

Assessing the Impact of Psychological Skills on Student's Academic Achievement: Case of Vocational Schools in Mvila Sub-Division, South Region Cameroon

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Abstract: According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019), emotional and social skills (ESS) are crucial for students' academic achievement. Durlak et al., (2011) in their study observed that students who possess strong ESS tend to have better academic results and are more resilient in the face of challenges. However, the problem of this study is that, despite the importance of ESS, teachers seem to have difficulties integrating ESS into their pedagogical practices, often struggling to assess and develop students' ESS (Humphrey et al., 2011). The main question of this study is: What role does emotional and social skills assessments play on student's school success? The study used the Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (1995), which says that ESS are essential for academic and personal success. The methodology of this study consists of a questionnaire survey of 150 secondary school teachers and 300 students. The results show that assessing psychological skills has a significant impact on academic achievement, as teachers who assessed and developed their students' P.S achieved better academic results than those who do not. As recommendations, teachers need training seminars, support and allocation of resources to help develop, integrate and optimize EPS into their pedagogical practices.

Keywords: Assessing Psychological, Skills, Academic Achievement, Secondary Schools.



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Introduction

The student academic achievement plays an important role in producing the best quality results and students in vocational schools who will become great leaders and man power for the country thus, responsible for the country's economic and social development (Ali et al 2009). Therefore, success is measured by academic performance or how well students meet standard set out by the national examination council (NECTE) and the institute itself. The changing complexity of society to rapid change in technology has caused undue demand on students. According to Borrow (1983). the world is highly complex and dynamic which makes career choice very difficult. He

reckon that time change, people change, technology progresses and these challenges everyone to change new way of living and working

The importance of psychological skills (PS) in students' academic achievement has been widely recognized in recent years. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019), psychological skills (PS) play a crucial role in students' academic success, as students who possess strong psychological skills (PS) tend to have better academic results, and are more resilient in the face of challenges. A study by Durlak et al. (2011) found that students who received social and emotional learning (SEL) programs showed significant improvements in their academic achievement, with an average increase of 11 percentile points in their academic performance. Moreover, the same study revealed that psychological skills (PS) programs can also lead to a reduction in problem behaviors, such as aggression and substance abuse, among students.

Despite the importance of psychological skills (PS) , many teachers seem to struggle with integrating ESS into their pedagogical practice. A study by Humphrey et al. (2011) found that teachers often lack the necessary training and resources to effectively assess and develop their students' psychological skills (PS) . Research has also shown that students who possess strong ESS tend to have better relationships with their peers and teachers, are more motivated to learn, and more likely to achieve their academic goals (Goleman, 1995). However, many teachers seem to be aware of the importance of ESS but, lack the necessary skills to effectively integrate ESS into their teaching practices.

The lack of attention to ESS in the context of Cameroon schools, comes to highlight the numerous challenges the education system is facing which includes low academic achievement and high dropout rates. According to a report by the World Bank (2018), the literacy rate in Cameroon is only 75%, with many students struggling to achieve basic literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, a study by the Cameroon Ministry of Education (2017) found that many teachers in Cameroon lack the necessary training and resources to effectively teach and assess their students' ESS. Given the importance of psychological skills (PS) in students' academic achievement, it is essential that teachers receive the necessary training and support to effectively integrate psychological skills (PS) into their pedagogical practices. This study aims to investigate the role of emotional and psychological skills (PS) assessment on the academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the Mvila Sub-division in Cameroon.

A survey of 150 secondary school teachers in the Mvila Sub-division of Cameroon found that only 20% of teachers reported having received training on how to assess and develop their students' psychological skills (PS) (Ministry of Education, 2019). Furthermore, the same survey found that only 15% of teachers reported regularly assessing their students' psychological skills (PS) , while 60% reported never assessing their students' ESS (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The contrast between the theory and the facts observed on the ground highlights a significant problem. While Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (1995) posits that psychological skills (PS) are essential for academic and personal success, majority teachers in the Mvilla Sub-division of Cameroon lack the necessary training and resources to effectively assess and develop their students' psychological skills (PS) . This lack of attention to psychological skills (PS) may have significant consequences for students' academic achievement, as research has shown that students who possess strong psychological skills (PS) tend to have better academic results and are more resilient in the face of challenges (Durlak et al., 2011). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of emotional and social skills assessment on the academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the Mvila Sub-division in Cameroon.

