PERSONALITY TRAIT AND SELF-EFFICACY AS PREDICTORS OF LEARNERS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS AT HO MUNICIPALITY, GHANA

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Abstract: **The purpose of the study was to examine the predictability of personality trait and self-efficacy on academic achievement of learners, focusing on Junior High Schools (JHS) at Ho Municipality of the Volta Region of Ghana. The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The study population was all learners in the 132 JHSs in the Municipality numbering 11,887. The sampling frame was 3,789 JHS three learners. However, the simple random sampling technique was used to select 390 JHS three learners for the study. Questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was the instrument used to collect the data. The completed returned copies of the questionnaire were 378, representing 96.9 percent response rate. The data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment correlation and linear multiple regression analysis. The study revealed that both personality trait and self-efficacy have significant and positive relationship with learners' academic achievement. The study further found out that both personality trait and self-efficacy are predictors of learners' academic achievement, especially, extrovert and neurotic personality trait. The study recommends that parents, headteachers and teachers in basic schools should help learners to develop and maintain positive personality trait and self-efficacy for enhancement of academic work in school. Also, they should promote attractive learning climate that will help in building children's confident level which will in turn boost their chances of developing positive traits and high level of self-efficacy.**

Keywords: **Academic achievement; Basic school; Personality trait; Self-efficacy.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of positive personality trait and self-efficacy among Junior High School (JHS) learners is very disturbing. Most learners have negative traits and low or weak self-efficacy that affects their academic achievements in schools (Barkhi & Brozovsky, 2014). Busari (2017) says among the problems that teachers encounter in schools is the act of instilling positive behaviours, be it academic or socio-emotional behaviours. The act of finding a lasting solution to the problem is not all that simple as parents have high hopes and expectations for their children to achieve academic excellence to enable them be in positions to be of help to their family members and their community, be able to contribute their quota to national development. This concern has to be handled with all seriousness to meet the demands of the second objective of the mid-term development plan under education, which its main objective is to build the human capital for national development (National Development Planning Commission [NDPC], 2016).

The objective emphasises the efforts of the Ghana Education Service (GES) which pays much attention to the value system; for example, discipline, attitude, character and identity of the learners. This part of the core is critical as it aims at preparing future leaders in all aspect of life to meet the demands of the country. Thus, the system to build the next generation of critical thinkers should focus on the development of people with winning personality and strong self-efficacy to pursue and achieve success entirely (Guntern, Korpershoek & van der Werf, 2017). However, the efforts to develop this generation may not be successful without any meaningful education at the basic level of our educational system, especially JHS level. This, therefore, gives an impression that the excellence academic achievement of JHS learners is not only to make them and their parents proud, but also to impact positively on their future wellbeing, and create opportunity for them to continue their education to the higher level. This is because it is quite normal that academic achievement opens a predominance opportunity for a successful career to improve the family social status and that of the state.

Success or achievement in Ghanaian educational institutions is largely measured by academic performance, or how well a learner meets standards set out by the institution itself. One of the main goals of GES is to expand admission of learners at the Senior High School (SHS) level by increasing the enrolment rate (NDPC, 2016). This can be achieved if learners at the JHS level perform significantly at the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE), a measure used to determine whether one is qualified to enter into SHS or not. Learners' performance plays an important role in producing excellent JHS graduates who turn up to become prospective candidates in SHSs. Poor performance of learners in basic schools, especially at the JHS level should be of great concern to parents, administrators and educators, as well as other stakeholders like corporations in the labour market. Therefore, it is important to have a look at the factors that influence learners' academic achievement.

Having investigated into that issue, Nijhuis (2017) concluded that personality factors can predict learners' achievement. In line with this assertion, it can be indicated that self-efficacy and personality trait can influence learners' academic achievement meaningfully. For this reason, it can also be inferred that it would be possible to increase levels of academic performance by previously optimising levels of the two constructs and the very specific levels of perceived competence. Whether these assertions are true or otherwise especially with JHS learners is what we will want to grapple with. Therefore, the main purpose of the study was to determine whether learners' self-efficacy and personality trait significantly predict learners' academic achievement, focusing on JHS learners at Ho Municipality, Ghana.

