

# Teachers' Expectations As Perceived By Students and Its Effect on Their Motivation, Academic Self Concept and Academic Achievement

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## Abstract

The main rationale of this study was to inspect teachers' expectations as perceived by students and its effect on their motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement of government general secondary schools of Bahir Dar special zone, Ethiopia. Path analysis was used to analyze the quantitative data and percentage and narrative description was used to analyze the qualitative data. The path analysis results showed that students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations had statistically significant direct effects on academic self concept and motivation; academic self concept, in turn, affected motivation and academic achievement of students significantly. The influence of motivation on achievement failed to reach a level of significance. Students' perceptions of teachers' expectations had a statistically significant strong direct effect on academic self concept and significant yet low effect on motivation of students. The qualitative results also proved that students' perceptions of teachers' expectations affected students' motivation to learn, their academic self concept and academic achievement. Lastly, based on the results of the study implications were discussed and recommendations to alleviate the problem were forwarded.

**Key words:** Teachers' expectations, Students' perceptions, Motivation, Academic self- concept, Academic achievement.

## 1. Introduction

Teachers' expectations are inferences that they make about the future behavior or academic achievement of their students, based on what they know about these students now (Good & Brophy, 2000), and that are formed and communicated in specific ways and interpreted through the philosophy of teaching and learning.

Teachers' expectations have been a fruitful area of psychological research for the last four decades. Attention first came to the issue of teacher expectations in 1966, when Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson published the results of a powerful study later known as the Pygmalion effect. According to Tauber (1998), the Pygmalion effect asserts that "one's expectations about a person can eventually lead that person to behave and achieve in ways that confirm those expectations" (cited in Bruns, 2000).

The influential work of Robert Rosenthal, his suitably named Pygmalion experiment appeared to demonstrate that when teachers expected their students to perform at high levels, they did. This phenomenon became known as the self fulfilling prophecy effect, states much like the Pygmalion effect, that "once an expectation is held, an individual tends to act in ways that are consistent with the belief and eventually his or her actions may cause the expectation to become a reality" (Cooper & Good, 1983). Rosenthal suggested that when teachers believe some of their students were very able teachers interacted with them in ways which promoted their academic development. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) cited in Harris (2009) conducted a study where they found that teachers' positive expectations of students led to academic performance gains whereas negative expectations led to academic difficulty.

Teachers' expectations had a significant effect on the life of students. Educators suggest that if a teacher expects a good and able student to behave well or get high marks, then the student will tend to continue to behave well and work to get high marks. Positive expectations have a sustaining effect, as it sustain the student's current behavior and achievement, and is more likely to achieve what the teacher expects. On the contrary, negative expectations can have damaging effects on students.

The motives that initiated the researcher to conduct a study on students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and its impact on their learning were her professional experience as a teacher and the informal observations and discussions she has made with teachers and students of the sampled schools.

Of the many factors that contribute to students' motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement, teachers' expectations as perceived by students are of paramount importance. Studies conducted in western countries and elsewhere in the world reported an abundance of research that has examined the impact of teachers' expectations especially at the primary school level on the academic achievements of students. The writer of this paper did not find any research done on the effects of teachers' expectations on students' motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement of especially government general secondary school students. Thus, it looks significant to carry out research on these psycho-educational variables that either facilitate or hinder learning process of students so as to facilitate them to be successful in their learning. The researcher's professional experiences as a teacher and the scanty of local research on this topic have motivated the researcher to study it.

Taking of all points discussed in to account, the researcher formulated the following leading research questions: Do students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations have significant effects on their motivation, academic self-concept and academic achievement? If so, on which of these variables is (are) the effect (s) of students' perceptions of teachers' expectations strong?

In the course of answering the above questions, this study may help teachers to be aware of the effect of their expectations on their students' motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement which consequently may help them develop appropriate perceptions to their students that could enhance positive academic self concept of students and that could encourage them to achieve high scores and be motivated to learn. Besides, it may inform teachers the relative importance of their expectations in affecting the cognitive and psychological variables that impinge on students learning.

