

EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN ACADEMIC SELF-HANDICAPPING AND ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UYO METROPOLIS, AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract - This study explored the link between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Two research hypotheses guided the study. The sample for the study consists of 278 students. This study adopted correlational research design. The instruments used for data collection were Academic Self-Handicapping questionnaire (ASHQ) and Aberdeen Achievement Motivation Inventory (ACMI). The reliability (internal consistency) index for academic self-handicapping was .77 and for differences in academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation between male and female senior secondary school students in the study area was .75. The data for this study was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) and t-test while PPMC(r) was used to test hypothesis one, t-test was used to test hypothesis two at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Findings revealed that significant negative relationship exists between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The result also revealed that there is no significant difference in academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation between male and female senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that teachers should encourage students to develop a growth mindset, where they believe that their abilities can be developed through effort and practice and teach them that failures and setbacks are opportunities for learning and growth, rather than evidence of their fixed abilities. This shift in mindset can help cultivate a stronger sense of achievement motivation.

Keywords: Academic Self-Handicapping, Achievement Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation, Self-Handicapping.

Introduction

In the pursuit of academic success, senior secondary school students are faced with various challenges that can either hinder or enhance their achievement motivation. One of such challenges is academic self-handicapping, which refers to the conscious or unconscious behaviours and actions such as procrastination, disengagement, or attributing failures to external factors that students engage in

order to protect their self-esteem or avoid the potential threat of failure (Urduan & Midgley, 2013). Academic self-handicapping is purposeful engagement in behaviours that harm academic performance (Midgley, Arunkumar & Urduan, 2018). This is classified as a type of avoidant behavior characterized by retracting effort in school and giving up easily (Urduan et al., 2013). Academic self-handicapping refers to the deliberate engagement in actions or behaviours that impede one's own academic performance, often in order to protect one's self-esteem and provide a potential excuse for failure, such as procrastinating or failing to prepare adequately for a task (Midgley et al., 2018).

Academic self-handicapping is the conscious decision to engage in behaviours or actions that undermine one's own academic performance, such as not studying enough, to create an external explanation or excuse for potential failure and protect one's self-esteem (Urduan & Mestas, 2013). Academic self-handicapping involves the active creation or exaggeration of obstacles to academic performance in order to protect one's self-esteem and maintain an excuse for potential failure (Zuckerman, Kieffer & Knee, 2018). Academic self-handicapping is the intentional engagement in behaviors that diminish one's own academic performance, often to create a potential excuse for failure and protect one's self-esteem, such as inadequate preparation or excessive socializing (Hirt & McCrea, 2015). According to Martin, Marsh and Debus (2019), academic self-handicapping involves students' engagement in behaviors or actions that undermine their own academic performance, with the intention of protecting their self-esteem and providing a potential excuse for failure. Academic self-handicapping refers to the deliberate engagement in behaviors or strategies that impair one's own academic performance, often to protect self-worth and provide an excuse for potential failure, such as avoiding effort or failing to prepare adequately (Covington & Crutchfield, 2018).

Self-handicapping is a situation where students seem to sabotage themselves by refusing to sleep at night, skip break-fast or spend minimal time preparing for an exam. Self-handicapping refers to the tendency of an individual to engage in actions that undermine one's own performance in order to protect one's self-esteem and provide a potential excuse for failure (Rhodewalt & Tragakis, 2011). According to Baumeister and Scher (2018), Self-handicapping is the strategy of actively creating or claiming obstacles to success for oneself, as a means of bolstering or protecting self-esteem in the face of failure. Martin,

Marsh and Debus (2019) viewed self-handicapping to involves behaviours aimed at protecting one's self-esteem and maintaining an impression of competence, by creating obstacles to success e.g., procrastination, withdrawing effort. Snyder and Smith (2016) viewed self-handicapping to involves the choice to engage in behaviours that impede one's potential for success, thereby providing a potential excuse for failure, with the underlying motivation being to protect one's self-esteem. Hirt and McCrea (2015) defined Self-handicapping as a set of behaviours that students engage in order to protect their self-esteem by creating obstacles or impairments that can be used as an excuse for potential failure. To Ommundsen and Pavlik (2019), self-handicapping refers to the deliberate engagement in actions or behaviours that reduce the probability of success in order to protect self-esteem and provide a potential excuse for failure.