Statement of the Problem

In the teaching and learning process, some learners get actively involved in the learning process while others are quite passive. In most cases, these passive learners lack the strength or belief in their abilities to complete tasks and reach their goals (Barkhi & Brozovsky, 2014). This situation occurs because their actions are influenced by their personality trait and self-efficacy. The development of personality trait and high self-efficacy depends on factors that are social, cultural, economic and psychological in nature. It is therefore important to examine the influence personality trait and self-efficacy have on learners' academic achievement within the Ghanaian cultural context. This is so because there is no study that has been conducted to be precise, at the Ho Municipality pertaining to learners' achievement vis-a-vis the two independent constructs.

Most researchers have indicated the negative consequences of poor study habits which usually leads to poor academic performance and non-progression of learners to higher levels of education (Busari, 2017; Guntern et al., 2017; Nijhuis, 2017). Also, current records show that a number of learners at the various basic schools in the Municipality who completed their basic education are not able to continue because they were not placed by the Computer School Selection Placement System (Educational Management Information System [EMIS], 2019). This was as a result of the fact that their performances were below average and could not meet the requirements. However, there were learners within the same school climates and from the same socio-cultural background, performed in their exams and were placed in SHS for the continuation of their education. Can this problem be linked to personality trait of the learners such as extrovert or introvert and neurotic or emotional stability? Could it also be linked to lack of strength or belief in learners' abilities to complete tasks and reach their goals? These gaps as indicated motivated us to examine the influence that personality trait and self-efficacy have on learners' academic achievement, focusing on JHS learners in Ho Municipality of the Volta Region of Ghana.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the under listed research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. In what way does self-efficacy play a significant role in predicting learners' academic achievement?

2. What is the predicting role of personality trait on learners' academic achievement?

Research Hypotheses

H^1_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and learners' academic achievement.

H^2_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between personality trait and learners' academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

The study can be of great value to Ghana Education Service and policy makers as it will throw more light on the fact that personality trait and self-efficacy of learners can also predict learners' academic achievements. That apart, other stakeholders like parents will be helped to see the need to play their role in developing their children's personality trait and self-efficacy at home, all in the name of performing well in school. Learners can also benefit directly from the study by consulting their school counsellors for assistance to develop their personality trait and self-efficacy. The study will further urge all teachers at the basic school level to go the extra mile in helping learners not only to be academic discipline but also develop their personality trait and self-efficacy for betterment of performance in academics. It will assist educational sociologists and counsellors in the various basic schools to be more proactive and innovative to design very comprehensive socio-counselling intervention programmes for learners to facilitate the development of their personality trait and self-efficacy in order to improve results in academics. The findings would further broaden the intellectual horizon of counsellors and thereby sharpening their skills to render counselling services to learners to improve performance academically.

Delimitation

There are many constructs or variables which can serve as predictors of learners' academic achievement, but the study was delimited to personality trait and self-efficacy. This is because several research works have been conducted on learners' academic performance using different factors other than personality trait and self-efficacy as predictors. Geographically, the study should have ideally assumed a regional or national dimension and also cover all JHS learners, but it was delimited to JHS learners in Ho Municipality. The choice of JHSs was as result of the fact that their performance at that level to SHS is not all that encouraging. Also, within the specified scope, it is expected that the study would be able to carry out an objective study of the problem void of prejudices and/or biases. Junior High Schools in the Ho Municipality being a subset of all JHSs in the Volta Region and Ghana, may limit the inferences that can be drawn from this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Personality trait, self-efficacy and learners academic achievements are some of the major issues that have been discussed in educational sociology and psychology for years. Achievement or failure is a variable that can be related to many factors such as personality trait and self-efficacy. Motivation is seen as one of the important predictor variables in explaining the success and failure of learners (Elliot, Hufton, Willis & Illushin, 2015). Furthermore, there are various motivation theories that are precursor descriptors to explain the concept of achievement. One of the major focal points of motivation theories used to explain achievement in recent years is the achievement goals theory (Elliot et al., 2015). Achievement goals are defined as set objectives that are determined by the person who aims to achieve. It examines certain criteria and standards used by learners to assess their opinions about achievement and performance. This theory primarily focuses on two fundamental goals, which are learning and performance. According to Greene (2017), the learning purpose is the most important impetus to achieve goals and it refers to the effort to obtain competence while the performance purpose refers to the effort to exhibit this competence in normative standards.

