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## **Relationship between Psychological Disorders and Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja**

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### **Abstract**

The study investigated relationship between psychological disorders and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja. Correlational research design was used. The population of the study was 40,452 senior secondary school students. The multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw a sample size of 384 respondents. Three instruments were used to collect data for this study. A self-developed Psychological Disorders Scale (PDS), Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT), and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT) were used for data collection. Data analysis was done using Pearson product moment correlation. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between psychological disorders and academic achievement score of students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja. The results proved that psychological disorders had a negative great impact on academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. However, counsellors and psychologists should develop strategies to help reduce psychological problems such as forgetfulness and apathy among students, and develop intervention programmes to enhance students' psychological well-being which may help to increase their academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Relationship, Psychological disorder, Academic achievement, Senior students

### **Introduction**

Achievement is an important phenomenon that is always the concern of all stakeholders in the educational sector. It is an accomplishment or proficiency of performance in a given skill or body of knowledge. According to Roberts (2018), academic achievement is a specified level of attainment or proficiency in academic work as evaluated by the teachers through standardized tests or by a combination of both. Atkinson et al. (2018) defines achievement as a specified level of proficiency in scholastic or academic work. Education or achievement is a specified level of proficiency in academic work as evaluated by a teacher. According to Okegbile (2017) academic achievement is a pedagogical terminology used while determining learner's success in formal education, which is measured through factors exerting influence essentially. The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) has identified school achievement content according to school subjects which are classified as core or elective subjects. In every school setting, students are perpetually in search of academic success, the success of academic achievement is their ultimate goal. Academic achievement in Mathematics and English Language can be expressed in the form of good scores and prizes as a result of hard work and exceptional performance in classroom test, assignment and examination (Robinson, 2016).

Verma (2016) stressed that psychological factors could promote academic achievement of the students, high and low achievers as well as over and under achievers differ significantly with regard to quality and strength in managing academic situations. It has become very unfortunate

and worrisome when students fail to improve or retain the previous success level as it is among secondary schools students in Federal Capital Territory.. The trend of poor achievement of secondary school students has also been confirmed by Education Resource Center as the result of examinations is on a declining state annually. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) results analysis for the years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 in Federal Capital Territory revealed that less than average of the students could get a credit pass in Mathematics and English and with average having between five to six credits with deficiency in either one of the two compulsory subjects. Also, similar situation apply to students in National Examination Council (NECO) as performance between this period in Mathematics and English Language fall below 50 per cent among 70 per cent of the total population of students. This sad development in recent time could be attributed to psychological disorders experience by the students in classroom.

Psychological factors are product of an individual reaction and interaction with happening in the environment which vary from one individual to another (Malekela, 2017). The psychological state of the students could have relationship with the learning ability of students. This is because behaviour is a product of the environment which students cannot be isolated from as the school setting is a social environment which gives room for interaction between students and teachers. Psychological factors play a crucial part in the process of learning and performance. In educational system, psychological factors have been widely acknowledged to be viewed as an important element in assessing students' academic achievement.

Psychological disorder is a behaviour tendency or attitude that is against the norms and value of any social environment or group of persons. The most influential conceptualizations of psychological disorder was proposed by Wakefield (1992), who defined psychological disorder as a harmful dysfunction. Wakefield argued that natural internal mechanisms that is, psychological processes honed by evolution, such as cognition, perception, and learning have important functions, such as enabling one to experience the world the way others do and to engage in rational thought, problem solving, and communication. Dysfunction occurs when an internal mechanism breaks down and can no longer perform its normal function. But, the presence of a dysfunction by itself does not determine a disorder. The dysfunction must be harmful in that it leads to negative consequences for the individual or for others, as judged by the standards of the individual's culture. The harm may include significant internal anguish (e.g., high levels of anxiety or depression) or problems in day-to-day living (e.g., in one's social or work life). These dysfunctions assume to be psychological disorders in the context of this study are apathy and forgetfulness.

