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 8th 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

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.