In most cases, learners who are motivated with learning purpose work harder to learn during their academic endeavour. When they understand the subject and learn at a certain competence level, they feel satisfied. Learners targeting high

performance want to have a higher or even the highest mark in class. The sense of satisfaction emerges with the sense of recognition, which results from achievement. According to Burger (2016), two learners who study their exams and homework equally in the same classroom may take similar notes but their goals, which motivate their achievement, are different. While one learner learns the subject in order to have the sense of knowledge and competence, and becomes relaxed by the sense of overcoming challenges, another learner decides on what to do for good performance or to get a good mark and organises his or her studying time properly with this goal in mind. Accordingly, social comparisons are of great importance for performance-purpose oriented learners because these learners cannot understand whether they are successful or not unless they are compared to others.

Academic duties such as studying, doing homework and preparing for examinations, require conscious and sustainable personality trait. The current personality trait concept considered is made up of four dimensions that are extrovert, introvert, neurotic and emotional. Many studies have looked at these variables and their relation with learners' academic achievement. Relevant studies have found that there is a relationship between neuroticism and achievement goals (Jayasuriya, Caputi, Gregory & Meloche, 2017). Neurotic personality trait is related to emotional stability and the continuity of personal adaptation. People with emotional problems or those with ever-changing emotions have high scores on neurotic personality trait (Burger, 2016).

With regard to self-efficacy, it is asserted that it has a positive influence on learners' academic achievements (Guntern et al., 2017). Learners who believe that they are able, and that can and will do well are much more likely to be motivated in terms of effort, persistence and behaviour than those who believe that they are less able and do not expect to succeed (Jayasuriya et al., 2017). Findings from Greene (2017) reveal how important self-efficacy is for successful learning and academic achievement. In this context, research work has reliably shown that self-efficacy is positively correlated with measures of meaningful cognitive strategy use (Greene, 2017). Learners who are not confident or perceive themselves incapable may avoid behaviours that are seen as challenging or difficult. This study expects self-efficacy to have a positive influence on learners' academic achievement. One can therefore, argue that self-efficacy is an antecedent to outcome expectations.

According to Carroll et al. (2013), studies have shown that self-efficacy, aspirational, and other psychosocial influences account for considerable variance in academic achievement through a range of meditational pathways, although no research to date has tested the meditational relationships identified. Carroll et al. investigated the structural relations among self-efficacy, academic aspirations, and delinquency, on the academic achievement of 935 learners, aged 11 to 18 years, from 10 selected schools in two Australian cities. Carroll et al. found that academic and self-regulatory efficacy had an indirect negative effect through delinquency and a direct positive effect on academic achievement. Academic and social self-efficacy had relationships with academic aspiration and academic achievement; however the relationship between academic aspiration and academic achievement was not significant in the final model.

