

## Self-Regulation Skills Training and Secondary School Students' Self-Concept in Written Composition in Jos North, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study focused on the effects of self-regulation skills training on secondary school students' self-concept in written composition in Jos metropolis, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of all the 4240 government senior secondary class two (SS2) students in Jos North Local government area of Plateau State out of which a sample of 100 was selected for the study. Three research questions and three hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study employed the use of quasi – experimental research design specifically, the non-randomized pre-test-post-test control group design. While a simple random sampling technique was used for selecting 2 schools out of the 20 and 100 students selected for the study. An instrument 'self – concept rating scale' (SCRS) designed to assess various components of self – concept was used as instrument for data collection. The study used mean rating, standard deviation, and t- test for related sample as techniques for data analysis with 2.50 and 0.05 as the criterion mean and level of significance respectively. Thus, the results of the analysis revealed that students' self-concept towards written composition improved significantly after exposure to self-regulation training. The analysis of research hypotheses further showed that there is no significant difference in the self-concept of males and females. And there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups' perception of their self-concept. This results shows that self-concept depends on the individual.

**Keywords:** Self-Regulation, Skill-Training, Secondary School, Self-Concept, Written Composition

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Conceptual Framework

Self-regulation Skills are internal or transactional processes that enable an individual to pursue goal directed activities during learning. It implies modulation of thought, effects, behaviour or attention through deliberate or automated use of specific mechanism and supportive meta- cognitive skills. Self – regulation is an integral learning process and consists of the development of a set of constructive behaviours that affects one's learning or processes that are planned and adapted to support the pursuit of personal goal in the course of learning. Self – regulation results from students' generated thoughts and behaviours that are systematically directed toward the attainment of goals. It involves goal setting, planning, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, environmental restructuring, peer learning, help seeking and evaluation of one's performance. Students are proactive during learning and so modify or adjust to appropriate behaviours that leads to actualization of set goals. In this respect, students engage in activities while trying to achieve specific goals, these activities are very important when obstacles arise in the course of the pursuit of goals and additional investment of effort is required.

Self-regulation is beneficial to learning this is because it enables a student to seek challenges and overcome obstacles with persistence to achieve a set goal. Self-regulation enable students set realistic goals and utilize a battery of resources and approach academic task with confidence and purpose. Self-regulation enables students to combine positive expectation with motivation and use diverse skills to

solve academic problems and have control over the learning environment. It is beneficial to learning, this is because students continually seek the appropriate learning skills for any situation and also shift focus from comparing performance with peers and from being reactive to proactive learners. Self-regulation influences thoughts, feelings and actions that are planned and adapted to the attainment of personal goals. It helps students generate content for the composition and enhance their capability to write and meet the demands of the question by writing exactly what is expected of them. Also, when students use self-regulation skill, it enables them organize their thought processes during writing. It also involves logical arrangement of ideas, and clear writing of paragraphs.

The use of self-regulation skill also enhance students capability in written expression; students are better able to recognize when to use each of the parts of speech such as the noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb and preposition as well as the articles. Self-regulation learning is a veritable tool that makes students become proficient in the use of mechanical accuracy when writing composition. Mechanical accuracy in this aspect involves the use of full stop (.), question mark (?), comma (,), colon (:), semi-colon (;) and apostrophe (') as well as spelling. Self-regulation encompasses a number of inter-dependent aspects such as moods, feelings, emotions, capacities like belief, perception and knowledge. This aid in one's understanding of learning and attainment.

Self-regulation skills may play a significant role in enhancing students' performance in written composition since it involves systematic planning and controlling of one's behaviour as well as self-evaluation, it is expected to improve proficiency in writing. Students need to master the self-regulation skill in order to write better compositions. Writing is a challenging task and students need to be equipped with the skills required to tackle writing tasks. On this basis, if students are trained in the self-regulation skills, it may improve their performance in composition writing, self-concept and other areas of human endeavour (Stumpt, 2008).

**Self-concept** is a person's self-perception gained through the person's experience and interaction with the environment. Self-concept also refers to the totality of a complex, organized and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about the person's personal existence. Self-concept equally means the image or perceptions that students hold about themselves. It includes attitude, feelings and knowledge about

abilities, skills, appearance and social acceptability. (Okeke, 2008). These perceptions of the self are basically formed through experience with and interpretation of one's environment.

