



## Self-concept and academic achievement: Is there any correlation?

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**Abstract:** This study was carried out to find nature of relationship between self-concept and academic achievement in context of high school students. It also aimed to determine how self-concept and performance affects each other. High school students having high level of self-concept show high academic achievement, and this relationship is reciprocal. In contrast components of self-concept like “self-esteem” and “self-identity” also affects academic achievement, positively. Self-efficacy, an extension of self-concept also positively affects academic performance. Apart from this, academic self-concept plays a role in achievement. Together all these components interact with self-concept and affects achievement of an individual. A total of ten research papers have verified this in this paper. These findings indicate that there exist a reciprocal relationship between self-concept with academic achievement in context of students of high school.

**Keywords:** self, self-concept, academic achievement, academic performance, school performance, high school, students

### Introduction

Self-concept also known as “conceptual self” (Neisser, 1988) implies to an individual’s “conceptual representations” of himself or herself. It is one of the most reflective aspects of self. It functions on process of encoding, organisation and bringing back the stored personally meaningful events into the self. The “autobiographical memory” (Neisser, 1988) also known as ‘extended self’ or the ‘remembered self’ strengthen the “development, expression and continuation of the dynamic self-concept”.

The self-concept comprise of mainly four components – self-identity, body image, self-esteem and role performance. The self-concept develops with further cognitive growth and social experience, and shows increasing complexity, integration and differentiation.

Academic achievement is known as student’s successes in long term and short term goals of education. As a big picture, academic achievement can be seen as completing high school or getting a college degree. In a given class or semester it means a student in honour role. Self-concept has a

long history which started centuries ago from Socrates and Plato to Bandura and Rogers (Hattie, 1992). It affects its components which in turn affects an individual overall self. Achievement is said to be affected by self-concept by many researchers and several models have been created like REM, etc. to explain this relationship.

### Self-esteem and academic achievement

Presence of high self-esteem has a good effect on a student, especially of a high school performance. In a research conducted by “MoradiSheykhjan, Tohid; Jabari, Kamran; Rajeswari, K. (2014)” on 40 students of which 20 males and 20 females selected randomly from 610 people. The research was carried to find impact of ‘self-esteem’ on ‘academic achievement’ of students of high school in Miandoab, Iran. This research found a high level of correlation between academic achievements. Apart from this, self-esteem of both boys and girls were found same as no significant level of distinction exist between the two groups.

Students with different extent of ‘self-esteem’ differ greatly in academic performance. It is mainly due to they see themselves in positive light or not. Alokun, F.B., Ogunsanmi, J.O., Ibitola, V., Makinde, B.O.F. (2014) carried a study to find dissimilarity in “academic performance” of students having high “self-esteem” and low “self-esteem” respectively.. This research was carried on 240 students selected randomly from six schools. A descriptive type research using survey was carried out. A questionnaire named Academic Performance Questionnaire (Reliability = 0.72) was used. The result concluded that there is a difference in two groups. Students having high “self-esteem”, their performance were good in school in comparison to students with low “self-esteem”.

In yet another study conducted by “Vishalakshi, K. K., & Yeshodara, K. (2012)” attempted to study links and relation between ‘self-esteem’ and ‘academic performance’. The sample consisted of 321 students of different government and private schools in Mysore. For data collection, Coppersmith Self-esteem Inventory (CSEI) and



grades of second semester exam were used. The research found positive relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement.

### Self-identity and academic achievement

Self-identity is a component of “self-concept” which contains one’s view of self as an individual of a particular social category. The category can differ from cultural to racial self-identities. On the same, “Whitesell, N. R., Mitchell, C. M., & Spicer, P. (2009)” carried out a study of longitudinal type of cultural identity, “self-esteem” and “academic success” in the “American Indian students” in high school. In this study 1,611 students participated over a period of three years from three different American Indian groups of different culture in United States. It was found that self-esteem was in relation to academic achievement although identity was highly unrelated to academic achievement and has very small indirect effects on the later.

In an another study conducted by “Witherspoon, K. M., Speight, S. L., & Thomas, A. J. (1997)” in context of “racial-identity”, “school achievement” and “self-concept” in “African American students”, 86 students from different high schools were taken. The study found on analysis that racial-identity, academic self-concept are in relation with academic performance of students. Previously in literature, it was found that this community of students do not choose to study or perform better as they don’t want to be seen as acting white. But in this study majority of students had support of peers and parents in developing their identity.

### Self-efficacy and academic performance

Studies have shown that self-efficacy and aspiration have effects on academic achievement. “Motlagh, S. E., Amrai, K., Yazdani, M. J., AltaibAbderahim, H., & Souri, H. (2011)” conducted a research to find relation between self-efficacy and academic achievement in high school students. A sample of 250 students of year 2011-12 participated. To study the sample multi-stage sampling (cluster type) and ‘self-efficacy scale’ was used. For measuring academic achievement score grade point were used and ‘correlation coefficient’ and ‘regression analyses’ were used for analysis of data. It was concluded that ‘self-evaluation’, ‘self-directing’ and ‘self-regulation’ are in correlation to academic achievement. So, self-efficacy plays as a crucial role in academic achievement.