Kandemir (2014) in his study also focused on examining the approach-avoidance achievement goals, five-factor personality trait, self-efficacy, and academic beliefs within a scope of a model. Kandemir (2014) found that learners' approach and avoidance achievement goals are explained by cause-effect relationship with personality trait, self-esteem and self-efficacy belief. Also, it was found that self-efficacy belief and self-esteem are the most important variables that predict achievement goals and avoidance achievement goals, respectively.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study took into consideration all possible factors from the literature and from observations to derive the dependent and independent variables for descriptive and inferential analysis. The dependent variable is learners' academic achievement while personality trait and self-efficacy constitute the independent variables. The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. Learners' academic achievement in general is influenced by learner's personality trait and self-efficacy. The study agrees that these two main variables do influence learners' academic achievement positively (Kandemir, 2014). The explanation of the individual variables has been well dealt with in the literature. The study hypothesised that JHS learners personality trait and self-efficacy influence their academic achievement significantly.
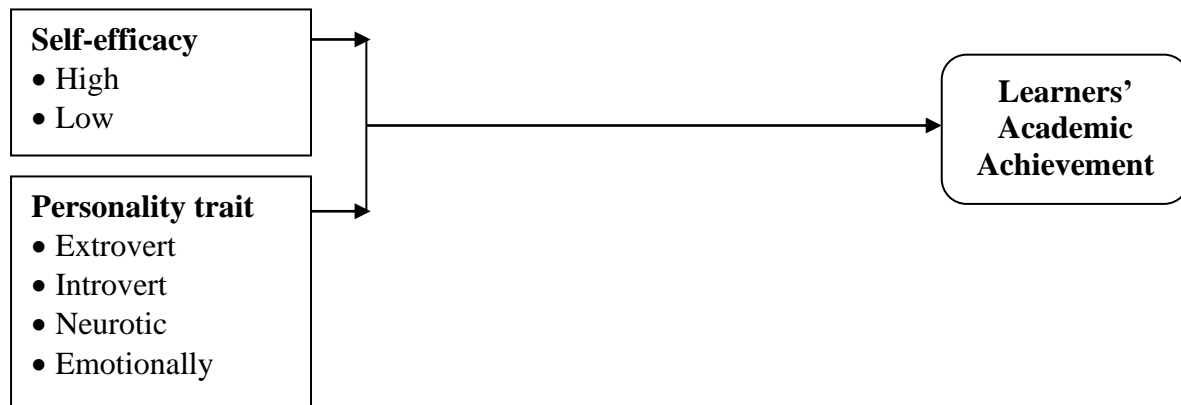
Figure 1: Model on the Influence of Personality Trait and Self-Efficacy on Learners' Academic Achievement

Source: Authors' construct

The argument of the study is that when learner's personality trait and self-efficacy are viewed positively, they will perform academically well. However, this influence is not direct as it seems. It can be seen as complex influence because the fact that the two main variables are perceived positively does not mean that they will perform significantly in terms of academic. The learners must first belief in their abilities to perform well on the programme and also must exert some level of effort in their academic work, and must also be conscientious to have total development of self, that is, academically, morally and economically. These will boost their academic work which in the long run, can increase their academic achievements significantly.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was designed to find out whether personality trait and self-efficacy are predictors of learners' academic achievement in the various JHSs at Ho Municipality. Since the study entailed a survey of learners' views on the issues, situations and processes, the descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate. The study population was all learners in the 132 JHSs in the Ho Municipality. Records show that the total number of JHS learners in the schools is 11,887 (Educational Management Information System [EMIS], 2019). Most researchers (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Gravetter & Forzano, 2018) are of the view that the most used and acceptable approach for determining the sample size in a survey is to specify the precision of estimation desired and then to determine the sample size necessary to ensure it. The sample size of 390 was selected using Slovin's (as cited in Kelly, 2016) recommended formula. This formula was used because it specifies the precision of estimation desired for the population. The formula: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$, where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision.

n = 11,887 ÷ [1 + 11,887 (0.05)²] = 11,887 ÷ 30.7175 = 386.97 ≈ 390

All basic 9 (JHS 3) learners of the various schools were selected purposively for the study. They were 3,789 in number. The basic nine learners were considered appropriate because they were in a better position to understand the items on the questionnaire that was used to elicit data on their personality trait and self-efficacy. The computer random number method of simple random sampling technique was used to select the individual learners sampled after designing the sample frame of the study.

Questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.845 was the instrument used to collect the data. After seeking audience with the heads and teachers of the schools, and arranged for meeting with the teachers and learners, we proceeded to administer the questionnaire to the learners. The questionnaires were distributed to the final year learners only. The completed returned questionnaires were 378, representing 96.9 percent response rate. With the help of Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) Version 16.0, we employed inferential statistical tools to analyse the data. Specifically, research questions one and two were analysed using linear multiple regression analysis while Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to test the first and second research hypotheses at 0.05 significant level.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hypotheses formulated aimed at finding out the relationships between self-efficacy, personality trait and learners' academic achievement. Each of the variables was made up of multiple items. The items for each variable were pooled together using average response scores to form each major variable. Personality trait include four traits such as extrovert, introvert, neurotic and emotional. With regard to self-efficacy variable and learners' academic achievement, five items each were used to elicit data on them. Similarly, the items were pooled together to form each major variable. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship between Self-efficacy, Personality Trait and Learners' Academic Achievement