Furthermore, self-concept is a significant variable in psychology that fosters the academic performance of students. Positive self-concept is valued as a goal of education, behaviour and socialization. It facilitates and motivates students towards actualization of education goal. Self-concept has the potential to improve achievement and social behaviour including leadership ability, ambition, career aspirations, physical appearance and academic performance. In the context of this study, self-concept can be conceptualized as the student's awareness of his or her self and ability. Some students have positive self-concept and this influences their attitudes and actions while others are deficient of positive self-concept and what happens to anyone in life whether success or failure has to do with that person's self-concept. This is because self-concept is students' thought, feelings and hopes, fears and fantasies, their views of what they are, what they have been, what they might become and their attitude pertaining to their worth. Therefore, it means that a student's outward behaviour is a reflection of his or her feelings, thinking, belief and general assessment of him or herself.

Self-concept is grouped as positive or negative. Students with negative self-concept often assess themselves negatively, engage in negative self-remarks about themselves, doubt their abilities to perform or achieve, express fear in task performance and often attribute their failure to external factors such as luck or fate. On the other hand, students with positive self-concept generally think positive about themselves, they have self-confidence and trust their abilities in achievement oriented issues.

In addition, there exist a reciprocal interaction between academic performance and self-concept. High academic performance may lead to positive self-concept and positive self-concept may in turn lead to high academic performance. Positive self-concept is a desirable and critical goal across many educational settings and because of the importance of self-concept to education, positive self-concept is linked to various education outcomes such as academic efforts, course work selection, educational aspirations and academic performance. This implies that academic performance and self-concept are reciprocally related and mutually reinforcing (Okeke 2008).

Hence, it is believed that exposing students to self – regulation training may enhance their ability to develop positive self-concept and also enhance their performance in composition writing. Composition writing involves imaginative thought process, creativity and organization of thought. It comes about when a person has something to say and the person is moved by a feeling to voice out something through graphic symbols. Writing is a psycholinguistic activity which is formal and solitary. It is a highly sophisticated act of encoding a message to a receiver who may be known or unknown. Writing gives rise to the printed message, which compels reading and hardly is there anything read which has not been written. Since writing is an extension of a mastery of the speech pattern of a language, the art of writing then presupposes good command of the linguistic patterns of the language in terms of grammar, spelling and punctuation and at a higher level, style and situation.

Furthermore, writing is a tool that is used for learning and convinces others of the writers' argument, hence, researchers have applied various writing skills to improve students' writing. Such skills are cognitive skills. Meta -cognitive skills, observational learning and learning by doing. The use of these skills has shown a strong influence on students' writing quality. Cognitive skills are planning, translating and reviewing of writing task, while Meta cognitive skills facilitates monitoring the writing process and setting the cognitive skills to actualize the intended writing products. Also, observational learning and learning by doing have shown to improve students' writing. Learning to write by observation involves the students observing a model that performs the writing task and then adapts the task relevant knowledge skills and strategies without difficulty. Learning to write by doing involves cognitive apprenticeship where the students observe a model and emulate the model's behaviour and then internalizes the emulated skills. Equipped with these skills, the students become more aware of the execution of their writing process and more flexible working on transfer tasks.

Writing is not an act that one can hurriedly and haphazardly embark upon because it requires a systematic organization of thought, creativity, imagination of thought process and diligence. Learning to write helps students to develop their awareness of print conventions. It also makes them become aware of the symbolic nature of writing. Since writing involves imaginative thought processes, creativity and organization of thought process, it is important that students master the act of

writing especially at their youthful age when they exhibit most of their youthful exuberance and vigor.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Students' performance in English language in secondary schools and in external examination in Nigeria is poor. Students perceive English language as a difficult subject with a wide scope which leads to low performance in it, despite the fact that it is a prerequisite for admission in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Students have problems answering questions in composition writing which is basic area in English language. The Chief Examiner Report 2015 – 2018 also confirmed this. For example, in Plateau State only 35 percent out of a total of 2,100 students that sat for the examination had a credit mark. While for the National Examination Council (NECO), only 30 percent out of a total of 2,000 students that sat for examination had a credit mark in English language (Ministry of Education Plateau State). This has the potential to affect students' performance in the subject. The poor performance in English language will deprive students from reading course of their choice in higher institutions thereby increasing the number of youths out of school.

However, attempts have been made in the past by researchers to improve students' performance using different methods of teaching such as the use of co-operative learning strategy, expository writing, group discussion and reciprocal teaching method among others yet there is still poor performance of students in the subject. This poor performance may be partly due to lack of proper instruction on composition writing since composition writing is one of the basic components of English language.