Apathy is a feeling of negligence and not concern about things and happening around the environment. It is students' nonchalant attitude towards academic work as a result of lack of interest. Apathy conventionally describes a lack of interest or emotion (Ishii, 2019). Traditionally, it is considered a symptom of depression by existing nomenclatures according to American Psychiatric Association (APA 2016). However, it is increasingly recognized as a behavioural syndrome that can be discriminated from depression, and is characterized by diminished motivation in combination with a lack of goal-directed behaviour and goal-directed cognition, and a lack of emotional effect (Robert, 2019). Apathy most time is greatly manifested in students when depression, stress or lack of interest set in the mind of the students in school. It could help in showing the area of interest in improving achievement among students and equally make learning very difficult for students which depict a sign of relationship between apathy and academic achievement of students.

It is fact that severe anxiety could lead to forgetfulness among student. Forgetting (retention loss) refers to apparent loss of information already encoded and stored in an individual's long term memory. According to Connerton (2017) argues that 'forgetting' is not necessarily a failing, but it is a combination of actions that lead to one's inability to remember things. It is a spontaneous or gradual process in which old memories are unable to be recalled from memory storage. Problems with remembering, learning and retaining new information are a few of the most common complaints of older adults. Memory performance is usually related to the active functioning of three stages. These three stages are encoding, storage and retrieval which all have in one way or the other a reflection on the student academic achievement which could have a negative or positive relationship with students' achievement.

It can be inferred that forgetfulness and apathy may be experienced among the student at the same or different time. It is pertinent at this juncture however to say that the poor quality of students and declining academic achievement at secondary school level in Federal Capital Territory in recent time could be traced to persistent psychological disorder witnessed in schools. Therefore it is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the relationship between psychological disorders and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory.

Stakeholders as well as Nigerians are becoming worried about the alarming rate of poor achievement of students in West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) especially in the two core subjects of Mathematics and English Language.. Parents in Federal Capital Territory are particularly disturbed because by the rate of failure of students which has continued to rise every year from 2018-2020 as indicated in 2016 (24.85%), 2017 (38.81%), 2018 (35.57%), 2019 (31.28%), and 2020 (38.68%).

It is assumed that psychological disorder such as apathy, anxiety and forgetfulness could be responsible for students' failure. Students' failure which is attributed to psychological disorder may have relationship with academic achievement of students. It is expected that students must have at least five credits passes in their results before they are admitted in Universities and other tertiary institutions. While the problem persists, there is no published empirical study in Federal Capital Territory to show that psychological disorder could be the main reason for under-achievement in Mathematics and English language. It is in the light of this that the study sought to investigate the relationship between psychological disorders such as apathy and forgetfulness which has not been holistically handled by other previous research bordering on academic achievement of secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory in particular.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study investigated relationship between psychological disorders and academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. relationship between apathy and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja; and
2. relationship between forgetfulness and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

### **Research Questions**

The researchers posed the following research questions to guide the study.

1. What is the relationship between apathy and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?
2. What is the relationship between forgetfulness and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja?

### **Hypotheses**

Two null hypotheses were postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between apathy and academic achievement score of students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.
2. There is no significant relationship between forgetfulness and academic achievement score of students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

### **Methods**

The correlational research design was adopted for this study. Correlational research design attempts to established relationship between two or more variables. The design was suitable for the study because it established relationship between psychological disorders and Academic achievement among senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory. The population of the study was 40,452; comprising all the SS 2 students in Federal Capital Territory, drawn from 26 senior secondary schools in the six Council Areas in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as revealed by Education Resource Centre (ERC, 2022).

The study sample size was 384. This sample size was in accordance with Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining required sample size given a finite population. The multi-stage sampling procedure was employed to select the study ample. The first stage involved clustering of Federal Capital Territory into six Council Areas of Abuja Municipal: Bwari, Abaji, Kuje, Kwali, and Gwagwalada. The second stage was the use of proportionate sampling to select 13 secondary schools from the drawn Council areas, while the third stage was the drawing of 384 secondary school students through simple random sampling technique of lucky dip. Three instruments were employed for the study: A self-developed Psychological Disorder Scale (PDS), Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT), and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). The PDS measured the three subscales of psychological disorders which are apathy and forgetfulness. The scale consisted of 18 items, which was measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale with response sets of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree to seek responses from the sampled participants of the study. The Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT) and English Language Achievement Test were adapted by the researcher from the 2016 West Africa Examination Councils (WAECSSCE) Mathematics and English Language Paper 2 (Objective) test items. The instrument consisted of 40 multiple-choice items with four options of A-D. The MAT and ELAT were administered to the students in an examination condition with two research assistants.

