

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CREATIVITY AS CORRELATES OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NORTHWEST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated Emotional Intelligence and Creativity as correlates of Academic Performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest Nigeria. Guided by two objectives and corresponding null hypotheses, the research employed a correlational survey design. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 1,532 Senior Secondary School II students from public secondary schools across Katsina, Kano, and Zamfara States. Three validated and reliable instruments were used for data collection: the Students' Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (SEIQ), the Students' Creativity Questionnaire (SCQ), and the English Language Performance Test (ELPT). Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Findings revealed a statistically significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance ($r = -0.132, p < 0.05$), and between creativity and academic performance ($r = -0.075, p < 0.05$), leading to the rejection of both null hypotheses. These results suggest that higher levels of emotional intelligence and creativity are associated with improved performance in English Language. The study concludes that emotional and creative competencies are important psychological variables influencing academic success in language learning. It recommends that schools integrate emotional intelligence training and creativity enhancement into instructional and counseling practices to support students' academic growth.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Creativity, Academic Performance

Introduction

Academic performance in English Language continues to serve as a key benchmark for educational achievement and a determinant of students' readiness for higher education and employability in Nigeria. As the official medium of instruction and communication, English Language forms the foundation for learning across all subjects in the school curriculum. However, persistent underperformance in the subject especially among senior secondary school students in Northwest Nigeria has raised significant concerns about students' preparedness for academic and professional success. Available data from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) indicate a worrying trend: only 8.3% of candidates in Sokoto State achieved the required five credits including English and Mathematics in 2016; Jigawa State reported just 9.65% in 2017; and Katsina State recorded a decline to 30.06% in 2018. These statistics underscore the need to explore alternative explanatory factors beyond curriculum and pedagogy.

In recent years, psychological constructs such as emotional intelligence and creativity have gained prominence as critical personal attributes influencing academic outcomes. Emotional intelligence (EI) defined as the ability to perceive, regulate, and manage emotions has been associated with students' capacity to handle academic stress, maintain motivation, and build positive relationships with peers and teachers (Mayer & Salovey, 2004; Goleman, 2006). Emotionally intelligent students tend to better manage

anxiety, sustain attention, and navigate challenges skills that are particularly essential in language-based subjects like English, which require expressive communication and comprehension.

Supporting this view, empirical evidence consistently points to a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Quílez-Robres et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis involving 27 studies and over 13,000 participants, reporting a moderate to high correlation ($r = 0.390$, $p < 0.001$) between EI and academic achievement. Similarly, Sánchez-Álvarez et al. (2020) synthesized data from 44 studies and affirmed a statistically significant impact of EI ($Z = 0.31$), particularly when conceptualized as a cognitive ability. These findings are echoed in Nigerian contexts as well. Abdullahi et al. (2022) found high correlations ($r = 0.90$ and $r = 0.85$) between emotional intelligence and both academic performance and retention in trigonometry among secondary school students in Katsina State. Other studies (Wafa et al., 2022; Halimi et al., 2021) also affirm that emotionally intelligent learners are better equipped to cope with academic demands and maintain sustained effort and engagement in their studies.

Parallel to emotional intelligence, creativity the capacity to generate novel, valuable, and original ideas have also been identified as a major contributor to academic success, particularly in subjects that require critical thinking, idea generation, and expressive writing such as English Language. Creativity facilitates flexible thinking, imaginative problem-solving, and deeper engagement with learning tasks (Olatoye et al., 2010; APA, 2023). Empirical studies lend strong support to this view. Ugur (2023), in a meta-analysis of 18 studies with 6,846 students, found a medium effect size (0.619) linking creativity with academic performance. Mohamed and Irina (2023) similarly reported that students with higher creative thinking abilities demonstrated superior academic achievement due to their divergent thinking and curiosity-driven engagement with academic content.

Research by Chauhan and Sharma (2017) further confirms creativity's predictive power across different school types and genders, indicating its generalizable role in academic excellence. Additionally, Faysal and Veli (2017), in a thematic meta-review, and Yaghoob et al. (2013), using Torrance's Creativity Test, affirmed the strong association between creative potential and academic performance, with creativity-related attributes such as originality, fluency, and elaboration contributing positively to academic success. Despite these findings, there remains a dearth of contextualized studies in Northwestern Nigeria examining how creativity specifically influences English Language performance.