In another research conducted by Carroll, A., Houghton, S., Wood, R., Unsworth, K., Hattie, J., Gordon, L., & Bower, J. (2009) on 935 students from ten schools of two different cities in Australia. The research aimed at studying relation among self-efficacy, academic aspirations and

delinquency. Scales like “Children’s Self-Efficacy Scale”, “Adapted Self-Report Delinquency Scale (Rev.)”, and “Children’s Academic Aspirations Scale” were used for data collection. On analysis, academic and self-regulatory efficacy had an indirect relationship and effects on delinquency whereas indicated positive effects on academic achievement. Further it was reported that academic and social ‘self-efficacy’ had a positive relation of significance with ‘academic aspiration’ and ‘academic achievement’, respectively. Whereas, academic aspiration and academic performance had no significant relationship.

Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992) described the role of student’s self-efficacy beliefs and academic goals in academic achievement and its self-motivation. The study used path analysis. It related goal-setting by parents and student’s self-efficacy and personal goals and grades in social studies. Correlation ( $r = 0.56$ ) was found between four self-motivation scales and social science grades. It was concluded self-regulated learning in student’s affects self-efficacy and in turn academic achievement. The whole study was interpreted according to the social cognitive theory of self-motivation.

### Discussion

Academic self-concept, which is one’s knowledge and self-perceptions about his/her academic ability. It is one of the important components of self-concept. Much early literature showed a high correlation between academic self-concept and academic achievement. It is demonstrated that high academic self-concept leads to high level of “school performance”. “Self-concept” in one domain (like math self-concept) is more strongly relate to achievement (like math achievement) than in other areas.

If “academic self-concept” has effects on “academic achievement” (self-enhancement model) then intervention of teachers based on developing self-concept leads to result in high performance. Giving attention to improve performance would be better if academic achievement results in high self-concept (the skill development model) (Calsyn & Kenny, 1997) If academic achievement or performance and academic self-concept are in reciprocal relation with each other, then it is best to deal with both at the same time. (Marsh & Craven, 2006).

Kumari, A. & Chamundeswari, S. (2013) conducted research on “Self-Concept and Academic Achievement of Students at the Higher Secondary Level”. A sample having 321 students of different school categories and different education system were taken. The self-concept was seen to play a



significant impact on academic achievement, also expressing a positive relation. It was also found that students studying in central schools were good in 'self-concept' and 'school achievement' than other boards.

"Ghazvini, S.D. (2011)" proposed a research "Relationships between academic self-concept and academic performance in high school students" to identify relation between academic 'self-concept' and 'academic achievement' in high school children. For the study, sample was of 363 students of 10 different high schools in Iran. The sample was selected by cluster (multistage) sampling method. For collection of data, "Self-concept Questionnaire" (SCQ) and a questionnaire made by researcher for academic self-concept were used. For school performance the marks assigned by teachers were taken. The research found a close relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. It was also found that academic self-concept also affects performance in subjects like mathematics and literature.

In recent years, there is a lot of evidence for Reciprocal effects model (REM) has grown steadily (Marsh et al.) A meta-analysis from one of the research supports REM and implies that academic self-concept significant relationship with academic achievement and vice-versa. (Valentine, DuBois & Cooper, 2004). These results had been generalised over gender, age, ethnicity and different countries. This reciprocal relation has been demonstrated to be accurate across different cultures.

Self-concept is an individual perception of oneself which not only affects him/her but also surroundings and other people. Self-concept is unique in every individual and therefore it is an important aspect of social psychology and individual differences. It changes with time and has powerful influence over one's life. Academic self-concept is part of the same, although it deals with academic performance.

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'Self-concept' is related to cognitive and thinking aspect of self (mainly self-image) whereas self-esteem is affective or emotional concept (mainly self-worth). Self-concept refers to the rough idea we have of ourselves and self-esteem is one of the component of 'self-concept'. Few authors use them interchangeably. If we talk about self-identity it is one of another component of self-concept which is constructed in relation to race, society and culture.

Motivation also plays an important role in achievement, so self-efficacy or self-motivation plays an important role in development of self-concept as well as in academic achievement. In Albert Bandura's social-cognitive system, self-efficacy is known as feeling of 'adequacy', 'efficiency' and 'competence' in coping with problems and challenges in life. Completing and developing our standards affects and develops "self-efficacy"; while failure to meet and completing the standards reduces "self-efficacy". So, low self-efficacy leads to distorted self-concept and thus low academic achievement.

## Conclusion

From the above research papers we can conclude as all the components of self, interact with each other, self-esteem, self-efficacy shows a positive relation with academic achievement. Self-identity shows rather ambiguous nature, sometimes showing low correlation and sometimes very high. "Self-esteem" and "Self-identity" are main components of "self-concept". "Self-efficacy" acts as a forerunner of self-concept development and is one of the multiple components and processes in self-concept.

So, we can from above relation of components of self-concept and REM theory as well as from skill development model and self-enhancement model, we can conclude the existence of reciprocal relationship between "self-concept" and "academic achievement", in students of high schools. Both self-concept and achievement affects and have impact on each other and we can use it to apply in high schools for good performance in different subjects.



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