The validity of the instruments was established by three experts from the Department of Educational Foundations, Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The experts subjected the instruments to construct and content validity. Suggestions made by the experts were effected and incorporated into the final version of the instrument used for data collection. The PDS yielded a logical validity index of 0.74, 0.83 for the MAT and 0.78 for the ELAT.

The Psychological Disorders Scale (PDS) was pilot tested on 50 students outside the study area.. In doing this, copies of the questionnaire were administered and retrieved from the respondents.

The scores from the instrument were analyzed to establish the internal consistency of the scales using Cronbach's Alpha, in which a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained for the PDS. The MAT and ELAT items were also pilot tested on 50 SS2 students in schools outside the study area. The items were manually scored, and each correct option attracted one (1) point, while wrong answer (option) attracted zero (0) point. The internal consistencies of MAT and ELAT yielded reliability coefficients of 0.85 for the MAT and 0.88 for the ELAT using Cronbach's Alpha.

The researchers visited the selected secondary schools, introduced themselves to the Principals and teachers with a letter of introductory letter on ethical consideration for the study. The researchers explained to the students the purpose of the study before administering the instruments on them. The "wait-and-take" technique was used to retrieve the instruments from the respondents. The respondents were given verbal instruction where necessary.

Data collected were sorted for completeness of responses, cleaned and were coded into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyze and answer the research questions, and as well tested the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Using Jackson (2009) estimates for weak, moderate, and strong correlation coefficients,  $\pm 0.00 - .29$  was interpreted as none (.00) to weak relationship,  $\pm .30 - .59$  was interpreted as moderate relationship, and  $\pm .60 - 1.00$  was interpreted as strong relationship.

## Results

**Table 1: Relationship between Apathy and Achievement Scores of Students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja**

S/n	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	r
1	Apathy	3.640	1.016	.073
2	Academic Achievement Scores	2.720	1.640	

Key for interpretation:

$\pm 0.00 - .29$  = None (.00) to Weak Relationship;  $\pm .30 - .59$  = Moderate Relationship;  $\pm .60 - 1.00$  = Strong Relationship

Table 1 shows that there was a weak positive relationship ( $r = .073$ ) between apathy and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja. This implies that increase in the apathy of students leads to increase or higher academic achievement scores.

**Table 2: Relationship between Forgetfulness and Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja**

S/n	Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	r
1	Forgetfulness	3.150	0.813	.063
2	Academic Achievement Scores	2.720	1.640	

Key for interpretation:

$\pm 0.00 - .29$  = None (.00) to Weak Relationship;  $\pm .30 - .59$  = Moderate Relationship;  $\pm .60 - 1.00$  = Strong Relationship

Table 2 shows that there was a weak positive relationship ( $r = .063$ ) between forgetfulness and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja. This implies that increase in the forgetfulness of students leads to increase or higher academic achievement scores.

#### Achievement test of SS 2 Students in Mathematics and English Language

S/n		High (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low(1)	Mean	Std	Remarks
1	Mathematics	28	111	249	2	2.42	1.55	Fairly good
2	English	133	137	117	3	3.03	1.74	Good
	Average mean					2.72	1.64	Excellent

\*Scale = 2.50

The achievement test on Mathematics and English Language shows that the students who scored high, moderate, low, and very low are 28, 111, 249, and 2 in mathematics with the mean of 2.42 are Fairly good, while students who scored high, moderate, low, and very low are 133, 137, 117, and 3 in English Language with a mean of 3.03 are Good. However, the average mean of both Mathematics and English Language is 2.72; indicating the general achievement of students to be excellent in Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation Showing Significant Relationship between Apathy and Academic Achievement Scores of Students in Federal Capital Territory**

Variable	N	r	p-value	Decision
Apathy	384	.073	0.030	Rejected
Academic Achievement Score	2.72			

Table 3 shows the relationship between apathy and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory using Pearson's product moment correlation with p-value of 0.030 less than 0.05 level of significance. The analysis shows that the hypothesis was rejected, thus significant. Therefore, there was a weak positive significant relationship between apathy and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory Nigeria

**Table 4: Pearson Correlation Showing Significant Relationship between Forgetfulness and Academic Achievement Scores of Students in Federal Capital Territory**