To anchor these constructs conceptually, the study draws from three theoretical perspectives. Goleman's (2006) Performance-Based Model of Emotional Intelligence provides the emotional framework, emphasizing competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, motivation, and emotional regulation skills closely linked to academic performance in language subjects. Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory (1964) explains the cognitive processes underpinning creativity and learning, positing that learners construct knowledge through exploration and creative engagement. Complementing these, Nicholls' (1984) Achievement Goal Orientation Theory explains how intrinsic motivation, influenced by psychological traits like EI and creativity, drives students' pursuit of academic goals.

Despite various educational interventions in Northwest Nigeria, persistent underperformance in English Language as seen in WAEC results (e.g., 9.42% pass in Jigawa in 2018, 17.9% in 2016; 38.2% in Katsina in 2016) indicates unresolved academic challenges. While prior research has focused on cognitive and socio-economic variables, limited attention has been paid to the psychological dimensions of learning. Emotional intelligence and creativity, though fundamental to adaptive academic behaviours, remain underexplored in relation to English Language performance in the region. Therefore, the study

investigated Emotional intelligence and creativity as correlates of academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Northwest Nigeria. The study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the non-cognitive factors influencing students' academic success and to offer evidence-based insights that can inform learner-centered pedagogical strategies for enhancing English Language outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study

1. To investigate emotional intelligence as correlates of academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest Nigeria.
2. To examine creativity as correlates of academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest on the basis on gender.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between creativity and academic performance among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational survey design to examine the relationships among emotional intelligence, creativity, and academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School II (SSS II) students in Northwest Nigeria. This design was suitable as it allowed investigation of the degree and direction of relationships between naturally occurring variables without manipulation.

The population comprised 315,538 SSS II students enrolled in public secondary schools across the seven states in the Northwest geopolitical zone (Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Jigawa, and Zamfara) during the 2023/2024 academic session. SSS II students were selected for their cognitive maturity and exposure to the English curriculum. A sample of 1,532 students was drawn using a multi-stage sampling procedure. First, the seven states were grouped into three clusters based on geographic proximity and demographics, and one state was randomly selected from each cluster: Katsina, Kano, and Zamfara. Next, two co-educational public secondary schools were randomly chosen from each senatorial district within these states, totaling 18 schools. Participants within schools were selected via proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure balanced male and female representation. The final selection employed the balloting method.

Data were collected using three instruments: the Students' Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (SEIQ), adapted from Joiceswarnalatha (2015) with 20 items rated on a 4-point scale; the Students' Creativity Questionnaire (SCQ), adapted from the Nicolas Holt Creativity Test, with 20 items on a 4-point Likert scale; and the English Language Performance Test (ELPT), a 25-item multiple-choice test derived from past WASSCE questions. Scores were categorized into performance levels for interpretation. Face and content validity were established through expert review by three Educational Psychology and Counselling specialists and one English Language educator. Reliability was tested via the test-retest method on a pilot sample of 30 students, with a three-week interval. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for SEIQ and SCQ were 0.80 and 0.77, respectively, while ELPT's reliability (KR-20) was 0.85, indicating acceptable reliability.

Data collection spanned six weeks, following ethical approval from State Ministries of Education and permissions from school principals. Trained research assistants and guidance counselors administered the instruments during school hours under supervision. Confidentiality and voluntary participation were emphasized. Data analysis employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School Students in Northwest, Nigeria.

Table 1: r-value of Emotional Intelligence and Academic performance

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Emotional Intelligence	1,532	57.35	14.43	1,530	-0.132**	0.000	Sig.
Students' Academic Performance	1,532	14.64	3.44				

**Correlation not significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result on table 1: shows that there is significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School Students in Northwest, Nigeria; this indicates that correlation co-efficient of *r*-value of -0.132 and *p*-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 significant alpha level at 1,530 degrees of freedom. Therefore, hypothesis three is hereby rejected, because there is significant relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Academic Performance in English language among Senior Secondary School Students in Northwest, Nigeria. Therefore, Emotional Intelligence was significantly found to have a capacity to influence Students' Academic Performance.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Creativity and Academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School Students in Northwest, Nigeria.