Also, in Plateau State where this study will be conducted, the researcher observed that the students particularly those in Government Secondary Schools display negative self-concept, they feel inferior and less composed when they face the challenges of learning. This is further confirmed by Ezurike's (2016) study on Effect of Self-Concept Enhancement Programme on SSI students' Academic Performance in Mathematics in Plateau State. The result of the study reveals that majority of the students score below average on the self-concept rating scale. Thus the question is; Can students self-concept be enhanced through self- regulation skill training? or How best can students' self- concept improve their written composition? How long will the problem of students' low performance in composition writing persist?

### 3. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to find out the effects of self-regulation skills training on senior secondary school (SS2) students' self-concept in written composition. Specifically, the study sets to:

- Determine the effects of self-regulation skills training on students' self-concept development.
- Determine the effects of self-regulation skills training on students' self-concept in composition writing.
- Find out the effect of self-regulation skills training on male and female students' development of self-concept.

### 4. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the effects of self-regulation skills training on students' self-concept development?
- What is the level of the SS2 students' self-concept in composition writing after the self-regulation training?
- What is the level of male and female students' self-concept after exposure to self-regulation training?

### 5. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups level of self-concept after exposure to self-regulation training.
- Students' gender has no significant effect on students' self-concept after exposure to self-regulation training.
- There is no significant difference between male and female students' self-concept after exposure to self-regulation training.

### 6. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is the self-regulation theory. The theory was propounded by Zimmerman in 1986. The theory set the pace in introducing the self-regulation to the academic learning field. In line with Bandura (1986) social cognitive theory, Zimmerman's theory in triadic

model states that both personal factors and environmental situations reciprocally connect with each other during learning. According to Zimmerman, these personal factors are products of metacognition which represents behavioural and planning control. Behavioural control consists of learners' self-observation, self-reaction and self-evaluation. In addition to personal factors, environmental influences such as social situation, enactive experiences and support from other human agents create interactions that influence each other in the course of learning. Self-regulation for academic learning fits well with this idea of reciprocal interaction because personal factors, behaviours and environmental condition change during learning and this must be monitored, such self-monitoring can lead to additional changes in student strategies, cognition, affect and behaviours.

Self-regulation according to this theory is cyclical process in which learners set goals, implement strategies, monitor their learning progress and modify their strategies when they believe the strategies are not effective. Also, the theory states the importance of motivation as being very crucial for learning and this means that self-regulated learning does not occur automatically rather the students have to approach learning with set goals and the extent to which the students self-regulate depends on motivational factors such as their beliefs about their capabilities to learn or perform tasks at designated levels.

This theory view self-regulation as a construct of multiple domain that are interwoven hence, in the face of difficulty students can use multiple strategies simultaneously to regulate their behaviours, attention, emotion and affect. For instance, if a student does not want to fail a subject and then repeat the class, such a student may not engage him or herself playing computer games, visiting friends or watching movies, instead, the student may chose to discipline him or herself and sit down to read his books seriously in order to achieve high academic performance or pass his tests and examinations.

### 7. Methodology

The population of the study consists of all the 4240 government senior secondary school two (SS2) students in Jos North Local government area of Plateau State. And a sample of 100 students were selected for the study using simple random sampling technique

The self-concept rating scale developed by Fleming and Whaleng 1985 was adapted to elicit responses

from the respondents about their self – concept. It is made up of 36 items, the instrument will be divided into two sections: A and B. Section A consist of students’ biodata. Section B is made up of 36 items that bothered on students’ self – concept with four point scale of Always = 4 points, often = 3 points, sometime = 2 points and never 1 point.

Construct validity of the instrument was determined by experts and reliability test was subjected to a test – retest method. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to estimate the co-efficient of internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a reliability coefficient score of 0.76. The format to be used for scoring will

be 0-49 was rated as low, 50-60 was rated as moderate while 70 and above was rated as high. A face to face method of data administration and data collection was done.

Mean and standard deviation was used to answer research questions using the data collected on students’ responses on self – concept. Hypotheses was tested using the t – test for related samples, this was used to determine any difference in the pre – test and post- test mean scores of the experimental and control groups.

**8. Results**

**Research Question One:** What is the level of SSII students’ self-concept before and after the training in self-regulation?

**Table 1:** Level of Students’ Self-concept before and After Exposure to Self-Regulation Training

LEVEL	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Level of self-concept before	44	62.00	12.40
Level of self-concept after	56	78.64	15.33

The results of the analysis in table 6 reveals that the mean response of respondents on their level of self-concept before treatment was 62.00 with a standard deviation of 12.40 while their mean responses after exposure to self-regulation training was 78.64 with a standard deviation of 15.34. This shows that students’ level of self-concept increased after treatment and that students self-regulation has a significant impact on their self-concept.

