
**Mastery Motivation As Predictors Of Academic Performance
In English Among Secondary School Students In Rivers East
Senatorial District Of Rivers State**

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Abstract

The study investigated academic self-concept and mastery motivation as predictors of academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District. The study adopted a correlational research design. Three research questions and three hypotheses were stated to guide the study. A sample of 400 of SS2 students was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. The “Mastery Motivation Scale” (MMS) and English Performance Test (EPT) were used for data collection. The reliability of the instruments was determined using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). SCAMMS had a reliability coefficient of $r=0.85$ for Intrinsic Motivation Scale, $r=0.76$ for Task Persistence Scale, $r=0.81$ for Process Orientation Scale and $r=0.87$ for English Achievement Test. The data generated for the study was analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS); Simple regression analysis was employed for data analysis. Results showed that intrinsic motivation, task persistence and process orientation significantly predicted

academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Among others, it was recommended that students should be encouraged to explore avenues for self and intrinsic motivation, students should be given tasks they can easily perform as this will motivate them to stay on and perform better.

Key words: Intrinsic Motivation, Task Persistence, Process Orientation and English Performance

Introduction

Education is derived from the Latin words, *educere* and *educare*, implying a process of bringing out of the learner some innate and acquired skills, competencies and abilities, and nurturing the same through training, towards the full development of the individual. Thus, education is a learner-centred activity, geared towards equipping students achieve self-sufficiency in terms of their ability to function. A major goal of education therefore, is to ensure that the learner excels in school and in life. This goal of life constantly presents the students with new challenges as they pass through different endeavours in life. The students' performances in school therefore depends on the students mental and physical abilities which are influenced by a number of factors.

Among the important factors that affect students learning is critical thinking skill and learning styles which have a great influence on the students overall academic achievement. Despite this apparent position, majority of research on the factors associated with academic achievement of students are majorly rooted in the believe that cognitive factors such as intelligence are the major determinants of performance. However, recent research and empirical findings are beginning to acknowledge the role of non-cognitive factors and their contributions to the academic excellence of their pupils. It is on this basis that the current study investigates mastery motivation and academic self-concept as predictors of academic achievement in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

In Nigeria today, it is the researchers view that most of the problems that students experience in the course of going through the teaching/learning process result from a kind of natural desire to avoid confusion and frustration and their inability to understand other peoples point of view. Most of them often see the world exclusively within their own egocentric (self-centered) point of view. This invariably results in poor academic achievement, low grades, low self-esteem, which ultimately culminates into inefficient use of the English language for the purpose of communication and social interaction, especially during reading comprehension.

English language is an important language in the world. It is a world language, an international language and the language of science and technology. About a tenth of the world's population use English as a mother tongue and about a fourth of the world's population use English as a second or foreign language. It is a language used by most people in the world because no other language is spoken by as many people (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

In Nigeria, the multi-lingual and multi-cultural nature of the country and the absence of a national unifying indigenous language have led to the adoption of English language as an official medium of communication. The ability to communicate in English has remained an unwritten yardstick to measure literacy level in Nigeria. Certain advantages accrue to persons who speak the language both nationally and internationally. English language has always been the pivot on which the educational wheel of Nigeria rotates (Abdulraheem, et. al., 2017). English language occupies a strategic position in the social life of an average Nigerian-the language of government, education, administration, trade, commerce, industry and politics. It is also the language of mass media including newspapers, radios, televisions and even judiciary. It is the language of the entire school system in Nigeria (FRN 2014). It is a core subject in the secondary school curriculum such that a credit pass in English language is a prerequisite for one to gain admission into tertiary institution in the country. English is crucial for the survival of the child in the school system. Its importance cannot be overemphasized. Hence Etukudo, (2018), stressed that English language is the life wire of the whole communication system in Nigeria at home level, business arena, school environment and in the government settings. The newspapers, radio and television disseminate news and information and give entertainment first-hand in English, before translations are rendered in indigenous languages. Thus, the language has become an integral part of many social situations in Nigeria.