## **2. Methods**

To answer the research questions both qualitative and quantitative data gathering instruments were employed. Thus, the study followed mixed approach and the design of this study was descriptive survey type.

The target populations of this study were government general secondary school students of grades 9 and 10 at Bahir Dar special zone, Ethiopia. There were three government general secondary schools in the town. They were Tana Haik, Fasilo, and Ghion general secondary schools. These schools were selected using comprehensive (available) sampling method because all schools were included in the sample.

The total number of students in the selected schools was 6203 (3191 female and 3012 male). The size of sample could be determined by the researcher based on the nature of the study (Yalew, 2009; Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000). Therefore, the sample size was set to be 300 (146 males and 154 females) in order to make the sample manageable. Of the 300 students taken out of 6203, 166 (55.47%) students were taken from grade 9 and 134 (44.53%) of them were from grade 10. In order to maintain the proportionality of sample size across schools, grade level and sex, the researcher employed stratified random sampling technique. Once the population has been divided into subgroups, or strata, sample cases were selected using simple random from each subgroup (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

In this study questionnaire was mainly used as data gathering instrument. It was used to measure students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations, their motivation and academic self-concept. Moreover, documents were used to collect student's first semester average results.

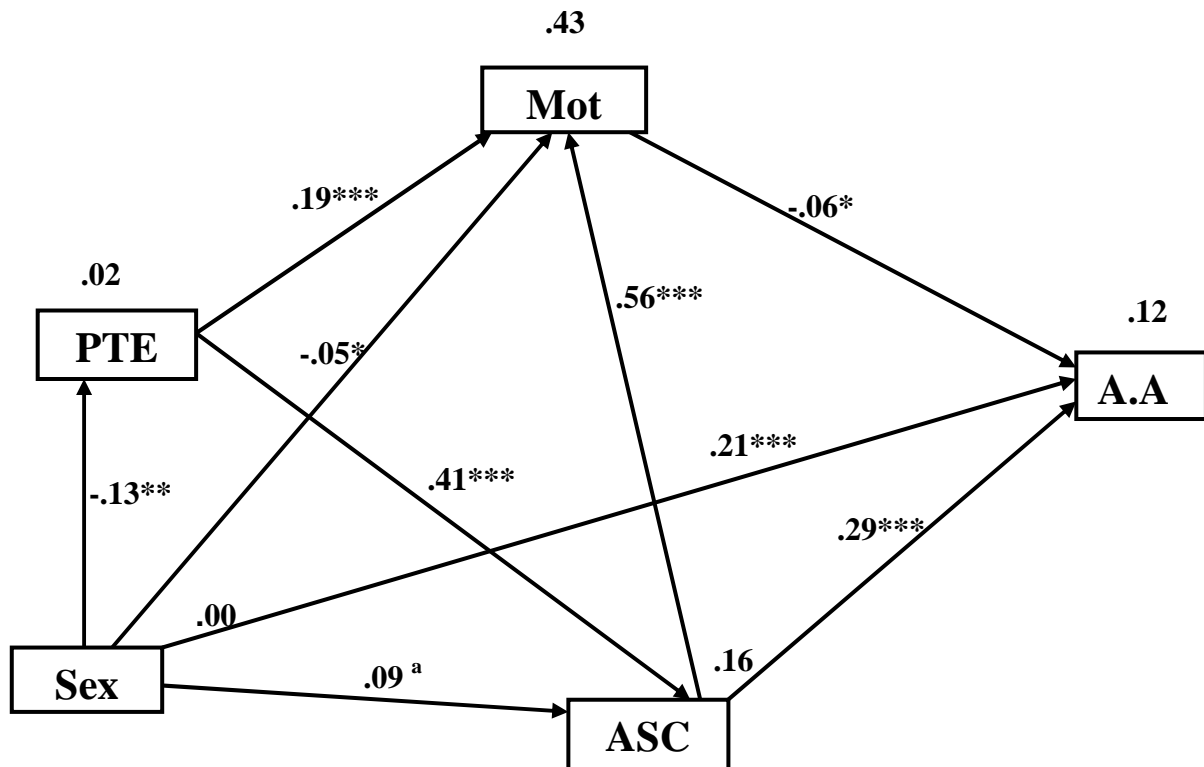
The data obtained from students and the record offices of schools were analyzed using quantitative method and, percentage and qualitative description was employed to analyze the data gathered through open ended items. Moreover, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 17.0 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 5 were used to analyze the data.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1. Quantitative results**

