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STUDY HABITS, SELF-EFFICACY, AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the prevalence of study habits, self-efficacy, and English Language academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Imo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted to examine the relationships among the variables. The population comprised all Senior Secondary Two (SS2) students in public secondary schools across the six education zones of Imo State, totalling 27,050 students. A sample of 772 students was drawn through a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure proportional representation across zones. Data were collected using the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Study Habit Inventory, and students' official English Language academic records. Reliability was established through a pilot study, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86 and 0.81 for the self-efficacy and study habit instruments, respectively. Findings revealed that most students demonstrated good study habits across multiple dimensions: book reading (95.1%), note-taking (83.3%), memory (97.4%), test preparation (91.3%), concentration (97.4%), and time management (92.1%). Additionally, 69.8% of students exhibited high self-efficacy, while 30.2% showed low self-efficacy. In terms of English Language achievement, 16.6% achieved excellent, 26.8% very good, 22.0% good, 19.2% poor, and 15.4% failed. These results suggest that while students generally possess strong study habits and self-belief, these do not consistently translate into high academic achievement. The study concludes that there is a need for targeted interventions to enhance the application of effective study habits and self-efficacy in improving academic outcomes. It recommends that teachers, school administrators, and policymakers strengthen instructional quality, counselling services, and study habit training to promote better English Language achievement among students in Imo State.

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Keywords: Study habits, self-efficacy, academic achievement, English Language, secondary school students, Imo State.

Introduction

Academic achievement remains a major indicator of students' learning outcomes and educational quality. However, the persistent concern among educators and policymakers is the declining academic performance of secondary school students, especially in key subjects such as English Language. English Language occupies a vital position in Nigeria's education system as it serves not only as a subject of study but also as the medium of instruction and assessment across all subjects (Anyaegbu, 2024). Despite this importance, many secondary school students in Imo State continue to perform below expectation in English Language examinations, suggesting deep-rooted challenges related to students' learning behaviours and motivational factors. Recent reports revealed that Imo State dropped to the 31st position in the national WASSCE ranking (Imo Trumpeta, 2022), underscoring an urgent need to investigate variables that influence English Language achievement.

Academic achievement has been broadly defined as the measurable performance outcomes that reflect a learner's understanding, competence, and mastery of curricular content (Ahmad et al., 2007). Similarly, Fortin et al. (2015) viewed academic achievement as the demonstration of knowledge and skills acquired through formal education, typically measured through grades or standardized tests. In the context of this study, academic achievement refers to students' performance in English Language, reflecting their mastery of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills as prescribed in the secondary school curriculum. It represents the extent to which students have attained the expected learning objectives in English.

Several factors influence academic achievement, but among the most significant are study habits and self-efficacy beliefs. Study habits denote the regular and systematic practices that students adopt to acquire, organize, and recall information effectively (Burns & Sinfield, 2022; Cottrell, 2024). Effective study habits; such as consistent reading, note-taking, time management, and reviewing, are critical predictors of success (Adedokun et al., 2020; Carew & Tukur, 2024). Studies in Nigeria and other settings have shown that students with positive study habits tend to perform better academically than those with poor study patterns (Ebele & Olofu, 2017; Oyasola & Adegoke, 2022). However, findings from Imo State suggest that many students exhibit poor study behaviours such as cramming before examinations, inadequate time management, and low engagement with textbooks (Ohuakanwa, 2023; Ijeoma et al., 2024). These deficiencies may partly explain their unsatisfactory English Language outcomes.

Another key variable likely influencing academic achievement is self-efficacy, which refers to individuals' beliefs in their capacity to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations (Bandura, 2002). Self-efficacy can determine how students approach academic tasks, the effort they invest, and their persistence in the face of challenges (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Empirical

studies have consistently demonstrated that students with high academic self-efficacy are more likely to adopt effective learning strategies, set higher goals, and achieve better results (Ansong et al., 2019; Ahmed et al., 2022). In Nigeria, Nne and Ekene (2021) found that academic self-efficacy beliefs significantly correlated with students' achievement in English Language. Similarly, Obafemi et al. (2023) confirmed a positive relationship between self-efficacy and performance in mathematics among secondary school pupils, suggesting that similar dynamics might apply to English Language learning. Yet, many students in Imo State appear to lack confidence in their language abilities, possibly due to ineffective teaching methods, negative peer influence, or prior academic failures.

The interplay between study habits and self-efficacy can offer a robust framework for understanding variations in students' academic outcomes. While study habits represent behavioural approaches to learning, self-efficacy reflects the cognitive-motivational dimension that sustains those behaviours (Cerezo et al., 2019; Schunk, 2023). Research has shown that students with strong self-efficacy are more likely to develop and maintain effective study routines, leading to enhanced academic performance (Hwang et al., 2016; Cazan, 2020). However, despite the extensive body of literature on these constructs, few studies have simultaneously examined their prevalence among senior secondary students in Imo State, where performance trends continue to decline.