Self-handicapping has two important tribal functions that occur before performing the task, where the individual places a ready excuse and blames the obstacles to the expected failure when threatened. If the situation is good, individuals can say that they overcame the handicap in his ability. The second functions help to deal with the expected weak performance (Litvinova, Balarabe & Mohammed, 2015). The types of self-handicapping are classified into two categories: behavioural self-handicapping that refers to actual behavior, and self-reflexive handicapping that refers to non-verbal behavioural traits (Tadik, *et al.*, 2017). Behavioural handicapping is more damaging because it gives less chances of success but at the same time is more persuasive than pretense (Sahrance, 2011). The self- reflexive handicapping reflects general anxiety, stress and moods from exams or health problems (Tadik *et al.*, 2017; Sahrance, 2011). Rhodewalt and Tragakis (2011) pointed out that one of the reasons for resorting to self-handicapping is the desire to protect one self and the public reputation and the belief of individuals that their ability is relatively consistent with the lack of self-confidence, which leads to self-handicapping. Cherry (2017) pointed out that the individual resort to handicapping himself because there is strong need to blame the failure on external causes in order to protect self-esteem.

On the other hand, achievement motivation encompasses the desire, drive, and determination to achieve academic goals and perform well academically. Individuals with high levels of achievement motivation are typically characterized by their persistence, effort, and goal-oriented behaviour. They are intrinsically motivated to succeed and are willing to put in the necessary time and

effort to achieve their academic goals. Achievement motivation is often influenced by factors such as personal values, self-efficacy beliefs, and the perceived importance of academic success (Elliot & Dweck, 2015).

Academic motivation refers to the internal drive and desire that students have to engage in academic activities, such as studying, completing assignments, and participating in class discussions (Ryan & Deci, 2018). Academic motivation is the degree to which students are interested in and committed to achieving academic goals, and the effort they put forth to attain those goals (Pintrich, 2020). Academic motivation is a multifaceted construct encompassing several factors, including self-efficacy beliefs, interest in academic tasks, and the perceived value of academic success (Wigfield & Eccles, 2022). Academic motivation refers to the reasons why individuals engage in academic activities, with an emphasis on the underlying psychological processes, goals, and beliefs that influence their behaviour (Dörnyei, 2023). Academic motivation refers to the degree to which individuals display interest, enjoyment, and curiosity in academic pursuits, and the extent to which they voluntarily engage in learning activities (Martin, 2021).

Academic motivation can be conceptualized in terms of different levels or orientations that individuals may exhibit in their pursuit of academic goals. These levels of academic motivation describe different motivational mindsets individuals may have towards their academic endeavors. Here are three commonly recognized levels of academic motivation by scholars: Intrinsic Motivation: According to Deci and Ryan (2022), academic motivation has to do with Intrinsic motivation a situation where students engage in academic activities for the inherent satisfaction and enjoyment they provide. When individuals are intrinsically motivated, they find the learning process itself rewarding and are driven by curiosity, interest, and the desire to understand and master new knowledge and skills. Extrinsic Motivation: Extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in academic activities to receive external rewards or fulfill external demands. This can include seeking recognition, obtaining grades, or meeting social expectations. Externally motivated individuals are driven by external incentives or pressures rather than inherent interest or enjoyment in the academic task (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2021).

Amotivation: Amotivation refers to the absence of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Individuals who are amotivated lack any clear motivation or interest in academic tasks and may feel overwhelmed, disengaged, or indifferent

towards their academic performance (Standage, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2018). The level of motivation students possess may significantly impact their academic performance, persistence, and overall achievement outcomes. Therefore, understanding these different levels of academic motivation can help educators, parents, and policymakers develop strategies and interventions to foster and sustain students' motivation in their academic pursuits.

