schools in Enugu State where they engage in malpractice. It is very possible that lack of motivation is particularly the cause of students' poor academic achievement. This poor achievement motivation in secondary school has remained a source of worry to enlightened parents, professional groups and stakeholders in education (Kanu, 2020). According to Abada (2021), secondary school students are often found loitering in the streets and market places when they are supposed to be in the classroom or library reading. However, there is this menace of addiction to the electronic media like social networking on internet (browsing, WhatsApp, Facebook) among others (Voka & Ndu, 2022). This is enough evidence that students now prefer pleasure to their studies which has taken the time that students should have invested in their studies for better academic achievement. As a result therefore, the motivation to achieve academically appears to be largely extinguished.

Motivation allows learners to participate in learning activities and maintain their learning status (Dtonh, 2021). Academic motivation is a students' desire (as reflected in his or her approach, persistence, and level of interest) regarding academic subjects when the student's competence is judged against a standard of performance or excellence (Idman, 2022; Ibhet, 2023). Academic achievement motivation according to Johphi (2021) is a situation where learning outcome is appraised in terms of matching it with standardized testing and its successful completion.

Academic achievement motivation is usually personal success through demonstrating competence which leads to social standards (Ball, 2023).

However, there has been a general understanding about the lack of academic achievement motivation among students in Nigeria and this has been of much concern to stakeholders in education. Emeshi (2021) pointed out that lack of achievement motivation has become an important matter that concern many stakeholders like counsellors, educational psychologists, school administrators, teachers among others. This concern about students' lack of interest in schooling has prompted some people to investigate the determinants of students' learning outcomes. For instance, Udohi and Ehihi (2022) identified some factors that lead to students' lack of motivation in schools. According to the authors, the factors included dwindling teachers' commitment, inadequate resources or poor socio-economic status, psychological factors, poor study habits and stress among others. The authors also noted that counsellors' attitudinal skills such as empathy and listening skills forms the major factor undermining academic motivation. Guhai (2020) found that lack of academic achievement motivation lead to high academic failure and students' dropout. In the same manner, Rothi and Arsdit (2021) noted that students blamed their lack of motivation mainly on counsellors' attitudinal skills.

Counsellors' attitudinal skills are soft (interpersonal) and hard (technical) attributes that a counselor puts to use in order to best help their clients work through personal issues and overcome obstacles that are currently preventing them from living a full and happy life (Durando, 2020). This implies that for a counsellor to function effectively, there are essential basic skills required of him or her. These basic attitudinal skills according to Bronssarb (2022) include: empathy, listening, open questions, genuineness, among others. These attitudinal skills are very important because they are the attributes that counsellors use to help their clients understand themselves (Pin, 2022). In other words, counsellors' attitudinal skills are important skills which counsellors should possess for effective counselling and meaningful outcome.

In all the counsellors' attitudinal skills, empathy and listening skills are the core skills. According to Ezra (2021), empathy and listening skills are basic and most essential skills required of counsellors during counselling session. Empathy skill is a skill that a counsellor needs to perform his job effectively. Empathy skill is the ability of the counselor to understand what the client is experiencing and to communicate that kind of feeling (Corey, 2023).

In this case, the ability of the counselor to understand the students experiencing lack of achievement motivation can help such students excel academically. It is a key element of emotional intelligence, the link between self and others, because it is how we as individuals understand what others are experiencing (Cark, 2022). Empathy skill according to Barbara (2023) does not mean that you have to identify with the client or share similar experiences, but

you should feel what the person is passing through. You may not actually know how they feel, but it is important to develop the ability to discern another's experience and then to communicate that perception back to the individual to clarify what they have said (Barbara, 2023). Lidar (2022) found out that empathy attitudinal skill influences positively counselling session. Empathy attitudinal skill is being use by counsellors because without it one cannot understand the feeling of their client. Brown and Udah (2023) found out that empathy skill of counsellors' affect to great extent the achievement motivation of secondary school students. Also, Eneh (2023) posits that empathy skill relates positively with students' academic motivation. Ezekiel (2021) posits that the empathy skill of a counselor relates positively to achievement motivation of students.

Listening attitudinal skill is another core skill of a counselor. According to Mbah (2021), listening skill include nod your head at appropriate times to confirm that you are hearing what they are saying, making eye contact among others. Listening attitudinal skill means counsellors' conscious efforts to hear what the client has to say in order to respond to the client in such a way that they feel understood (Cabra, 2021). To support the above claim, Barbara (2022) found out that successful counselling is anchored on listening attitudinal ability. Bronner (2021) found out that listening skill has link to achievement motivation of students. Equally, Adole (2022; Mutek, 2023; and Udeze, 2023) found out that listening skill has direct relationship with achievement motivation of students. In addition, Ehaih (2022) found out that attitudinal listening skill to a great extent influences counselling session. This implies that counsellors with this skill will be able to help students who are experiencing maladaptive behaviour such as lack of academic achievement motivation. Achievement motivation can have several effects in behaviour. Individuals with high achievement motivation are often more likely to set challenging goals for themselves, persist in the face of obstacles and seek out tasks that provides a sense of accomplishment (Ekeh, 2023). Lack of academic achievement motivation of students in Enugu State, Nigeria, specifically Nsukka Education Zone is assuming an alarming rate. School principals, teachers, parents, significant others have often wondered and worried that students are not motivated academically. In spite of efforts made to reduce this ugly situation of low achievement motivation, it is still on the increase. It is based on this background that the researchers sought to investigate counsellors' attitudinal skills as predictors of academic achievement motivation of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

The main objective of the study was to investigate whether counsellors' empathy and listening attitudinal skills predict academic achievement motivation of secondary school students in Nsukka Education Zone of Enugu State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to:

- (1) determine the predictive power of empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.
- (2) determine the predictive power of listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.