Table 2: r-value of Creativity and Academic performance

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	Df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Creativity	1,532	58.39	19.92	1,530	-.075**	0.003	Sign.
Students' Academic Performance	1,532	14.64	3.44				

**Correlation not significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result on table 2 shows that there is significant relationship between Creativity and Academic Performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School Students in Northwest, Nigeria; this indicates that correlation co-efficient of *r*-value of -0.075 and *p*-value 0.000 is less than 0.05 significant alpha level at 1,530 degrees of freedom. Therefore, hypothesis four is hereby rejected, because there is significant relationship between Creativity and Academic Performance in English language among Senior Secondary School Students in Northwest, Nigeria. Therefore, Creativity was significantly found to have a positive relationship to influence Students' Academic Performance.

Discussion of Finding

The study investigated the relationships between emotional intelligence, creativity, and academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest Nigeria. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between both emotional intelligence and creativity with academic performance, underscoring the importance of these psychological factors in students' success in

English Language.

The testing of the first hypothesis showed significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic performance r -value of -0.132 and p -value 0.000. This finding supports prior research (e.g., Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Mayer et al., 2008) that links emotional competence to academic achievement by facilitating adaptive behaviors and positive engagement with learning tasks. The result also addresses a gap in the Northwestern Nigerian context, where limited studies have explored the role of emotional intelligence in academic success. Thus, fostering emotional intelligence can be an effective strategy to enhance students' academic outcomes in English, a subject that demands both cognitive and affective engagement. The findings also corroborate with Goleman's (2006) Performance-Based Model of Emotional Intelligence, which emphasizes self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, and motivation as key competencies enhancing academic outcomes. Students with higher emotional intelligence are better able to manage stress, stay motivated, and navigate social interactions within the school environment, contributing to improved learning and performance in English Language.

Creativity was also found to have a significant positive correlation with academic performance in English Language r -value of -0.075 and p -value 0.000. The finding corroborates the meta-analytic results by Ugur (2023) and empirical evidence by Mohamed and Irina (2023), highlighting creativity as a robust predictor of academic success across various subjects and student demographics. Moreover, the result aligns with Chauhan and Sharma's (2017) findings regarding creativity's universal relevance across genders and school types, suggesting that enhancing creative skills should be integral to English Language instruction. This is consistent with theoretical frameworks such as Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory, which advocates for active knowledge construction through creative exploration and problem-solving. Creativity, through its components of originality, fluency, and elaboration, enables students to engage critically and imaginatively with language tasks, thus improving their writing, comprehension, and overall English proficiency.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that both emotional intelligence and creativity play significant roles in influencing academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Northwest Nigeria. These psychological attributes facilitate better emotional regulation, intrinsic motivation, and cognitive flexibility qualities essential for academic success in language arts.

Conclusion

The study established that emotional intelligence and creativity are significant correlates of academic performance in English Language among Senior Secondary School students in Northwest Nigeria. Students who demonstrate higher levels of emotional intelligence and creativity tend to perform better academically, highlighting the critical role of these non-cognitive factors in enhancing English Language learning outcomes. These findings underscore the need for educational stakeholders to incorporate emotional and creative skill development into teaching and counselling practices to improve student achievement.

Recommendations

1. **For Educational Psychologists:** Integrate emotional intelligence training programs into school counseling services to help students develop better emotional regulation, stress management, and motivation skills that support academic success.
2. **For School Counsellors:** Design and facilitate creativity-enhancing activities and workshops that encourage divergent thinking and problem-solving abilities, fostering students' engagement and

innovation in English Language learning.

3. **For Teachers:** Incorporate pedagogical strategies that promote both emotional and creative development, such as collaborative learning, reflective journaling, and creative writing assignments, to stimulate deeper cognitive and affective involvement.
4. **For Policy Makers:** Develop curriculum guidelines that emphasize the teaching and assessment of emotional intelligence and creativity alongside traditional academic content, ensuring holistic student development across secondary schools in the region.

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