

SELF CONCEPT AS A PREDICTOR OF EGO IDENTITY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL  
ADOLESCENTS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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**Abstract:** *The study investigated the extent to which self-concept predicts ego identity of secondary school adolescents in Enugu State, Nigeria. One thousand two hundred students were selected randomly from secondary schools to participate in the study. A thirty item questionnaire each on self-concept and ego identity were used to generate data for the study. One research question and one hypothesis were tested in the study and data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlations to determine the correlation coefficient and to test the hypothesis at 0.05 levels of significance. The result indicated that self concept predicted the ego identity of the subjects. Based on the findings, appropriate recommendations were made to adolescents and governments.*

**Keywords:** *Self concept, Ego identity, Predict, adolescents, correlation*

### 1.00 Introduction

In Nigeria, education at all levels is given a high priority rating. This is because stakeholders in education recognize the fact that education obviously is the basic instrument of economic growth and technological advancement of the society. This also explains why different regimes of Nigerian governments invest immense resources in education to ensure the provision of education to the citizens. Governments also tailor their policies towards ensuring that education is made accessible to the generality of the citizenry. Nowadays, the world's workplace has become increasingly geographically fluid across national, regional and international borders due to economic globalization and the development of advanced communications and information technologies. In this context, knowledge has emerged as an economic commodity which has in turn placed pressure on existing national systems to ensure they are placed competitively in the international marketplace.

With the above in view, educationalists and researchers in Nigeria however, are beginning to worry that the performances of Nigerian students in public examinations these days do not justify the enormous investment being made in education. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) Head of National office, Abuja while announcing the performance of Nigerian students in 2013/2014 WAEC examinations remarked that, "there was over 8% decline in candidates' performance as only 29.17% obtained credits in 5 subjects and above including English and Mathematics"(Vanguard, Nigeria, August 12<sup>th</sup> 2014 edition). He added that Nigeria had recorded a continuous decline in the last 3 years: 38.81% in 2012, 36.57% in 2013 and 31.28% in 2014. If this situation remains unchecked, the future of Nigerian youths would be adversely affected.

Researchers and educational psychologists (Akubuiro and Joshua, 2004, Osang 1990) have blamed the continuing poor performance of Nigerian secondary school students in public examinations on such factors as the students' poor self esteem, depressed self concepts and the

consequent low achievement behaviour. Perceptual psychologists (Pajares 2002., Bandura 1998) postulate that all persons create their own reality through their perceptions of what they believe to be real. They maintain that a person's behaviour is contingent on how the individual perceives and interprets his/her experiences (Combs and Gonzales, 1994). Thus from the perspectives of perceptual psychology, one can infer that to understand an individual's behaviour, it is necessary to know how that individual perceives and interprets his/her experiences. It also follows that to understand the dynamics of students' academic performance, one needs to examine how students perceive and interpret their world, school, school subjects and academic performance. All these constitute their self concepts.

## 2.00 Self Concept

One of the most influential and eloquent voices in self-concept theory was that of Carl Rogers who introduced an entire system built around the importance of the self (Hattie, 1992). In Rogers' view, the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment. Rogers described the self as a social product, developing out of interpersonal relationships and striving for consistency. He maintains that there is a basic human need for positive regard both from others and from oneself. He also believed that in every person there is a tendency towards self actualization and development so long as this is permitted and encouraged by an inviting environment. There are a variety of ways to think about the self (Gross, 1992).. Two of the most widely used terms are self-concept and ego identity. Self-concept is the cognitive or thinking aspect of self (related to one's self-image) and generally means the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence.

According to Purkey & Schmidt,( 1987), Self-concept can also mean the general idea we have of ourselves. The idea of self-concept includes attitudes, feelings and knowledge about ability, skills, and social acceptance capability of the self. Self-concept covers all aspects of our cognitive, perceptual, and affective evaluation. Therefore, self-concept is simply a collection of personal attitudes towards oneself (Gross, 1992).

Other perceptual psychologists (Purkey & Schmidt, 1987) have paid a lot of attention to factors related to the formation and development of self-concept. An individual's conception of his or her person is linked to the personality and to a certain extent determines the attitude of that person to his or her environment, and to a larger extent, the person's academic performance. It may then be suggested that if self-concept is positive and normal, the individual will possess normal mental health. Conversely, if self-concept is negative and abnormal, the individual may behave abnormally in his or her environment. The implication is that good mental health (resulting from positive self-concept) makes for positive academic achievement.