In view of the importance of English language, serious emphasis is placed on passing English language at credit or distinction level in addition to other subjects before any candidate can gain admission into any higher institution of learning. Secondary school curriculum, therefore, tends to emphasize the development of effective language skills as well as positive attitude towards the subject. Emphasis has always been placed on the use of English language in teaching at the various school levels. Even at the nursery or lower primary where the national language policy prescribes the use of the mother tongue, English language seems to have dominated. The reason being that ability to speak English language was recorded as an important yardstick for academic achievement at that level by parents. English language communicative competence developed at this level by children is considered very crucial for further academic pursuits. It is therefore on this basis that there have been multiple efforts aimed at improving the academic achievement in English Language.

According to Pruett (2010) academic achievement is the level of achievement attained via the combination of inputs from students' motivation and conduct. Also, Academic Achievement Index (2010) revealed that academic achievement is how students deal with their studies and responsibilities given to them by their teachers. Louis (2012) posits that academic achievement is the ability of students to obtain high grades and standard test scores in school courses, especially courses that are part of the core academic curriculum. From the foregoing, academic achievement as a major focus of research in the 21st century strengthens the basis for success and excellence in man's drive towards academic growth and development.

The search for factors that impacts on students' achievement in schools generally and English Language has yielded various results. While some studies have been focused on ascertaining the impact of teaching methods, others have placed greater emphasis on the intellectual capacity or cognitive competency of students. Only recently have effort been directed at understanding the impact of non-cognitive skills such as mastery motivation on academic achievement of students. It is to address this observation that the current study is being investigated.

Mastery motivation is a psychological concept that centers around an individual's innate drive and desire to acquire, develop, and excel in skills and competencies within various domains. At its core, mastery motivation represents the internal urge to seek personal growth, improvement, and expertise, rather than merely aiming for external rewards or comparisons with others (Morgan, et. al., 2010). Mastery motivation has also been referred to as effectance motivation, intrinsic motivation or competence motivation. However, the concept of mastery motivation is considered a different type of motivation as it is not based on the “direction towards or away from a goal”. Morgan and Harmon (2004) opined that mastery motivation is a psychological force that originates without the need for extrinsic reward and leads a person to attempt to master tasks for the intrinsic feeling of efficacy rather than because of current reward. Within the context of this study, Mastery motivation is defined as a psychological force that stimulates an individual to attempt independently, in a focused and persistent manner, to solve a problem and to master a skill or task.

Research into mastery motivation emerged in the 1950s through the work of Yarrow and associates (Ulvund, 2010), resulting in various conceptualizations and operationalizations. However, Wachs and Combs (2008) provide a conceptualization of mastery motivation which identified four sub-domains which are intrinsic motivation, task persistence, self-regulation and process orientation.

Intrinsic motivation is the cornerstone of mastery motivation, emphasizing the internal gratification one derives from engaging in an activity. Deci and Ryan (1985) explain that individuals intrinsically motivated are inherently drawn to tasks due to their inherent enjoyment, curiosity, and the satisfaction of experiencing personal competence. When a person is intrinsically motivated, their actions are driven by an inherent interest, making the journey of skill acquisition an inherently fulfilling experience.

Despite the interest and the empirical support for the integration of these non-cognitive factors on learning, there is no known study by the researcher within the context of Rivers State that has investigated the extent to which mastery motivation and academic self-concept predicts the academic achievement of secondary school students, especially in English Language. It is against this background that the current study is being conducted which investigates mastery motivation and academic self-concept as predictors of academic achievement of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Education serves as a cornerstone for personal development and societal progress, and the academic performance of students serves as a pivotal indicator of educational success. It thus follows that the quality of an educational system is reflected in the academic performance of students. Indeed, the academic performance of the students influences a country's social and economic development. However, the researcher has observed abysmal decline of students' academic performance particularly in mother subjects like English language.

Scholars have established that academic performance is influenced by numerous factors, including mastery motivation. While effort aimed at improving the academic performance of students have been ongoing for decades within Rivers State, there have not been adequate effort targeted at understanding and integrating mastery

motivation into the educational enterprise. The importance of mastery motivation and positive academic self-concept cannot be overstated, as their absence or deterioration can have detrimental effects on students' academic journey and overall well-being.