Variables	Learners' academic achievement	
	Correlation co-efficients (r)	Sig.
Self-efficacy	0.69**	0.00
Personality trait	0.54**	0.00

Source: Field data, 2019   **p < 0.01   (N = 378)

As shown in Table 1, the views of learners with regard to their self-efficacy were statistically significant and positively correlated with their academic achievement (r = 0.69, p < 0.01). This means that the more learners develop high self-efficacy the more they achieve high and significant increase in their academic achievement. Therefore, if learners' belief that they can successfully achieve at a designated level on their academic task or attain a specific academic goal, then they are most likely to obtain high academic achievement. Based on the finding, the study therefore rejects the hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and learners' academic achievement. Bandura (as cited in Carroll et al., 2013) has stated in his work that self-efficacy played a role in determining how individuals felt, thought and motivated themselves, which then ultimately affected the behaviour and the outcome. On the basis of this finding, one can assume that when one's self-efficacy towards academic work is high, he or she tends to put greater effort into their academic work, which eventually results in good grades and high academic achievements.

The finding is congruent with the assertions of Kandemir (2014) who avers that academic self-efficacy is a major variable that has a strong relationship with learners' academic achievement goals. Kandemir further indicates that a person's faith in his or her skills is correlated with achievement goals. Jayasuriya et al. (2017) also posit that there is a positive correlation between self-efficacy and learning achievement goals. High self-efficacy will encourage someone to pursue challenging personal goals and spend much effort to realise them, and show high academic achievement. Low self-efficacy on the other hand, will result in pursuing less encourage academic achievement (Greene, 2017).

Table 1 further shows that personality trait (r = 0.54, p < 0.01) have significant and strong positive relationship with learners' academic achievement. This means that if learners develop good or positive personality trait, their achievement in academic work will increase significantly. Thus, learners' academic achievement is tied directly to high self-efficacy and positive personality trait. If learners exhibit positive personality trait and high self-efficacy in school, they will be most likely to achieve high in academics. The finding corroborates with the submissions of many researchers (Barkhi & Brozovsky, 2014; Nijhuis, 2017) who posit that personality trait is an important factor with regard to achievement goals of learners. Kandemir (2014) in his study also indicated that learners' approach and avoidance achievement goals are explained by cause-effect relationship with personality trait, self-esteem and self-efficacy. In this study, it was found that self-efficacy belief and self-esteem are the most important variables that can predict achievement goals and avoidance achievement goals, respectively.

The rationale of the two research questions was to find out the influential roles of self-efficacy and personality trait on learners' academic achievement. The four personality trait (introvert, extrovert, neurotic and emotionally) adapted and self-efficacy were used as the independent variable while learners' academic achievement was treated as the dependent variable. The fact of this study is that if these four personality trait are in positive behavioural terms with high self-efficacy, learners' academic achievements will increase significantly as expected. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Influences of Personality Trait and Self-efficacy on Learners' Academic Achievements

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	p-values
Extrovert	.077	.034	.076*	.042
Introvert	.011	.021	.004	.512
Neurotic	.087	.032	.058*	.043
Emotional	.083	.031	.013	.770
Self-efficacy	.159	.023	.101**	.000
Constant	0.069			
R Square	0.600			
Adjusted R Square	0.597			

Dependent variable: Learners' academic achievements **p < 0.01 *p < 0.05 (N = 378)

Source: Field data, 2019

As depicted in Table 2, the four personality trait (extrovert, introvert, neurotic and emotional) and self-efficacy were entered as independent variables. Not all the independent variables were statistically significant predictors of learners' academic achievements. The independent variables that were statistically significant predictors of learners' academic achievements in order of importance were self-efficacy (β = 0.101 (0.023), p < 0.01), extrovert (β = 0.076 (0.034), p < 0.05), and neurotic (β = 0.058 (0.032), p < 0.05).