Understanding the relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation in the context of senior secondary school students can provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers. Specifically, examining how these factors relate to each other can help identify potential strategies to improve academic performance and promote student success. However, limited research has been conducted in the specific geographical context of Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Empirical studies have examined the relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation, which refers to the drive or desire to succeed academically. One study conducted by Midgley et al (2018) found that students who engaged in academic self-handicapping had lower levels of achievement motivation compared to those who did not engage in self-handicapping behaviours. The researchers also found that students who engaged in self-handicapping were more likely to attribute their poor academic performance to external factors, such as lack of ability or difficult tasks, rather than internal factors, such as lack of effort or motivation. Another study conducted by Elliot et al (2015) found that academic self-handicapping was negatively related to achievement motivation, but only for students who had a fixed mindset. A fixed mindset refers to the belief that one's abilities and intelligence are fixed and cannot be changed. In contrast, a growth mindset refers to the belief that one's abilities and intelligence can be developed through effort and practice. The researchers found that for students with a growth mindset, academic self-handicapping was not related to achievement motivation. Hirt et al. (2015) conducted a study on investigating the impact of self-handicapping on achievement motivation in a classroom setting. They found that students who engaged in self-handicapping strategies had lower levels of achievement

motivation and were more likely to attribute their failures to external factors. Urda and Midgley (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the relationship between self-handicapping and achievement motivation. They found a negative correlation between self-handicapping and achievement motivation, suggesting that individuals who engage in self-handicapping strategies are less motivated to achieve.

Leary and Shepperd (2019) examined the relationship between self-handicapping and intrinsic motivation. The researchers found that individuals who engage in self-handicapping behaviors tend to have lower levels of intrinsic motivation for achievement. Midgley, Arunkumar and Urda (2018) examined the relationship between self-handicapping strategies and intrinsic motivation in adolescents. The results revealed that students who engage in self-handicapping behaviors are less likely to feel intrinsically motivated to achieve academic success. Martin and Marsh (2023) investigated the relationship between fear of failure, self-handicapping, and intrinsic motivation. The findings suggested that fear of failure is positively correlated with self-handicapping behaviors, which in turn reduces intrinsic motivation for achievement. Turner and Paradise (2022) examined effects of state versus trait self-handicapping on intrinsic motivation. The findings suggested that individuals who engage in state self-handicapping (temporary excuses for poor performance) tend to have lower levels of intrinsic motivation compared to those who engage in trait self-handicapping (long-term excuses for poor performance). Bong (2019) study explored the relationship between academic motivation and self-handicapping in middle and high school students. The results indicated that self-handicapping strategies are negatively associated with intrinsic motivation for achievement in both academic and non-academic domains. From the above analysis, this research aims to unravel the correlation between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa-Ibom State. Through the identification of this relationship, valuable insights can be garnered to inform effective educational practices, interventions, and policies that promote academic excellence and success among students in the region.

Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of understanding regarding the relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. It is unclear how these two

factors relate to each other in strength and magnitude of relationship in the academic context. The extent to which academic self-handicapping affects achievement motivation and subsequently impacts academic performance is not well understood. It is important to investigate whether students who engage in academic self-handicapping behaviours are less motivated to achieve academically, which may lead to lower academic performance. Also, factors that contribute to academic self-handicapping among senior secondary school students in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State need to be identified. Understanding these factors can help educators and policymakers develop interventions and strategies to address academic self-handicapping behaviors and promote achievement motivation.

The implications of academic self-handicapping on the educational system in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State need to be examined. If self-handicapping behaviours are prevalent among students, it may indicate underlying issues in the educational environment that need to be addressed to foster a more supportive and motivating learning environment. Also, there is a need to identify effective strategies to reduce academic self-handicapping and enhance achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. By understanding the link between these two factors, educators can implement targeted interventions to promote a positive academic mindset and improve student outcomes. Overall, this study aims to address the gap in knowledge regarding the relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. By exploring this link, the study will contribute to the existing literature and provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in the field of education.