## 2.01 Ego Identity

According to Kendra .(2014) ego identity is a series of core beliefs (self-definitions) that also function as a defense/protection mechanism. It is who one thinks he is as well as familiar feelings and emotions one identifies with oneself. She uses the concept of "belief" and "Knowingness" to differentiate how a child and an adolescent, for example, constructs ego identity. According to her, a belief is a firmly held opinion that is taken as truth. Beliefs are unquestioned assumptions that are taken for granted. In contrast," knowingness" emerges from common sense wisdom. Knowingness is derived directly from experiences once the brain has fully developed and, abstract reasoning is available and functioning well. Children believe beliefs while adults have the capacity to Know, provided they are psychologically matured. She maintains that the ego identity begins around two years of age when the child understands simple language and the child begins to associate names

with objects, including the body. The ego identity solidifies as a mental structure around 7 to 9 years old.

In his theory of psychosocial development (Erikson 1970), Erikson sees Ego identity as the conscious sense of self that one develops through social interaction. He maintains that ego identity is constantly changing due to new experiences and information one acquires in their daily interactions with others.

Psychologists refer to identity as all of the beliefs, ideals, and values that help shape and guide a person's behavior. Formation of identity begins in childhood and becomes particularly important during adolescence, but it is a process that continues throughout life. One's personal identity gives one an integrated and cohesive sense of self that endures and continues to grow as they age (Kendra 2014).

In addition to ego identity, Erikson (1970) also believes that a sense of competence motivates behaviors and actions. Each stage in Erikson's 8-stage theory is concerned with becoming competent in an area of life. If the stage is handled well, the person will feel a sense of mastery, which is sometimes referred to as ego strength or ego quality. If the stage is managed poorly, the person will emerge with a sense of inadequacy. A basic concern of this study is to find out the role of self concept in this complex relationship.

## 2.02 Development of Ego Identity in Adolescence

Erikson believes that in each stage of the psychosocial development, people experience a conflict that serves as a turning point in development. According to him, these conflicts are centered on either developing a psychological quality or failing to develop that quality (Erikson,1980). During these times, the potential for personal growth is high, but so is the potential for failure. In the fifth stage which Erikson classifies as *Identity vs. Confusion*, he explains that: the adolescent explores his independence and develops a sense of self. Those who receive proper encouragement and reinforcement through personal exploration will emerge from this stage with a strong sense of self and a feeling of independence and control. The ones who remain unsure of their beliefs and desires will feel insecure and confused about themselves and the future. Completing this stage successfully leads to fidelity, which Erikson described as an ability to live by society's standards and expectations (Erikson 1980). According to him, an identity crisis, which may occur at this stage, is a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself.

Marcia ( 1980) expanded upon Erikson's initial theory. According to him, the balance between identity and confusion (or crisis) lies in making a commitment to an identity. He provides the most alternative framework for ego identity formulation. Focusing on a behavioural expression of identity, he investigated the processes of exploration of alternatives and commitment to values, beliefs and goals in various domains such as education, career and ideologies. Following the dimensions of exploration and commitment, he derived four ego identity statuses. These are:

- i. *Achievement status*, Identity achievement occurs when an individual has gone through an exploration of different identities and made a commitment to one.
- ii. *Moratorium*: Moratorium is the status of a person who is actively involved in exploring different identities, but has not made a commitment.

- iii. *Foreclosure* : Foreclosure status is when a person has made a commitment without attempting identity exploration.
- iv. *Diffusion*: Identity diffusion occurs when there is neither an identity crisis nor commitment.

Researchers (Combs and Gonzales, 1994) have found that those who have made a strong commitment to an identity tend to be happier and healthier and thus are motivated to be higher achievers than those who have not. Those with Ego identity diffusion have been associated with the problems of general apathy, academic and drug problems, and poor interpersonal skills. Schooling adolescents who are in the state of identity diffusion have a weaker social support network, are at risk for depression, and often do not take advantage of opportunities that could be helpful to them (Kendra 2014). In other words, the diffused individual is lacking the foundation of inner strength and environmental support to explore and make choices in both academics and social activities. The ego identity status of foreclosure has been associated with problems of idealized relationships with their parents, close-mindedness, smug self-satisfaction, authoritarianism, and rigidity (Schwartz, and Kidwell, 2001). While Ego identity achievement is associated with effective decision making, deep interpersonal relationships, and balanced thinking.

### 2.03 Statement of problem

Studies (Schwartz, and Kidwell, 2001, Pajares 2002., Bandura 1998.) on adolescent development in the contemporary world have tended to evince the fact that self-concept and ego identity are very important in understanding human behavioural changes and constancies with a view to predicting such changes and constancies. Adolescence is a peculiar developmental stage in human life course which is intermediate between the childhood stage and adulthood. It is seemingly a complex and contradictory developmental stage. Since a majority of the secondary school students fall within this age bracket, they have a reasonable share of the tax-payer's money for their education. Here lies the justification for this investigation. Several investigations abound which suggest a positive relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, so are investigation on ego identity and academic achievement behavior.