Research Questions

- (1) What is the predictive power of empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students?
- (2) What is the predictive power of listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.

H₀₂: There is no significant predictive power between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.

METHODS

The research design used for the study was a correlation survey design. The population for the study was all 562 SS II students identify from cumulative record folder who have performed poor in English Language and Mathematics in the study area. The entire population of 562 SS II students were used as sample. In this case, there was no sample. This is because the number can be managed. The instrument used for data collection were two sets of questionnaire titled: "Counsellors' Attitudinal Skills Assessment (CASA)" and "Academic Achievement Motivation Scalet (AAMC)". The CASA and AAMC were properly validated by experts in test development and the internal consistency reliability indices of the items estimated as 0.82 and 0.84 respectively using cronbach alpha method. The data collected were analyzed using coefficient of determination (R^2) for research questions while linear regression was used in testing the hypotheses at $p < 0.05$ level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 1: Regression analysis on the predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students

Variable	R	R^2
Empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students	0.61	0.72

R^2 =Coefficient of Determination

The result on Table 1 shows that the coefficient between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation was 0.61. This implies that there exist a high predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation. Table 1 also revealed that the coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.61 was 0.72. This coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that 72% of variation in academic achievement motivation of students is attributed to empathy attitudinal skill.

Thus, empathy attitudinal skill predicts academic achievement motivation positively.

Table 2: Regression analysis on the predictive power between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students

Variable	R	R^2
Listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students	0.60	0.78

R^2 =Coefficient of Determination

The result on Table 2 shows that the coefficient between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students was 0.60. This means that there exist a high predictive power between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation. Table 2 also revealed that the coefficient of determination (R^2) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.60 was 0.78. This coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates that 78% of variation in academic achievement motivation of students is attributed to listening attitudinal skill.

Thus, listening attitudinal skill predicts academic achievement motivation positively.

Table 3: Regression analysis significant between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.213	1	.215	1.00	.002 ^a
Residual	64.812	529	.134		
Total	64.616	530			

The result on Table 3 shows that an F-ration of 1.000 with associated exact probability value of 0.002 is less than 0.05 the probability value set for the study. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The researchers therefore conclude that there is a significant predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.

Table 4: Regression analysis significant between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	.312	1	.218	2.00	.001 ^a
Residual	.61.422	529	.162		
Total	.61.498	530			

The result on Table 4 shows that an F-ratio of 2.00 with associated exact probability value of 0.001 is less than 0.05 the probability value set for the study. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The researchers therefore conclude that there is a significant predictive power between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.

DISCUSSION OF RESULT

The findings show that the correlation coefficient of students was high. This means that there exists a high positive predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students. By implication, it means that the coefficient of determination with a high percentage variation in the academic achievement motivation of students can be attributed to empathy attitudinal skill. It also showed that increase in the empathy skill of counsellors predicts high academic achievement motivation of students.

Further analysis of the predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students revealed that at the associated probability for the calculated value of F, is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant predictive power between empathy attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students.

The findings of this study are not alone in research. This is because, the findings is in support of the study of Ezekiel (2019) who posits that empathy attitudinal skill of a counselor relates positively to achievement motivation of students. In the same vein, Lidar (2022) found out that empathy attitudinal skill influences positively counselling session. Equally, this findings is similar to the findings of Brown and Udah (2023) who stated that empathy skill of counselor affects to a great extent the achievement motivation of secondary school students. Corroborating this findings are the findings of Eneh (2023) who posits that empathy skill relates positively with students' achievement motivation.

The findings also show that correlation coefficient between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement motivation of students was high. This means that there exist a high positive predictive power between listening attitudinal skill and academic achievement

motivation of students. The findings of this study is in agreement with the study of Barbara (2022) who found out that successful counselling is anchored on listening attitudinal ability. Equally Ehaih (2022) found out that listening attitudinal skill to a great extent influences counselling session. Bronner (2021) also found out that listening skill has link with achievement motivation of students. Equally, Adole (2022; Mutek, 2023; and Udeze, 2023) found out that listening skill have direct relationship with achievement motivation of students. The above findings however validated that empathy and listening attitudinal skills predict academic achievement motivation of students positively. The implication of these findings is that if secondary school students are not properly counselled, their lack of academic achievement motivation will continue to increase.

Strength of the Study

This study explored an area which addresses the contemporary problems among students in Nigerian public secondary schools. The investigation is considered timely, given the pot entail prediction of high academic achievement motivation of students. The use of correlation coefficient enabled the researchers to compare empathy and listening attitudinal skills and academic achievement motivation.

Limitations

Like other survey-based studies, this present study has some limiting factors. The study utilized data from the criterion referenced point of view to investigate the predictive power of empathy and listening attitudinal skills on academic achievement motivation of students without considering the intervening influences of demographic variables like gender, ethnicity and some personality traits. With these limitations the generalizability of the findings should be done with care. However, future studies should explore how those demographic variables could moderate the predictive power of empathy and listening attitudinal skills on improving academic achievement motivation among public secondary school students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that empathy and listening attitudinal skills predict positively academic achievement motivation among public secondary school students.

Recommendations

Thus, it was recommended that:

- (1) Federal government should provide enough guidance counsellors in the various public secondary schools who will assist in the counselling of the students as empathy and

listening attitudinal skills of counsellors predict academic achievement motivation of students.

Compliance with Ethical Standard

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: Faculty of Education Ethical Committee on research at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, granted approval to conduct this study. The authors adhered to the ethical standard specification of the American Psychological Association (APA) (2017), and with that of the World Medical Association (2013).

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