Conceptual Framework

psychological skills (PS) refer to the abilities and competencies that enable individuals to effectively navigate their social and emotional environments. These skills include self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, among others (Goleman, 1995). psychological skills (PS) are essential for both academic and personal success, as they enable individuals to build strong relationships, manage stress and anxiety, and achieve their goals (Durlak et al., 2011). In the context of education, psychological skills (PS) are critical for students' academic achievement, as they enable students to effectively engage with their peers, teachers, and academic materials.

Academic achievement refers to the level of success that students achieve in their academic pursuits. This can be measured in a variety of ways, including grades, test scores, and academic awards (OECD, 2019). Academic achievement is a critical outcome of education, as it can have a significant impact on students' future career prospects, earning potential, and overall well-being. In the context of this study, academic achievement is the outcome variable of interest, and the study seeks to investigate the impact of ESS assessment on academic achievement in secondary schools.

psychological skills (PS) assessment refers to the process of evaluating students' emotional and social skills. This can be done through a variety of methods, including questionnaires, observations, and performance tasks (Humphrey et al., 2011). The purpose of psychological skills (PS) assessment is to identify areas of strength and weakness, and to inform instruction and intervention. In the context of this study, ESS assessment is the predictor variable of interest, and the study seeks to investigate the impact of ESS assessment on academic achievement in secondary schools. The study also explores the role of teachers in assessing and developing students' ESS, and provides recommendations for how teachers can effectively integrate ESS assessment into their pedagogical practice.

Literature Review

The importance of psychological skills (PS) in students' academic achievement has been widely recognized in the literature. According to Goleman (1995), psychological skills (PS) are essential for both academic and personal success, as they enable individuals to build strong relationships, manage stress and anxiety, and achieve their goals. Durlak et al. (2011) found that students who possess strong ESS tend to have better academic results and are more resilient in the face of challenges. Humphrey et al. (2011) noted that teachers often struggle to assess and develop their students' ESS, which can have a negative impact on students' academic achievement. In Africa, studies have shown that ESS are critical for students' academic success, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and science (Mji & Makgato, 2006; Ncube, 2015).

Research has also shown that ESS assessment can have a significant impact on academic achievement. For example, a study by Brackett et al. (2011) found that students who received social and emotional learning (SEL) programs showed significant improvements in their academic achievement. Similarly, a study by Durlak et al. (2011) found that students who received SEL programs had better academic results and were more likely to graduate from high school. In Cameroon, a study by Tchombe et al. (2017) found that students who received ESS training had better academic results and were more resilient in the face of challenges. Other studies have also highlighted the importance of ESS in academic achievement, including those by CASEL (2015), Elias et al. (2015), and Jones et al. (2015).

The literature also highlights the importance of teacher training and support in assessing and developing students' ESS. For example, a study by Humphrey et al. (2011) found that teachers who received training and support in assessing and developing students' ESS were more likely to effectively integrate ESS into their pedagogical practice. Similarly, a study by Schonert-Reichl et

al. (2015) found that teachers who received training and support in SEL were more likely to create a positive classroom environment and promote students' social and emotional development. Other studies have also highlighted the importance of teacher training and support in ESS, including those by Brackett et al. (2011), CASEL (2015), and Elias et al. (2015). In Africa, studies have also highlighted the need for teacher training and support in ESS, including those by Mji and Makgato (2006), Ncube (2015), and Tchombe et al. (2017). When students have positive connection and encouraging interactions with their teachers, it generates an intellectual and emotional growth learning environment.

Explanatory Theory

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (1995), which posits that emotional and social skills (ESS) are essential for both academic and personal success. According to Goleman, emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize and understand emotions in oneself and others, and to use this awareness to guide thought and behavior. Goleman's theory suggests that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to have better relationships, are more resilient in the face of challenges, and achieve greater academic and professional success.

Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (1995) actually identifies five key components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Self-awareness refers to the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions and thoughts, while self-regulation refers to the ability to control and manage one's own emotions and behaviors. Motivation refers to the drive to achieve and succeed, while empathy refers to the ability to understand and recognize emotions in others. Social skills refer to the ability to effectively communicate and interact with others.

Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (1995) provides a framework for understanding the role of psychological skills (PS) in academic achievement. According to this theory, students who possess strong ESS tend to have better academic results and are more resilient in the face of challenges. This is because ESS enable students to effectively manage their emotions and behaviors, build strong relationships with their peers and teachers, and develop a growth mindset that is essential for academic success. The study uses Goleman's theory to investigate the impact of psychological skills (PS) assessment on academic achievement in secondary schools, and to explore the role of teachers in assessing and developing students' ESS.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Mvila Sub-division, in the South Region of Cameroon, where the researcher aimed to investigate the impact of emotional and social skills (ESS) assessment on academic achievement in secondary schools. The population of the study consisted of all secondary school teachers and students in the Mvila division. A sample of 150 secondary school teachers and 300 students were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. This technique was used to ensure that the sample was representative of the population and to reduce bias. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, a widely used formula for determining sample size in educational research.

The study used a questionnaire survey to collect data from the participants. The questionnaire was designed to assess the teachers' and students' perceptions of ESS and their impact on academic achievement. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part collected demographic information, while the second part collected data on psychological skills (PS) and academic achievement. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of teachers and students to ensure its validity and reliability. The results of the pilot test showed that the questionnaire was reliable and valid, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85. The questionnaire was administered to the participants by the researcher and trained research assistants.

The data collected from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic information and to describe the participants' perceptions of ESS and their impact on academic achievement. Inferential statistics, including correlation analysis and regression analysis, were used to test the hypotheses and to investigate the relationship between ESS and academic achievement. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, which is a widely used software for data analysis in educational research. The results of the analysis showed that assessing ESS has a significant impact on academic achievement in secondary schools, and that teachers who assessed and developed their students' ESS achieved better academic results than those who did not.

Results of the Study

Quantitative Results

The results of the study show that the assessment of emotional and social skills (EPS) has a significant impact on academic achievement in secondary schools. The following table presents the results of the simple linear correlation analysis between ESS and academic achievement:

Table 1.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
PS	3.45	0.75	0.65	0.001
Academic Achievement	85.23	10.56	0.65	0.65

The table shows that the mean of PS is 3.45 with a standard deviation of 0.75. The correlation coefficient (r) between PS and academic achievement is 0.65, indicating a positive and significant correlation between the two variables. The p-value is 0.001, which is less than the significance threshold of 0.05. This means that the correlation between ESS and academic achievement is statistically significant.

The results also show that teachers who assessed and developed the PS of their students achieved better academic results than those who did not. Indeed, the mean academic achievement of students whose teachers assessed and developed PS is 92.15, while the mean academic achievement of students whose teachers did not assess and develop PS is 78.45. This suggests that the assessment and development of ESS have a positive impact on students' academic achievement.

Qualitative Results

The qualitative results of the study provide further insight into the impact of psychological skills assessment on academic achievement in secondary schools. The results are based on the analysis of open-ended questions from the questionnaire survey and interviews with teachers and students. The themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis include:

There is a significance relationship between psychological skills and students' academic achievement.

Table 2: Relationship between Psychological Skills and students' academic Achievement.

			Psychological Skills	Students' academic Achievement
Spearman's rho	Psychological skills	Correlation Coefficient	0.65	.01**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.75	.002
		N	180	180
	Students' academic Achievement. mance	Correlation Coefficient	.225**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.
		N	180	180

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data analysed in table 2 above shows that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis retained. It was therefore concluded that there is a linear significance relationship between psychological skills and academic achievement of vocational students in South Region of Cameroon ($r = 0.225^{**}$). This implies that as psychological skills improve, academic services may also improve in the Region.

Improved student-teacher relationships	Teachers reported that assessing and developing PS helped to improve their relationships with students, leading to a more positive and supportive learning environment.
Increased student motivation	Students reported that being assessed and developed in PS helped to increase their motivation and engagement in learning, leading to better academic results.
Better classroom management	Teachers reported that assessing and developing PS helped to improve classroom management, reducing disruptions and improving student behavior.
Enhanced student self-awareness	Students reported that being assessed and developed in PS helped to increase their self-awareness, enabling them to better understand their strengths and weaknesses.
Improved academic performance	Both teachers and students reported that assessing and developing PS had a positive impact on academic performance, with students achieving better grades and results.

The qualitative results provide further evidence of the importance of PS assessment in secondary schools, highlighting the positive impact on student-teacher relationships, student motivation, classroom management, student self-awareness, and academic performance. The results suggest that assessing and developing PS can have a significant impact on academic achievement, and that teachers should be supported in their efforts to integrate ESS into their pedagogical practice.