It is however significant to observe that the proportional contribution of the four personality trait and self-efficacy to the dependent variable (learners' academic achievements) is 0.600 with an adjusted R^2 of 0.597. Extrovert, introvert, neurotic, emotionally and self-efficacy are able to predict or explain 60 percent of the variances in learners' academic achievements. It therefore means that besides these variables identified, other variables not yet in the model have a chance of contributing or predicting 40 percent to learners' academic achievements. The results show that both personality trait and self-efficacy are predictors of learners' academic achievements, especially, extrovert and neurotic personality trait.

The findings are consistent with the comments of Burger (2016) who posits that neurotic personality trait is related to emotional stability and the continuity of personal adaptation. People with emotional problems or those with ever-changing emotions have high scores on neurotic personality trait. According to Burger (2016), people with positive neurotic and emotional traits are in a better position to achieve high in their academic work. Jayasuriya et al. (2017) also posit that personality trait and self-efficacy do influence learners' academic achievements positively. The findings are in line with the argument of the study that if learners' personality trait and self-efficacy are viewed positively, they will perform well academically. However, observations made by the researchers show that this influence is not direct as it seems. It can be seen as complex influence because of the fact that the two main variables are perceived positively does not mean that they will perform significantly in terms of academics. The learners must first belief in their abilities to perform well in the programme. Also, they must exert some level of effort in their academic work and must be conscientious in order for them to have total development, leading to their academic excellence.

Limitations

The study covered only JHSs in the Ho Municipality, Ghana. This means that private JHSs within the Municipality were not considered. Therefore, the result may have restricted generalisation to all learners in JHSs. Besides, only four personality trait namely extrovert, introvert, neurotic and emotional traits as against others like conscientiousness, agreeableness, and open to experience, were used in this manuscript creating a vacuum for restrictions on generalisation of the result of the study with regard to the concept of personality trait. In view of this, it will be worthwhile for any further studies to focus on both public and private JHSs to reduce restriction on generalisation of the result of the study. In addition, it will also be useful for future researchers to pay attention to other facets of personality trait which were not considered in this study to strengthen the result of how personality trait in general can influence academic achievements of learners.

5. CONCLUSIONS

First and foremost, the present research proves that personality trait and self-efficacy are positively correlated with learners' academic achievements. However, even though they are related to one another, multiple regression analyses display some interesting findings. The multiple regression analysis shows that extrovert and neurotic traits and self-efficacy can significantly predict learners' academic achievement. The study therefore concludes that the influence of personality trait and self-efficacy are not direct as it seems. It can be seen as a complex influence because of the fact that the two main variables are perceived positively does not mean that learners will perform significantly in terms of academic. The learners must first belief in their abilities to perform well in the programme and also must exert some level of effort in their academic work. Besides they must also be conscientious in order for them to have total self-development. These in all will boost their academic work which in the long run will improve their academic achievements significantly.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

In view of the fact that self-efficacy and personality trait does influence academic achievement significantly, much attention has to be paid to the two independent variables when rendering group counselling and school social orientation or re-orientation services to learners on academic issues. For example, learners' self-efficacy can best be developed through counselling, which can finally result in building their confidence levels to perform. It can also reduce or over shadow the act of feeling shy in class to ask questions for clarifications and proper understanding of what is taught in class.

Further, assisting learners to develop their personality trait, especially extroversion and neuroticism through counselling can help them to improve on their quest for knowledge and fact finding, leading significantly to academic excellence. Encouraging learners to speak out, to be courageous in class so to ask questions, not to be scared of being ridiculed in class for making a mistake, can help them develop their personality trait to achieve result in class. Counsellor-centred approach as against client-centred approach is more appropriate to employ when handling cases of this nature. Neurotic learners express the tendency to experience negative or unpleasant emotions such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, nervous, anxiety and guilt. For counselling implications, affected learners can be assisted through counselling to allay the fear or anxiety of writing examinations or undertake any related academic activities, especially in school, to achieve results.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that

1. Parents should be made aware of what to do at home to help their children develop positive personality trait and self-efficacy. This can be done through Parent-Teacher Association meetings.

2. Counsellors in schools should periodically organise guidance programmes for learners to see the need of developing their personality trait and self-efficacy.

3. Heads of schools should ensure the formation and operations of clubs and societies in their schools, to help build and develop various personality trait and self-efficacy of learners.

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