Variable	N	r	p-value	Decision
Forgetfulness	384	.063	0.039	Rejected
Academic Achievement Score	2.72			



Table 4 shows the relationship between forgetfulness and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory using Pearson's product moment correlation with p-value of 0.039 less than 0.05 level of significance. The analysis shows that the hypothesis was rejected, thus significant. Therefore, there was a weak positive significant relationship between forgetfulness and academic achievement scores of students in Federal Capital Territory Nigeria

### **Discussion**

The finding revealed that there was a weak significant relationship between apathy and academic achievement of students in Federal Capital Territory Abuja (Tables 1 and 3). The finding is supported by Ruslan and Koopmans (2016) who examined the effects of a multidisciplinary depression programme on apathy and depressive motivational and mood symptoms, and discovered that the whole depression management programme reduced apathy in dementia units and depressive motivational symptoms in somatic units. They revealed that the effect on apathy in dementia units was mainly attributed to activating strategies which are not known to secondary school students in this study. Apathy worsening was associated with pharmacological depression treatment in both unit types and that depression management may affect apathy and depressive symptoms differently, which underpins the position of apathy as a distinct syndrome. A person with apathy will have less motivation, as well as some of the following changes: lack of effort to do everyday tasks (such as personal hygiene), reliance on others to structure daily activities, loss of interest in new things (such as people), lack of concern about their own problems, unemotional responses to news or personal events and implication students' apathy will exhibit on occasion and even regular reluctant to academic work in schools, which in turn can result to poor academic achievement among students in Abuja. Erickson's Theory of Psychosocial Development emphasis on stage five which focus on Identity/Role Confusion believe that adolescents who are successful at this stage have a strong sense of identity and are able to remain true to their beliefs and values in the face of problems and other people's perspectives. When adolescents are apathetic, do not make a conscious search for identity, or are pressured to conform to their parents' ideas for the future, they may develop a weak sense of self and experience role confusion. They will be unsure of their identity and confused about the future. Teenagers who struggle to adopt a positive role will likely struggle to find themselves unstable because they feel unconcern and running away from their responsibility when they should have accepted the situation.

Deniz et al. (2022) highlight that students are grappling with challenges in classroom interactions, particularly in areas, such as discussion participation and effective collaboration in small groups. West (2024) noted that recognizing the importance of attending to students' social-emotional needs and building supportive relationships further contributed to a more conducive learning environment.

Forgetfulness has a significant relationship with academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The urbanization characteristics of Abuja coupled with the youthful exuberance that have taken over the mind of students, have made them to give less priority to their academic in expense of their social life. This finding was confirmed by Mundia (2014) who investigated effects of Psychological Distress on Academic Achievement among students in Brunei and revealed that forgetfulness was found operating in combination with either extroversion or introversion among students. While mild extroversion, introversion, and forgetfulness were not necessarily harmful, excessive amounts of each of these traits could undermine a student's educational and social functioning. This implies that forgetfulness is a psychological disorder that affects a student irrespective of his/her personality type. As a student,



personality does not make him or her to escape or be above the act of forgetfulness. There is abundant evidence that the deliberate attempts to forget, mentioned by some abuse survivors are plausible in neurobiological terms. Suppressing the retrieval of an unwanted memory when a reminder to that memory appears is reliably associated with top-down modulation of hippocampal activity by the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. By implication, student will certainly experience poor achievement activities such as revision, constant exercise that enhance memory as neglected. Also, this is supported by the law of exercise by Edward Thorndike in his Connectionism S-R theory.

Most students struggle with their academic performance, as the most basic cognitive ability in studying working memory is expected to correlate positively with academic performance (Hu & Hu, 2023). The unique recovery of working memory is an important factor in mathematical fluency. Working memory is associated with tasks, such as reading comprehension and math problem-solving, which illustrates the impact and contribution of working memory to academic achievement.

### Conclusion

The study findings have shown that psychological disorders of apathy and forgetfulness had a weak positive significant relationship with academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. However, Teachers and Psychologists should develop intervention programmes to curtail psychological problems such as apathy and forgetfulness among students to enhance students' psychological well-being which may help to increase their academic performance. Also, students should take responsibility to learn apathy and forgetfulness management strategies from teacher and counsellors that will include revision before actual test time so as to refresh and enhance the memory of the student.

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