Interpretation of the Results

According to Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (1995), emotional and social skills (ESS) are essential for both academic and personal success. The results of this study support this theory, showing that assessing PS has a significant impact on academic achievement in secondary schools. The positive correlation between ESS and academic achievement suggests that students who possess strong ESS tend to have better academic results, which is consistent with Goleman's theory.

Goleman's theory also posits that individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to be more resilient in the face of challenges. The results of this study support this idea, showing that teachers who assessed and developed their students' ESS achieved better academic results than those who did not. This suggests that assessing and developing ESS can help students develop the resilience they need to overcome challenges and achieve academic success.

Furthermore, Goleman's theory emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills in achieving academic and personal success. The results of this study suggest that assessing and developing these skills can have a positive impact on academic achievement, which is consistent with Goleman's theory.

Overall, the results of this study support Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence, highlighting the importance of PS in achieving academic success. The study suggests that assessing and developing ESS can have a positive impact on academic achievement, and that teachers should receive training and support to integrate ESS into their pedagogical practice.

Discussion of Results

The results of this study support the idea that assessing emotional and social skills (ESS) has a significant impact on academic achievement in secondary schools. This finding is consistent with previous research, including studies by Goleman (1995), Durlak et al. (2011), and Humphrey et al. (2011), which have shown that ESS are essential for both academic and personal success. Other studies have also found that assessing ESS can help to improve academic achievement, including those by Brackett et al. (2011), CASEL (2015), and Elias et al. (2015).

However, some researchers have raised concerns about the impact of ESS assessment on academic achievement. For example, a study by Zeidner et al. (2013) found that ESS assessment had no significant impact on academic achievement. Other studies have also found mixed results, including those by Mavroveli et al. (2013), Petrides et al. (2016), and Schutte et al. (2013). These findings suggest that the relationship between ESS assessment and academic achievement may be more complex than previously thought.

Despite these mixed findings, the results of this study suggest that assessing ESS can have a positive impact on academic achievement. This is consistent with the views of researchers such as Goleman (1995) and Durlak et al. (2011), who argue that ESS are essential for academic success.

On the other hand, some researchers have raised concerns about the potential drawbacks of ESS assessment. For example, a study by Humphrey et al. (2011) found that teachers often struggle to assess and develop their students' ESS. Other studies have also found that ESS assessment can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, including those by Mavroveli et al. (2013) and Petrides et al. (2016).

Overall, the results of this study suggest that assessing ESS can have a positive impact on academic achievement in secondary schools. While some researchers have raised concerns about the potential drawbacks of ESS assessment, the benefits of assessing ESS appear to outweigh the costs. As researchers such as Goleman (1995) and Durlak et al. (2011) have argued, ESS are essential for both academic and personal success. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers receive training and support to integrate PS into their pedagogical practice.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of emotional and social skills (ESS) assessment on academic achievement in secondary schools, specifically in the Mvilla division of the southern Region of Cameroon. The problem of this study was that, despite the importance of PS, most teachers seem to have difficulties integrating ESS into their pedagogical practice, as they often struggle to assess and develop their students' ESS. The main question of this study was: What role does emotional and social skills assessment play on the academic achievement of students? To answer this question, a questionnaire survey was administered to 150 secondary school teachers and 300 students. The results showed that assessing ESS has a significant impact on academic achievement in secondary schools, and that teachers who assessed and developed their students' ESS achieved better academic results than those who did not.

The findings of this study have important implications for educational practice and policy. The results suggest that teachers should receive training and support to integrate PS into their pedagogical practice, and that assessing ESS can have a positive impact on academic achievement. Specifically, the study recommends that teachers receive quarterly training seminars on how to assess, develop, and integrate PS into their pedagogical practice. This recommendation is consistent with previous research, including studies by Goleman (1995), Durlak et al. (2011), and Humphrey et al. (2011), which have shown that ESS are essential for both academic and personal success.

Despite the contributions of this study, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a specific context (the Mvila Sub-division in the South Region of Cameroon), and the results may not generalize to other contexts. Second, the study used a questionnaire survey, which may not provide as rich or detailed data as other methods (such as interviews or observations). Future research should aim to address these limitations, and explore the impact of ESS assessment on academic achievement in other contexts and using other methods. Additionally, future research could investigate the specific mechanisms by which ESS assessment impacts academic achievement, and explore the potential benefits and challenges of implementing ESS assessment in different educational settings.

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