Existing studies in Nigeria have largely focused on either self-efficacy in science-related subjects (Ahmed et al., 2022; Okere, 2019) or general study habits across disciplines (Adedokun et al., 2020; Dagogo, 2023). Limited attention has been paid to the prevalence of these variables, especially within the socio-educational situation of Imo State, characterized by overcrowded classrooms, inconsistent study support, and varying parental expectations (Iheka, 2023; Nnadozie, 2023). Moreover, while research elsewhere has emphasized environmental influences on study habits and self-efficacy (Dumanjug et al., 2024; Baji, 2020), such prevalence and dimensions remain underexplored in this locality. Hence, the current study is necessary to fill this gap in literature by examining the prevalence of study habits dimensions, self-efficacy and English Language academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Imo State. Understanding these relationships will provide empirical evidence for developing targeted interventions to improve students' language proficiency and academic success.

Statement of the Problem

Several studies conducted in Nigeria have examined either self-efficacy in science-related subjects or general study habits among students across various disciplines. However, there remains a dearth of research focusing on the specific prevalence and interaction of these variables within the English Language learning situation. In Imo State, where the educational environment is marked by overcrowded classrooms, inconsistent study support systems, and differing parental expectations (Iheka, 2023; Nnadozie, 2023), understanding how study habits and self-efficacy contribute to

English Language achievement is particularly critical.

Despite global evidence indicating that students' academic success is influenced by both environmental factors and individual learning dispositions (Dumanjug et al., 2024; Baji, 2020), little is known about how these dynamics manifest among senior secondary school students in this locality. This lack of empirical insight poses challenges for educators and policymakers seeking to improve language achievement outcomes. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the prevalence and dimensions of study habits and self-efficacy as they relate to English Language academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Imo State. The findings are expected to provide valuable evidence for designing targeted interventions that enhance students' study behaviours, strengthen their confidence in learning, and ultimately improve their academic performance in English Language.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the prevalence scores of Study Habits dimensions, Self-Efficacy scores, and Academic Achievement scores of Senior Secondary School Students in English Language in Imo State, Nigeria.

The specific purposes of this study were to:

1. Determine the prevalence scores of the various study habit dimensions of senior secondary school students in Imo State.
2. Determine the self-efficacy scores of senior secondary school students in Imo State.
3. Determine the academic achievement scores of senior secondary school students in English Language in Imo State.

Methods

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. A descriptive survey research design is a research approach used to collect and analyze data from a sample or an entire population to describe existing conditions, opinions, practices, or trends without manipulating any variables. It helps the researcher obtain factual information about people's attitudes, behaviors, or characteristics as they naturally occur. The research was conducted in Imo State, located in south eastern Nigeria, known for its strong educational culture but also challenged by overcrowded classrooms, limited study support, and exam-oriented pressures. The population comprised all Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in public schools across the six education zones of Imo State, totaling 27,050 students. SS2 students were chosen because they are midway through senior secondary education and preparing for critical examinations. A sample of 772 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Five education zones were purposively chosen for safety and accessibility, followed by proportional stratified sampling by zone and gender, and simple random sampling of participants within each stratum. This ensured representativeness and reduced bias.

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Three instruments were used for data collection:

1. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) – 15 items rated on a 4-point scale.

2. The Study Habit Inventory (Bakare, 1997) – 45 items covering eight areas of study behavior, rated on a 4-point scale.

3. Students' English Language academic records, obtained from official school documents.

A pilot study involving 30 similar students was conducted to assess reliability, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86 for self-efficacy and 0.81 for study habits, indicating good internal consistency. Data were collected through trained research assistants who administered questionnaires in classrooms after obtaining school and student consent. The process lasted two weeks and was closely supervised for consistency and accuracy. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage summarized responses, while simple and multiple regression analyses tested how study habits and self-efficacy predicted English Language achievement. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance, with correlation strengths interpreted following Schober, Boer, and Schwarte (2018).

Results

Data from the field of study were analysed and presented in tables as follows:

Research Question 1

What are the various study habits scores of senior secondary school students in Imo State?

Table 1: Range of various study habits scores of secondary school students in Imo State

Study Habits	Range of scores	N	%	Remark
Items on book	8 – 23	82	4.9	Poor items on book
	24 – 40	1592	95.1	Good items on book
Note taking	5 – 14	229	13.7	Poor note taking
	15 – 25	1445	86.3	Good note taking
Memories	9 – 26	44	2.6	Poor memories
	27 – 45	1630	97.4	Good memories
Test preparation	13 – 38	146	8.7	Poor test preparation
	39 – 65	1528	91.3	Good test preparation
Concentration	10 – 29	44	2.6	Poor concentration
	30 – 50	1630	97.4	Good concentration
Time management	6 – 17	132	7.9	Poor memories
	18 – 30	1542	92.1	Good memories

Table 1 reveals that with scores ranging from 24 to 40, 1592(95.1%) secondary school students have good items on book aspect of study habit, while 1445(83.3%) students whose scores ranged from 15 to 25 have good note taking aspect of study habits.