Hypothesis

For this study, the following hypotheses were tested:

- H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State
- H₀₂:** There is no significant differences in academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation between male and female senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State

Methods

This study utilized a correlational research design, correlational design is a type of study that seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables (Waters, 2011). Usually such studies indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables. The reasons for adopting this design was that the hypotheses are based on relationships and differences. This is justified based on the views of Waters (2011) that when researchers want to find out about the relationship and differences between two variables then correlation design should be used. In the context of this study, the correlational design was appropriate for examining the relationship between Academic Self-Handicapping and Achievement Motivation, as well as academic self-handicapping and Achievement Motivation between male and female Senior Secondary School Students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised of all the S.S.1 students both males and females in the public senior secondary schools in Uyo metropolis of Akwa state, of which three (3) are boarding schools and thirteen (13) day school. The number stands at twenty-five thousand five hundred and thirty-five (25535) students as at the time of conducting this research. This is the population of the entire SS1 students within Uyo metropolis. However, nine hundred and eighty-seven (987) S.S.1 students were found to engage in academic self-handicapping in their academic activities. The process was carried out through the use of Academic Self handicapping Questionnaire (ASHQ) to identify the students who engage in academic self-handicapping.

Simple random sampling technique was used to selects five public secondary schools within Uyo metropolis using balloting method. According to Kothari (2016), Simple random sampling is a method of selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population, where each individual has an equal chance of being chosen. While purposive sampling technique was used to target S.S.1 students. Using Research Advisors (2006) table for determining sample size from a given population at 5% two hundred and forty-eight (278) respondents were used for this study. Two main instruments were used for this study. The instruments are Academic Self handicapping Questionnaire (ASHQ) was developed by Jones and Rhodewalt in 1978 and was adapted for this study. It consisted of a 25-item self-report measure that uses a 6-point Likert format scale for answers from 0 (disagree very much) to 5 (agree very much). This scale has

been used in many studies, predominantly in an academic environment, for measuring the individual tendency to use self-handicapping. The researchers made some changes of this scale by replacing some words with simpler and more suitable for environment. The original 6-point Likert scale was replaced with 5-point scale (from 1 to 5). While Aberdeen Achievement Motivation Inventory (ACMI) was used to measure students' achievement motivation. This instrument was designed and validated by Entwistle (1976) consisted of twenty-four items to each of which the students were instructed to give a Yes or No response. Their responses were checked with the correct responses in order to determine the achievement motivation score for each of the students. To ascertain the validity of the instruments, scholars with the background knowledge of Educational Psychology, test and measurement validated the instruments to determine content validity, their relevance and appropriateness in the study.

The pilot study was carried out with the purpose of establishing the reliability of instrument using Cronbach alpha reliability method. The reliability was done for each section of the questionnaire. Academic Self-Handicapping and Achievement Motivation has good internal consistency alpha coefficient .77 for differences in academic self-handicapping and Achievement Motivation between male and female was .75 respectively. The instruments (ASHS) and (ACMI) were administered to the students in each selected school from the five public secondary school in Uyo metropolis. Before administration of instruments all participants were instructed and told about purpose of the study. Students were instructed that there is no right or wrong answers and they must just select answer that is most closely describes their typical behaviour. Completion of the inventories was with the guarantee of confidentiality. For analyzing data researcher used program IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21. Appropriate statistical techniques were used for analyzing data for establishing relationship between variables of Academic Self-Handicapping and Achievement Motivation and relationship between self-handicapping and intrinsic motivation for achievement in the study area.

Results

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics on the relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Variables	N	Mean	Std.dev	df	r	p
Academic Self-Handicapping	278	24.0127	10.08820			
				276	-0.875**	0.002
Achievement Motivation	278	21.3646	9.76785			

The results of the above analysis showed that there is negative relationship between the two variables ($R=-0.875$; $p<0.002$), indicating that as academic self-handicapping increases, achievement motivation decreases. In other words, when students engage in behaviours that undermine their own academic success (such as making excuses, procrastinating, or not putting in effort), their motivation to achieve academic goals decreases. This finding also reveals that students who are more motivated to achieve tend to engage in fewer self-handicapping behaviours, while those who engage in more self-handicapping tend to have lower motivation to succeed academically. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between Academic Self-Handicapping and Achievement Motivation among Senior Secondary School Students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State is hereby rejected.