Poor mastery motivation, characterized by a lack of intrinsic drive and passion for learning, often results in decreased academic engagement and subpar performance. Students who lack the desire to truly understand and master subjects may struggle to grasp complex concepts, leading to low grades and limited academic growth. Without the internal motivation to excel, students might become disinterested in the learning process itself, hindering their ability to achieve their full academic potential. Additionally, mastery motivation is closely linked to persistence and grit – the ability to persevere in the face of challenges. Students who lack mastery motivation might give up easily when confronted with difficult tasks, as they lack the internal drive to overcome obstacles. Without the determination to endure setbacks, students might avoid taking on challenging subjects or assignments, limiting their intellectual growth and adaptability.

In the context of the Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State, where educational resources might already be limited, the negative consequences of poor mastery motivation and negative academic self-concept can be particularly concerning. Addressing these issues becomes crucial not only for individual student's success but, also for the overall development of the region. The problem of the study therefore, is to find out if self-concept and mastery motivation predict students' academic achievement.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study investigated academic mastery motivation as predictor of academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District. In specific terms, the objectives of this study include:

1. To examine intrinsic motivation as a predictor of academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
2. To find out if task persistence predicts academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
3. To investigate process orientation as a predictor of academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does intrinsic motivation predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District?
2. To what extent does task persistence predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District?
3. To what extent does process orientation predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

- H0₁ Intrinsic motivation does not significantly predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
- H0₂ Task persistence does not significantly predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.
- H0₃ Process orientation does not predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District.

Methodology

The correlational research design was adopted in carrying out this research. The reason for adopting this design is because the researcher seeks to understand the extent to which self-concept and mastery motivation predicts the academic achievement in English Language of secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District. According to Nwankwo (2016), correlational research design is used to determine the relationship between two or more variables.

The population of the study consisted of all the 22,624 senior secondary II (SS2) students in the 96 public secondary schools in Rivers East Senatorial District as at 2023/2024 academic session. (Department of Statistics, Rivers State Ministry of Education). The essence of selecting senior secondary II (SS2) students is because they are not in the examination class in addition to the fact that they are mature enough to adequately read, understand and respond to the instruments of the research for data collection.

The sample size for this study was 400 senior secondary school two students. This sample size is determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table of Minimum Sample Size Recommendation. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), for a population below 20000, a sample size of 380 was calculated. On the basis of this minimum recommendation, the researcher will increase the sample size to 400 in order to increase the probability for greater generalization. Simple random sampling technique will be used to draw the sample from Port Harcourt and Obio/Akpor. 50 respondents will be drawn from 4 different schools from each of the LGAs. i.e $50 \times 4 = 200$ by two LGAs totally 400.

Two instruments were used for the study, and they are Mastery Motivation Scale (MMS) and English Performance Test (EPT). The MMS questionnaire would be used to assess or measure self-concept and mastery motivation of the students while EAT will be used to measure academic achievement of the students. The researcher has decided to use English language because it is a core subject in the senior secondary school. The items in these instruments are constructed using the four-point Likert Scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagreed which were weighted as 4, 3, 2, and 1 points respectively.

EPT is a cognitive and non-standardized test developed by the researcher to assess academic performance. The instrument had 25 items and the items are derived from past West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) questions based on the syllabi for SS1 & SS2 scheme of work. This instrument is constructed using a five-option multiple choice format lettered A-E. Only one option is correct and the correct option is given 2 points, while an incorrect option is given 0. Therefore, the maximum and minimum scores obtainable from the instrument are 50 and 0 respectively

To establish the face and content validity of the scale, draft copies of the instrument were submitted to the thesis supervisor and two experts each in Educational Psychology, as well as Measurement and Evaluation, along with the objectives and research questions of the study, to evaluate the instrument on item content, relevance, comprehensiveness, clarity, and literacy demand. Their suggestions, corrections and modifications were integrated into the final versions of the instruments before the instruments will be administered. Face and content validity of the EAT was done by giving the instrument to one SSII English Language Teacher to assess. Their inputs and modifications were integrated into the final version of the instrument before administration.