Also with scores ranging from 27 to 45, 1630(97.4%) secondary school students have good memories aspect of study habit, while 1528(91.3%) students whose scores ranged from 39 to 65 have good test preparation aspect of study habits. Finally, with scores ranging from 30 to 50, 1630(97.4%) secondary school students have good concentration aspect of study habit, while 1542(92.1%) students whose scores ranged from 18 to 30 have good time management aspect of study habits.

Discussion

The findings of the present study revealed that the majority of secondary school students demonstrated good study habits across all examined domains: book use, note-taking, memory, test preparation, concentration, and time management. These results suggest that the sampled students possess positive academic habits that could enhance learning outcomes and overall achievement. The reason for this finding could be associated with several factors. First, secondary school students are often guided by structured school timetables and teacher supervision, which may encourage consistent reading, revision, and note-taking. Moreover, the growing emphasis on continuous assessment and external examinations such as WAEC and NECO may motivate students to maintain disciplined study patterns. Parental involvement, availability of learning materials, and peer influence may also contribute to the development of effective study routines. The findings of this study align with those of Adedokun et al. (2020), who reported that study habits significantly predicted students' academic performance in Basic Science. They argued that good study routines such as regular reading, proper note-taking, and adequate test preparation lead to improved comprehension and retention. Similarly, Ebele and Olofu (2017) found that students who exhibited better study habits in Biology performed higher than those with poor study routines. Kwakye et al. (2020) also confirmed that pupils who managed their time well and reviewed lessons regularly achieved higher academic scores in Ghanaian schools. These consistent results reinforce the view that study habits form the foundation for academic success.

The current findings further agree with Cottrell (2024), who emphasised that effective concentration and self-discipline are essential components of productive learning among university students. Their studies revealed that students who plan their study schedules and actively manage distractions tend to achieve better results. Likewise, Burns and Sinfield (2022) explained that good note-taking, reading comprehension, and memory enhancement are vital for higher learning efficiency and performance. Also, in support of the present results, Nwadiani (2024) also established that effective study habits, especially time management and concentration, had a direct positive influence on academic achievement among business education students in Nigeria. Likewise, Oyasola and Adegoke (2022) concluded that students' mastery of study habits such as note organisation and systematic reading correlated significantly

with better performance in secondary schools in Oyo State.

Some studies however, have shown slightly different results. For example, Eva, Janja and Nark (2023) observed that study habits among higher education students declined during and after the COVID-19 pandemic due to increased digital distraction and reduced motivation. This partial disagreement may be attributed to circumstantial differences, while their study focused on post-pandemic university students, the current research examined younger secondary school students still under teacher supervision and structured learning conditions. The few differences observed in other studies may be explained by variations in study environments, age groups, levels of autonomy, and post-pandemic changes in learning culture. The present findings therefore reinforce the importance of consistent reading, organised note-taking, effective memory strategies, and disciplined time management as crucial predictors of students' academic success.

Research Question 2

What are the self-efficacy scores of senior secondary school students in Imo State?

Table 2: Self-efficacy scores of senior secondary school students in Imo State

Range of scores	N	%	Remarks
10 – 24	506	30.2	Low Self-efficacy
25 – 40	1168	69.8	High Self-efficacy

Table 2 indicates that 1168(69.8%) of SS11 students in Imo State with the scores ranging from 25 and 40 have high self-efficacy, while 506(30.2%) others who scored between 10 and 24 have low self-efficacy.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that a greater proportion of SS II students in Imo State demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy. This result suggests that most secondary school students in the state believe in their ability to accomplish academic tasks and succeed in their studies. High self-efficacy among these students could be attributed to supportive school environments, teacher encouragement, and parental involvement, which are known to promote confidence and resilience in learning (Agulanna & Onukogu, 2012). The high prevalence of self-efficacy also aligns with Ahmed, et al. (2022) who found that teachers' high self-efficacy significantly influenced students' belief in their own abilities, particularly in science subjects. This may explain the high number of students with strong self-belief in this study, as teacher role-modelling is a powerful factor in shaping learners' self-perception (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). Furthermore, the result also concurs with the work of Baji (2020), who found that students in Niger State displayed relatively high levels of academic self-efficacy regardless of gender. Similarly, Dumanjug et al. (2024) observed that most college students in their study demonstrated high self-efficacy across gender, further supporting the dominance of positive self-belief among Nigerian learners.