**Research Question Two:** What is the effect of gender on students’ self- concept in written composition?

**Table 2:** Students’ Self Concept in Written Composition Based on Gender

GROUP	N	$\bar{X}$	SD
Male	26	55.33	10.65
Female	30	58.44	14.54

The result of the analysis in table reveals that male have a mean of 55.33 with standard deviation of 10.65 while female had a mean of 58.44 with standard deviation of 14.54. From the analysis the mean of female of 58.44 is higher than that of male students of 55.33. This shows that the female performed higher than the male in composition writing.

**Research Question Three:** What is the level of the SSII students’ self-concept before and after exposure to training in self-regulation?

**Table 3:** Level of SSII Students’ Self-Concept before Exposure to Training in Self-Regulation

Level	N	Responses
High	57	45.24
Moderate	43	34.13
Low	26	20.63

The results of the analysis reveal the responses of respondents toward their perception of their self-concept. From the analysis, 57 (45.24) had high level of self-concept while 20 (20.63) had low level of self-concept. From the table it is evident that most of the students had high level of self-concept after exposure to self-regulation skills training.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference between the experimental and control groups level of self-concept before and after exposure to self-regulation training.

**Table 4:** The Results of t-test Analysis for Differences in the Level of Self-Concept Mean Scores of the two Group before and after Treatment

GROUP		N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	p-value
Experimental	Pretest	56	56.32	11.25		0.02	0.75
Control	Pretest	44	56.22	11.15	98		
Experimental	Posttest	56	78.63	15.34	98	0.03	0.62
Control	Posttest	44	62.00	12.40			

The results of the analysis in Table 14 shows that the calculated t-test value 0.02 with df 98, the p-value of 0.75 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was retained implying that there is no significant difference in the level of self-concept between the experimental and the control groups before treatment. For the posttest in Table 14, the results reveal that the calculated t-test value of 0.03 with df 98 is greater than 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference in the level of self-concept between the experimental and control group after exposure to self-regulation training.

**Hypothesis Two:** Students’ gender has no significant effect on students’ Self- Concept in composition writing after exposure to self-regulation training.

**Table 5:** Results of t-test Analysis for Difference between Male and Female Mean Scores After Exposure to Treatment

GROUP		N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	p-value
Male	Posttest	26	55.33	10.65	54	1.36	0.75
Female	Posttest	3	58.44	11.54			

The results of the analysis in Table 5 reveal that the calculated t-test value of 1.36 with df 54, the p-value of 0.75 is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis was upheld. Hence, there is no significant difference in the achievement mean scores between male and female SSII students after they were exposed to self-regulation training.

**Table 6:** Results of t-test Analysis for Difference between Male and Female SS11students’ Self-Concept Before and After Exposure to Treatment

GROUP		N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t-cal	p-value
Males	Pretest	26	37.42	11.21		1.34	0.051
Females	Pretest	30	36.51	11.31	54		
Males	Posttest	26	68.24	13.33	54	1.63	0.072
Females	Posttest	30	64.21	13.42			

The result of the analysis in Table 6 reveals the calculated t-test value of 1.34 with df 54, the p-value of 0.051 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that there is no significant difference in the self-concept of male and females. The posttest in Table 6 reveal that the calculate t-test 1.63 with df 54. The p-value is 0.72 greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the self-concept of SS11 male and female students after exposure to self-regulation skill training.

### 9. Discussions of Results

The results of the analysis reveal that students’ self-concept improved significantly after exposure to self-regulation training. This is in line with the findings by Mohammed 2009 and Dikkos, 2016 who found that self-regulation training has the potentials to

improve students’ achievements and motivation. Furthermore the findings from the study reveal that there is no significant difference between the control and experimental groups’ perception of their self-concept. This results shows that self-concept depends on the individual. This is in agreement with the views of Garido Vargas (2012). Again, the findings reveal that most students had high self-concept towards composition writing. This is also in confirmation with the findings by Lavasani (2011) who states that students exposed to self-regulation skills training have the potentials to improve in motivation and written expression..

### 10. Summary of Findings

The following are summary of findings:

- Students’ achievement in composition writing improved significantly after

exposure to self-regulation training in the study area.

- Students' self-concept on composition writing improved after they were exposed to self-regulation training skills in the study area.
- There is no significant difference between male and female students' self-concept after exposure to self-regulation skills training in the study area.

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