So as to see the effects of perceptions of teachers' expectations on motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement of students a path analysis was employed. Path analysis permits verification of statements concerning the direction of causal flow between variables ("causal" refers to the degree of impact one variable, or a set of variables, has on another variable) (Yalew, 2004). It shows the causal links among the latent and/or

observed variables.



\*\*\*  $p=0.001$ , \*\* $p=0.05$ , \*  $p>0.05$ , <sup>a</sup> $p=0.08$

PTE= Perceptions of Teachers' Expectations      Mot= Motivation  
 ASC= Academic Self Concept                              A.A= Academic Achievement

**Figure 1:** The path model representing the effects of students' perceptions of teachers' expectations on their motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement.

The constructed path model was tested if it fits the data. The model fit indices indicated that the model fitted the data very satisfactorily ( $\chi^2 = 0.088$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.767$ ,  $RMR = 0.306$ ;  $RMSEA = 0.000$ ,  $p = 0.838$ ;  $GFI = 1.000$ ,  $AGFI = 0.998$ ,  $NFI = 1.000$ ,  $RFI = 0.997$ , and  $CFI = 1.000$ ).

As indicated in Figure 1, effects of sex on motivation and academic self concept, of motivation on academic achievement were not significant at 0.05. The remaining effects were found significant at 0.05. The effects of perceptions of teachers expectations on students academic self concept was found strong and statistically significant ( $p = 0.001$ ), which further influenced academic achievements of students ( $p = 0.001$ ) and motivation of students ( $p = 0.001$ ), though the influence of motivation on achievement failed to reach a significant level.

The joint contributions of students perceptions of teachers' expectations, academic self concept and motivation to the variance in achievement of students was 12% of which the largest share was from academic self concept.

The other interesting results of the study were the effects of sex on students' perceptions of teachers' expectation, motivation, academic self-concept and academic achievement of the students. The only variables that were influenced significantly by sex were students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and academic achievement.

**Table 1:** Standardized direct, indirect and total effects of perceptions of teachers' expectations on motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement and the effect of sex on perceptions of teachers' expectation, motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement of students.

Effects	Standardized direct effect ( $\beta$ )	Standardized indirect effect	Standardized direct and indirect (total) effect
on perceptions of teachers expectations	-0.129**	0.000	-0.129
on academic self concept	0.094 <sup>a</sup>	-0.052	0.042
on motivation	-0.055*	-0.001	-0.055
on academic achievement	0.214***	0.016	0.230
of Sex			
on academic self concept	0.407***	0.000	0.407
on Motivation	0.185***	0.227	0.412
on Academic achievement	0.000	0.092	0.092
of PTE			

\*\*\* p= 0.001, \*\*p=0.05, \*p>0.05, <sup>a</sup>p= 0.08

As Table 1 shows sex had a statistically significant effects on perceptions of teachers expectations ( $\beta = -0.129$ ,  $t = -2.248$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ) and academic achievement ( $\beta = 0.214$ ,  $t = 3.911$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). The effect of sex on academic self concept was marginally significant at ( $p = 0.08$ ). But its effect on motivation was not significant.

Perceptions of teachers expectations had statistically significant effects on academic self concept ( $\beta = 0.407$ ,  $t = 7.626$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ) and motivation ( $\beta = 0.185$ ,  $t = 3.846$ ,  $P = 0.001$ ). Perceptions of teachers expectation also indirectly affected motivation (indirect effect= 0.227), which in turn, negligibly affected academic achievement (indirect effect=0.092).