Osang (1990) in his research entitled “Comparative study of self-concept among deaf and hearing Nigerians”, observed that the way someone sees himself or herself exercises, a great deal

of influence on that person's achievement and mental health. His study confirmed the existence of a positive significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. However, Osakwe (2006) using students' academic-school records discovered that:

- (i). The academic performance of Nigerian adolescents had little or no bearing on their self-concepts.
- (ii). a negative and non-significant relationship exists between self-concept and academic achievement of male students; and
- (iii). A negative and significant relationship exists between self-concept and academic achievement of students in girls' schools.

With the contradictions observed in the studies above, the present researcher felt it necessary to look beyond the variables deployed in the studies mentioned above to seek answers to the problem of poor performance among Enugu state students. Enugu state is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. To the best of the present researcher's knowledge, no study in the state and perhaps in Nigeria has examined the relationship between Self concept and Ego identity. Does one predict the other, for instance? This is important because the finding will help Curriculum designers to know which to emphasize in planning different learning environments.

## **2.04 Purpose of the study**

Specifically, the purpose of this study was:

To determine the extent self concept predicts ego identity of secondary school students in Enugu State.

## **2.05 Research Question**

For in-depth study of this phenomenon, the researchers posed only one research question and one hypothesis:

To what extent does self concept predict ego identity of secondary school students in Enugu State?

## **2.06 Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was formulated and was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Self concept does not significantly predict ego identity of secondary school students in Enugu State.

## **3.00 Method**

The design of this study was a correlation survey. Ali (2006) defined this type of design as a general approach to research that focuses on assessing the co-variation among naturally occurring dependent and independent variables. The correlation survey used here involved the employment of a predetermined set of questions making up the study questionnaire. The rationale for the use of correlation survey design was to enable the researcher obtain easily interpretable responses concerning the predictive relationships between self concept and ego identity scores of the subjects under study.

The area of this study is Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu State is composed of six education zones, thus: Enugu, Nsukka, Agbani, Awgu, Obollo-Afor and Udi education zone. (Planning, Research and Statistics unit, Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) Enugu Office, Enugu 2012)

The population of the study comprised all the 11,827 SS2 2012/2013 mixed and single sex Senior Secondary Schools (i.e. class two (SSII)) schooling adolescents in the six education zones that make up Enugu State. The six education zones including: Enugu education zone with 24 secondary schools, and 7518 SS11 students; Nsukka education zone with 58 secondary schools, and 8428 SS11 students; Agbani education zone with 45 secondary schools and 5970 SS11 students; and Awgu education zone with 52 secondary schools, and 4889 SS11 students; Obollo-Afor education zone with 47 secondary schools and 8035 SS11 students; and Udi education zone with 51 secondary schools and 4582 SS11 students Total population of SS11 schooling adolescents from the six Education zones in Enugu State, numbering **11,827** (5854 males and 5973 females) (PPSMB, Education Zonal Office, Enugu 2012). Enugu State has a total of 277 secondary schools, consisting

of 133 single sex and 144 mixed sex secondary schools the choice of these groups was guided by the fact that they were then not preparing for any external examination.

The sample for the study comprised 1200 randomly selected Senior Secondary School (SSII) students, consisting of 600 students from mixed- sex secondary schools and 600 students from single- sex secondary students in Enugu State. From these two groups, the researcher randomly selected 5 mixed sex and 5 single sex secondary schools making 10 secondary schools for each education zone. The single sex students consisted of 600 and the mixed sex students consisted of 600.

Two instruments developed by the researcher were used in this study, namely:

- a. Adolescent Self Concept Scale (ASCS)
- b. Adolescent Ego identity Scale (AEIS)

### **3.01 Adolescent Self Concept Scale (ASCS)**

The Adolescent Self Concept instrument constructed by the researcher consists of 30 items. It is a four (4) point scale meant to determine students' self concept in terms of low, medium, or high knowledge about a person's self concept. The items relate to the seven dimensions of self concept (Erikson, 1980) . It is a general broad based scale covering all aspects of the adolescents. For each dimension, 6 items were constructed. In each statement, to which the students indicated their level of agreement or disagreement on the responses, the range of response consisted of: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1) point.

The seven dimension areas included, items relating to emotional self concept, social self, intellectual ability or Academic self concept, moral self, physical self, family self. The questionnaire was framed based on the seven dimensions of self concept such as physical self concept (4 items), academic self concept (5 items), social self concept (4 items), emotional self concept (4 items), intellectual self concept (5 items) and moral self concept (4 items) and family self concept (4 items). The four point ratings given were Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2, and Strongly Disagree 1. Positive items were given the ratings of 4 to 0 and negative items were given the ratings of 0 to 4 respectively.

