

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNER SELF-  
CONCEPT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS IN ZIMBABWE**

by

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## **Dedication**

The thesis is dedicated to my wife Laetitia, my late mother Grettie, and our four sons, Ignatius (Jnr), Tinashe, Tatenda, and Tawanda.

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# Abstract

Poor academic achievement in Zimbabwe secondary schools prompted the study. Literature has demonstrated the importance of self-concept for achievement. The study investigates the significance of the relationship between learner self-concept and academic achievement in secondary schools in Zimbabwe, and also compares self-concepts and achievements on the basis of gender, age, form, school location, school type and type of attendance, e.g. boarders or day scholars. Data was collected from 1281 adolescent learners in urban and rural Government and Non-government secondary schools by means of questionnaires and interviews. Results confirmed the positive and reciprocal relationship between learner self-concept and academic achievement. Sport appears to have an influence on the academic achievement of male learners in Government schools. Learners believe that sport improves their confidence, discipline, time management skills and social relationships. Non-academic self-concepts correlate highly and significantly with the cognitive self-concept. Males and females appear to be similar regarding their self-concepts and overall academic achievement though girls have better cognitive self-concepts. School location and type, and type of attendance have a significant influence on learner academic achievements and self-concepts. Age may influence academic achievement and self-concepts as well. Junior adolescent learners appear to have better self-concepts than senior learners, though their academic achievement is similar. Learners in Government B schools and those in urban schools seem to have better self-concepts than those in other schools. Day scholars appear to have better physical, emotional and general self-concepts than boarders. The results emphasise the need to pay attention to self-concept as well, when trying to improve the academic achievement of learners.

**Key words:** academic achievement, cognitive self-concept, general self-concept, physical self-concept, emotional self-concept, social self-concept.

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