Examining Predictors of Academic Performance Amongst English Second Language (ESL) Middle School Students

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Introduction

- This study will examine how perceived social support, self-esteem and stress levels amongst ESL middle school students relates to their academic performance.
- All three of these constructs correlate to academic performance amongst students of wide age ranges (Fairlamb, 2022; Frazier, Gabirel, Merians, & Lust, 2019; Yasin & Dzulkifli, 2011) though less research has been conducted on ESL students.
- Past research has also indicated ESL students are more likely to face additional challenges that could make them vulnerable to these constructs (Spomer & Cowen, 2001).
- I hypothesize that:
  - Self-esteem and perceived social support will positively relate to academic performance of middle school ESL Students.
  - Stress levels will negative relate to academic performance amongst middle school ESL students.

Methods

Participants
- A total of 21 (12 female, 9 male) ESL middle school students were given pencil and paper surveys during a class time.
- All 21 students were enrolled as ESL students in 7th or 8th grade and were eligible to participate after returning signed informed consent forms giving parental/guardian consent.

Procedure
- Participants completed a 60-question paper survey in person during an ESL class. 7th and 8 graders completed the survey during their different ESL classroom times.

- The survey measured self-esteem, perceived social support, and stress levels. Participants also self-reported their current grades for different school subject they were taking.

Measures
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) (Rosenberg, 2006) which has 10 questions from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). RSE has an Alpha level of .85
- Perceived Social Support was measured using the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL). This is a 40-question scale ranging from 0 (Definitely False) to 3 (Definitely True) and has reliability alpha of .92.
- Stress levels are measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) which is a 10-question survey with answers ranging from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often). The PSS has an Alpha >.7
- Grades in their class subjects and GPA at the time of taking the survey were self-reported

Results

- The correlation between self-esteem and academic performance was statistically significant with a positive relationship r=.51
- The correlation between social support and academic performance was statistically significant with a positive relationship r=.554.
- The correlation between stress and academic performance was statistically significant with a negative relationship r= -.56

Figure 1

Construct	Correlation to grades	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Self-Esteem	r=.51*	.018	2.49	.485
Social Support	r=.55**	.009	1.76	.42
Stress Levels	r=-.56**	.008	2.23	.825

n=21
Academic Performance Mean= 2.684
Academic Performance S.D=1.058
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level

Discussion

- Results of the study supported my hypothesis; self-esteem and social support positively related to academic performance while stress levels negatively related to academic performance amongst middle school ESL students.
- All three constructs were statistically significant with large effect sizes.
- Gender or grade level did not have a differing impact on the construct's relationship with academic performance.