### **3.02 Adolescent Ego identity scale (AEIS)**

The Ego Identity instrument (AEIS) was also developed by the researcher. The instrument consists of 30 items measuring structure or self understanding of ego identity, goals, values and commitments, harmony and consistency of values of ego identity, willfulness or self-chosen direction and future potential for the self. These dimensions reflect the Eriksonian and Marcia (1980) focus on the power and role of social institutions on ego identity development of adolescents. The rating response format of Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly Disagree 1 was used. The positive rating ranges from 4 to 0, and negative rating from 0 to 4. Items were scored by weighting the "strongly agree" response with a value of 4 and the "strongly disagree" with a value of one. The questionnaire has 7 seven clusters of five or four items in each cluster.

The decision on uniform number of 30 items in each instrument was taken by the researcher after considering advice from the experts that validated these instruments. Adolescent Self Concept Scale

(ASCS) instrument developed by the researcher was face validated by four experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. Adolescent Ego identity scale (AEIS) was face and content validated by 4 experts each in Educational Foundation, 2 from Educational Psychology and 2 from Educational Measurement and Evaluation.

The Adolescent Self Concept Scale (ASCS) instrument was trial tested by administering it to 30 SSII students drawn from a mixed -sex and single- sex secondary schools in Enugu Education zone not in the sample. The internal consistency reliability estimate of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha method and the obtained reliability estimate was 0.88. This index suggests high reliability of the scale.

Adolescent Ego identity scale (AEIS) was subjected to the same treatment and had a value of 0.83. These indexes were high and suggested high internal consistency reliability.

A total of 1200 copies of the instruments were distributed physically with the help of research assistants and teachers in the individual schools. The same number was collected back. This is because the number of instruments distributed per stream for each selected secondary school was 20 copies based on the randomly selected students sampled per stream. Only 10 secondary schools were randomly selected per education zone. The data collected after administering the questionnaires were analyzed in line with the research questions and hypothesis. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) and correlations to determine the correlation coefficient was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 levels of significance.

## 4.00 Results

### 4.01 Research Question

To what extent does self concept predict ego identity of schooling adolescents?

Table 1: A Summary of R, B, R square, and adjusted R square in regression analysis

Model	R	Beta	R-square	Adjusted square	R	STD Error of the Estimate
1	0.111	0.111	0.012	0.011		0.47721

Predictors: (Constant), self concept 0.05 level of significance

Data in Table 1 indicate the extent self concept predicts ego identity of schooling adolescents. They show that the beta value of 0.111 which suggests that 11.1% of the change observed in schooling adolescents ego identity was as a result of self concept. To this extent self concept predicts ego identity. The regression analysis result of R value of 0.111 supports this result. These two results answer the research question one

### 4.02 Hypothesis

Table 2: The significance levels in regression Analysis (ANOVA) between predictor variable and the criterion measure self concept and ego identity.

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean square	F-ratio	Significant 0.05
Regression	3.400	1	3.400	14.931	0.00
Residual	272.823	1198	0.228		
Total	276.223	1198			

Table 3: The beta Coefficients of Regression r

Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficients	T	Significant 0.05
B	STE Error	Beta	
2.394	0.121	0.111	19.804
0.162	0.042		3.864

Results in Table 2 and 3 indicate that self concept was significantly a predictor of ego identity of schooling adolescents. The calculated values of F-ratio was 14.931 which were significant at 0.00 and also at 0.05 and t-values of 19.804 was significant at 0.00 and also at 0.05 confirm that self concept was a predictor of ego identity of schooling adolescents. Thus, the null hypothesis that self concept will not predict ego identity is rejected.

#### 4.03 Discussion of results

The results of analysis of multiple regression yielded R value was 0.111 and beta value is 0.111. This result indicates that only 11.1% of the total variance of the independent variable contributed to change in ego identity. The result of multiple regressions indicates that F-ratio value of 14.931  $p < 0.005$  and t- value of 19.804  $p < 0.000$  was found to be significant at 0.05 levels. The null hypothesis of no significant prediction was rejected. The result revealed that self concept is significantly a contributor to the prediction of ego identity. This result is supported by Sukuk (2010) who found that schooling adolescent learners who have higher positive self concept aim more at success in academics and ego identity formation than those with low negative self concept. Gouws and Hruger (2007) maintain that a positive self concept and ego identity formation is not only important for an adolescent mental well being but it also predicts his or her social relationships, progress at school, performances in all areas, and career expectations and success. The successful formation of an individual ego identity has been empirically linked to positive, supportive relationship in the educational environment, as well as adolescents self concept (Osakwe 2006).

#### 5.00 Conclusions and Recommendations

An obvious deduction from the study, and which also has implication to learning is that proper and positive development of self concept is very essential for effective development ego identity and by extension for fruitful learning to take place. The implication to schooling adolescents and to education in general, is that school practitioners should pay more attention to schooling adolescents' beliefs about their self concept. Schools should strive to provide enabling environments for effective self concept development.

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