The reliability coefficients of the instruments were determined using test re-test measure of stability. Copies of the instruments were given to 30 students outside the target population (i.e, Rivers-East State) and re-administered to them after an interval of two weeks. Their initial and subsequent scores were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The obtained correlation coefficient was $r=0.85$ for Intrinsic Motivation Scale, $r=0.76$ for Task Persistence Scale, $r=0.81$ for Process Orientation Scale and $r=0.87$ for Academic Performance Test which were deemed high enough to guarantee the reliability of the instrument for the study.

The administration of the instrument was done directly by the researcher and two teachers in each school who will serve as research assistants, and who will administer the instrument on the respondents. Copies of the instruments will be retrieved on the spot immediately after the respondents have completed them.

Research questions and the corresponding null hypotheses were answered and tested using simple linear regression and multiple linear regression, respectively, at 0.05 level of significance, using SPSS.

Result Analysis

Research Question One: To what extent does intrinsic motivation predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Hypothesis One: Intrinsic motivation does not significantly predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State

Table 1a: Model Summary of Intrinsic Motivation on English Performance Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.608	.370	.370	2.79278

Table 1 shows the result of the analysis of the research question carried out to determine the extent intrinsic motivation predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The table shows an R-value of 0.608, R^2 value of 0.370 and an Adjusted R^2 value of 0.370. From the above-stated intrinsic motivation was responsible for 37% of the observed variation in the academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Table 1b: ANOVA Associated with Regression Summary of Intrinsic Motivation on English Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4246.187	1	4246.187	544.411	.000 ^b
	Residual	7222.423	398	7.800		
	Total	11468.611	399			

Table 1c: Coefficients Associated with Regression Summary of Intrinsic Motivation on English Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	4.209	.764		5.506	.000
	Intrinsic Motivation	.420	.018	.608	23.333	.000

Table 1c shows the result of the regression analysis carried out to determine if intrinsic motivation significantly predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. An ANOVA associated with regression analysis testing the significance showed $F(1, 398) = 544.41, p < 0.05$. This result is significant as the p-value of 0.00 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Table 4.3.1b shows the coefficients of the regression equation to be $Y(\text{English Performance}) = 4.21 + 0.42(\text{Intrinsic motivation})$. The result thus suggests that significantly predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected

Research Question Two: To what extent does task persistence predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: Task persistence does not significantly predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State

Table 2a: Model Summary of Task Persistence on English Performance Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.651	.424	.421	2.68748

Table 2a shows the result of the analysis of the research question carried out to determine the extent task persistence predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The table shows an R-value of 0.651, R^2 value of 0.424 and an Adjusted

R² value of 0.421. From the above-stated task persistence was responsible for 42.1% of the observed variation in the academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State.

Table 2b: ANOVA Associated with Regression Summary of Task Persistence on English Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2635.398	1	878.466	121.628	.000 ^c
	Residual	8833.213.	398	7.223		
	Total	11468.611	399			

Table 2c: Coefficients Associated with Regression Summary of Task Persistence on English Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	18.485	.331		55.878	.000
	Task Persistence	1.908	.380	.651	5.020	.000

Table 2b & c show the result of the regression analysis carried out to determine if task persistence significantly predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. An ANOVA associated with regression analysis testing the significance showed $F(1, 398) = 121.628, p < 0.05$. This result is significant as the p-value of 0.000 [50807E-59] is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Table 4.3.2b shows the coefficients of the regression equation to be $Y(\text{English Performance}) = 18.49 + 1.91(\text{Task Persistence})$. The result thus suggests that task persistence significantly predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Hence the null hypothesis is **rejected**

Research Question Three: To what extent does process orientation predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State?