However, the finding of this study contrasts with the report of Okoro (2020), who found that many Nigerian undergraduates displayed moderate rather than high levels of self-efficacy. Okoro attributed this difference to limited instructional support and poor feedback mechanisms. This inconsistency could be due to contextual differences, as students in Imo State may benefit from improved teacher support, home supervision, or exposure to motivational programmes.

Research Question 3

What are the academic achievement scores of senior secondary school students in English language in Imo State?

Table 3: Academic achievement scores of secondary school students in English language

English language scores	N	%	Remarks
70 – 100	278	16.6	Excellent achievement
60 – 69	447	26.8	Very good achievement
50 – 59	378	22.0	Good achievement
40 – 49	321	19.2	Poor achievement
0 - 39	258	15.4	Failed

Table 3 reveals that 278(16.6%) of the secondary school students with the scores ranging from 70 and 100 have excellent academic achievement in English language, 447(26.8%) of the students who scored between 60 and 69 have very good achievement in English language; while 378(22.0%) of the students scored between 50 and 59 have good achievement in English language and 321(19.2%) of the students who scored between 40 and 49 have poor achievement in English language where 258(15.4) of the students who scored between 0 and 39 failed English language in secondary schools in Imo State.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed a wide spread of achievement in English language among secondary school students in Imo State. This result shows that although about half of the students performed well in English language, a considerable number still performed poorly or failed completely. This pattern of achievement suggests that there are differences in the students' levels of ability, study habits, and learning environments. Those who performed excellently or very well are likely to have better study habits, stronger reading culture, and more effective preparation strategies. They may also have benefitted from good teaching methods and supportive home environments. This finding agrees with the reports of Adedokun et al. (2020) and Ebele and Olofu (2017), who found that students with organised study habits and regular reading practices performed better academically. Similarly, Ahmed, Lawal and Ahmed (2022) observed that good teacher quality and effective instructional methods improve students' academic performance.

On the other hand, the large number of students who performed poorly or failed the subject could be attributed to weak teaching methods, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of adequate learning

materials. Home background and parental support may also have influenced performance. Students from homes with low literacy exposure or limited encouragement may have less motivation to read or practise English regularly. This finding agrees with the reports of Anierobi and Unachukwu (2020) and Ngwoke and Ede (2015), who stated that home literacy environment and parental involvement play vital roles in determining students' academic success.

The study also supports the idea that students' self-belief and motivation affect their performance. Students with high academic self-efficacy are more confident and tend to persist when faced with academic challenges. This observation is in line with Bandura's (2002) theory of self-efficacy and with the findings of Schunk and DiBenedetto (2021), who reported that motivation and self-confidence improve academic outcomes. In contrast, students who lack confidence or experience high examination anxiety may underperform, even if they have the ability.

However, the findings of this study differ slightly from those of some previous studies such as Adelantado-Renau et al. (2019) and Eva et al. (2023) whose studies showed that excessive screen time and pandemic-related disruptions affected students' learning negatively. If the students in this study experienced a more stable school period, this may explain why a good number achieved high scores compared to those in disrupted situations.

Conclusion

The study concludes that although most secondary school students in Imo State possess good study habits and relatively high self-efficacy, these strengths do not consistently lead to excellent academic outcomes in English Language. This highlights the need for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers to design interventions that not only reinforce effective study behaviours and self-belief but also address instructional quality, learning support, and assessment practices to enhance English Language achievement among students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to improve students' study habits, self-efficacy, and academic achievement in English Language among secondary school students in Imo State:

1. Schools should organize regular workshops and counselling sessions to help students strengthen weak areas of study habits such as note-taking and time management. Teachers and guidance counsellors should provide structured training on effective reading, summarizing, and revision techniques.

2. Since a significant number of students still exhibit low self-efficacy, schools should establish mentorship programs where high-performing students, teachers, and counsellors can encourage and support students with low academic confidence. This will help learners develop a positive attitude toward their academic abilities.

3. English Language teachers should adopt interactive and learner-centered teaching strategies such as

peer learning, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks. These methods can boost students' confidence and improve their comprehension, thereby enhancing overall academic achievement.

4. The Ministry of Education and school administrators should integrate study habit and self-regulation skills into the curriculum through subjects like Guidance and Counselling or Life Skills Education. This will ensure that students receive systematic training on how to plan, organize, and evaluate their learning.

5. Guidance counsellors should play a proactive role in identifying students with poor study habits or low self-efficacy and provide targeted interventions. Regular assessment of students' learning behaviors should be conducted to monitor progress and provide timely support.

6. Educational authorities should tackle systemic issues such as overcrowded classrooms and inadequate learning resources, which hinder effective study habits and concentration. Providing better infrastructure and adequate instructional materials will enhance students' learning outcomes.

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