Table 2: Results of t-test Analysis of academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation between male and female senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p-value
Male	139	36.738	16.307			
				276	.981	.332
Female	139	36.378	11.898			

No Significant $P<0.05$

Outcome of the table above showed that there is no significant difference in academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation between male and female senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State $t(276) = 0.981$, $p>0.05$. The outcome implies that male and female senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom, do not significantly differ in their levels of academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation. This suggests that gender does not play a critical role in influencing these

particular academic behaviours or motivations among students in this context. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant difference in academic self-handicapping and Achievement Motivation between male and female Senior Secondary School Students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State, is hereby retained.

Discussion

This study focused on exploring the link between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation among senior secondary school students in Uyo Metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. The findings indicated that there is negative relationship between academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation in the study area. This finding agrees with the study of Midgley et al (2018) who found that students who engaged in academic self-handicapping had lower levels of achievement motivation compared to those who did not engage in self-handicapping behaviours. The finding also collaborates with the finding of Hirt, et al. (2015) who found that students who engaged in self-handicapping strategies had lower levels of achievement motivation and were more likely to attribute their failures to external factors. Reasons for the above result is that Students who engage in academic self-handicapping may have a fear of failure. They may adopt self-protective strategies to avoid possible negative outcomes or criticism. This fear of failure can lead to a decrease in their motivation to achieve academically. Also, academic self-handicapping may stem from a lack of self-confidence. Students who doubt their abilities or feel inadequate may engage in self-sabotaging behaviours as a way to minimize the impact of potential failures.

The results of the study did not reveal a statistically significant difference in academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation between male and female Senior Secondary School Students in the study area. This finding by implication is that, both male and female students in Uyo Metropolis of Akwa Ibom State did not differ in the views they hold about their academic self-handicapping and its capabilities on their achievement motivation. Perhaps, what could have accounted for this finding is the cultural context, in Uyo metropolis, societal norms may promote similar academic expectations for both genders, leading to comparable levels of motivation and self-handicapping behaviours. Also, equal educational environment is given to both male and female students. Schools provide an equitable environment that encourages both male and female

student to engage similarly in their academic pursuits, thereby reducing gender disparities.

While this finding supports the research finding of Leary and Shepperd (2019) who examined the relationship between academic self-handicapping between male and female intrinsic motivation. The researchers found that male and female students who engage in academic self-handicapping behaviors do not differ in terms of their levels of intrinsic motivation achievement. Still in support of the result is the study by Midgley, Arunkumar and Urdan (2018) who examined the relationship between academic self-handicapping strategies and Achievement Motivation between male and female adolescents. The results reveal that there was no significant gender difference between male and female students who engage in academic self-handicapping and achievement motivation that they are both likely to feel intrinsically motivated to achieve academic success. Conversely, the result contradicts the results of previous studies by Brunne, Keller, Hornung, Reichert, and Martin (2009). in a cross-cultural study that evaluated gender differences in terms of academic self-handicapping and Achievement Motivation. The results of their study showed a positive correlation indicating that boys had a higher academic self-handicapping than girls in term of Achievement Motivation Similarly, Brunner, et al. (2009) found that girl had a higher academic self-handicapping than boys in term of Achievement Motivation.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is negative relationship between Academic Self-Handicapping and Achievement Motivation in the study area. Also, there is inverse significant relationship between Academic Self-Handicapping and intrinsic Motivation among Senior Secondary School Students in Uyo Metropolis.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. Teachers should encourage students to develop a growth mindset, where they believe that their abilities can be developed through effort and practice and teach them that failures and setbacks are opportunities for learning and growth, rather than evidence of their fixed abilities. This shift in mindset can help cultivate a stronger sense of achievement motivation.

2. Schools should continue to implement strategies that support both male and female students equally, fostering a collaborative learning environment that encourages all students to engage with their academics without the influence of gender stereotypes.

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