Hypothesis Three: Process orientation does not significantly predict academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State

Table 3a: Model Summary of Process Orientation on English Performance Test

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.618	.381	.377	2.68748

Table 3a shows the result of the analysis of the research question carried out to determine the extent process orientation predicted academic performance in English

Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. The table shows an R-value of 0.618, R² value of 0.381 and an Adjusted R² value of 0.377. From the above-stated process orientation was responsible for 37.7% of the observed variation in the academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State

Table 3b: ANOVA Associated with Regression Summary of Process Orientation on English Language Performance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2004.988	1	668.329	87.319	.000 ^c
	Residual	9463.623	398	7.654		
	Total	11468.611	399			

Coefficients Associated with Regression Summary of Process Orientation on English Language Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	18.293	.363		50.357	.000
	Process Orientation	2.536	.416	.618	6.098	.000

Table 3b shows the result of the regression analysis carried out to determine if process orientation significantly predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. An ANOVA associated with regression analysis testing the significance showed $F(1, 398) = 87.319$, $p < 0.05$. This result is significant as the p-value of 0.000 [50807E-59] is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Table 3b shows the coefficients of the regression equation to be Y (English Performance) = 18.29 + 2.54 (Process Orientation). The result thus suggests that process orientation significantly predicted academic performance in English Language among secondary school students in Rivers East Senatorial District of Rivers State. Hence the null hypothesis is **rejected**

Discussion of Findings

Intrinsic Motivation and Academic performance

The finding showed that intrinsic motivation significantly predicted academic performance of students in English language. This result is expected. The finding agrees with that of Sivrikaya (2019) who investigated the relationship between academic motivation level and academic performance of physical education and sports students. In the study, it was determined that the students' academic motivation scores were above the middle. This study is similar to the current study because the sample was drawn using university students. However, it is different to the extent that the sample was drawn from two different countries. .

The result is also in line with the finding of Tatlah (2012) who investigated on the relationship between teacher motivation and students' academic performance at secondary school level. It was found that intrinsic motivation of teachers was having

strong correlation with academic performance of the students. Unlike the current study, this study integrated teachers' motivation as a composite variable, while the current study considered students motivation.

Task Persistence and Academic performance

The finding showed that task persistence significantly predicted academic performance of students in English language. It goes with the finding of Fang, et. al. (2012) whose study investigated on online learning persistence and academic performance among undergraduate students. Clustering analysis identified three distinctive patterns of persistence-related learning behaviors: (1) High persistence and rare topic shifting; (2) Low persistence and frequent topic shifting; and (3) Moderate persistence and moderate topic shifting. We further explored the association between persistence and academic performance. No significant differences were observed between academic performance and the different learning patterns.

Furthermore, Torgrimson, et. al. (2011) investigated the relationship between response inhibition and task persistence among elementary school children. Result from the study showed that motivational constructs are not sufficient for understanding differences in persistent behavior during this developmental period.. Like the current study, this study considered task persistence. However, it is different to the extent that gender difference was not considered.

Process Orientation and Academic performance

The finding showed that process orientation significantly predicted academic performance of students in English language. The result is not surprising. Earlier, Barzegar (2012) had examined the mediation role of self-regulated learning strategies in relationship between goal orientation and Academic performance. The results show positive effects of mastery and performance-approach goals on the use of metacognitive and deep cognitive strategies. Further, performance-approach goals positively affected the use of surface cognitive and resource management strategies. Moreso, it confirms the finding of Venkatesan and Shankar (2022) who investigated on the influence of goal orientation on academic performance of students studying at the undergraduate level. Findings of the study indicate that there exists significant relationship between goal orientation and its dimensions namely positive self-motivation, realistic perception, personality integration and autonomy with academic performance of undergraduate students.

Conclusion

A number of factor predicts the academic performance of secondary school students. Some of the predictors are intrinsic motivation, task persistence and process orientation. Therefore, when students are inwardly or internally motivated to learn, they tend to excel in their academic more than when they are dependent on external factors of motivation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should be encouraged to explore avenues for self and intrinsic motivation.
2. Students should be give tasks they can easily perform as this will motivate them to stay on and perform better.

3. Students need process orientation to acquaint them what is expected of them at a particular time. This will enhance their performance.

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