**Table 2:** Decomposition of direct effects of variables

Effects	$\beta$ - coefficients	t-test	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>
on Perceptions of teachers expectations of Sex	-0.129	-2.248	0.025**	0.02
on Academic self concept of Sex	0.094	1.767	0.077 <sup>a</sup>	0.16
of Perceptions of teachers expectations	0.407	7.626	***	
on Motivation of Perceptions of teachers expectations	0.185	3.846	***	0.43
of Academic self concept	0.558	11.669	***	
of Sex	-0.055	-1.232	0.218*	
on Academic achievement of Academic self concept	0.291	4.144	***	0.12
of Motivation	-0.064	-0.917	0.359*	
of Sex	0.214	3.911	***	

\*\*\* p= 0.001, \*\*p = 0.05, \*p>0.05, <sup>a</sup>p = 0.08

In sum, it was found that, students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations (PTE) had statistically significant and strong direct effects on academic self concept (ASC) and motivation (Mot), where academic self concept, in turn, affected motivation and academic achievement significantly. Moreover, the effects of sex on students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and academic achievement were statistically significant. Though its effect on academic self concept was marginally significant ( $p = 0.08$ ), its effect on motivation was not significant. The influence of motivation on achievement failed to reach a significant level.

Based on the results of path model analysis, it is conceivable that students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations had a statistically significant strong direct effect on academic self concept and significant yet low effects on motivation of students.

### 3.2. Qualitative results

Of the questionnaire open ended items that constitute sentences dealing with students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and the impact they have on their motivation; academic self concept and academic achievement were developed. The results obtained were as follows. The first question students were asked was "How do you perceive your teachers expectations towards you?" The responses indicated 87(29%) students said their teachers highly expected them to achieve high, 69(23%) students said that they are expected to a certain level whereas, 98(32.67%) students perceived that their teachers expectation were low. But, 46 (15.33%) of them did not give any responses for the question.

The second question presented to the students was: "To what extent are you motivated to learn from the expectations your teachers have towards you?" The responses indicated 106 (35.33%) students reported that their motivation is low, 63(21%) students said they are motivated to some extent, 84(28%) students said they are highly motivated as the result of their teachers' expectations to them, but 47 (15.67%) of them did not give any response.

The third question students were asked was "How do you perceive yourself academically based on the expectations your teachers have towards you?" The responses indicated 98(32.67%) students said they do have low academic self concept, 63(21%) students said they do have average academic self concept, 83(27.67%) students said they do have high academic self concept, but 56 (18.67%) did not give the appropriate responses and some students didn't give any response.

The fourth question students were asked was "Do you think that your teachers' expectations could affect your academic achievement? If yes how?" The responses indicated 163 (54.33%) students said "yes", where as 83 (27.67%) students said "no". The remaining number of students didn't give any response. And finally students were asked to write if they have anything to add.

Generally, as the qualitative results indicated the way students perceived their teachers expectations which could be expressed through their differential treatment, affect their motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement.

#### **4. Discussion**

The discussion of the results is presented in accordance with the leading research questions.

- ☞ Do students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations have significant effects on their motivation, academic self-concept and academic achievement? If so, on which of these variables perceptions of teachers' expectations had strong effect?

As the findings of the study revealed the way students perceive their teachers expectations affect their academic self concept. That means when students perceive that their teachers' expectations to be high their academic self concept was found to be high or when students' perceive their teachers' expectations of them to be low their academic self concept tend to be low.

Students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations also had a significant direct effect on their motivation. That means when students perceive their teachers' expectations to them to be high their motivation to learn tend to be high or when students perceive that teachers expectations are low their motivation show a decrease. These findings are in harmony with the findings of Bakash (1984) where he found that teachers' expectations are one of the most influential factors in determining student motivation.

Academic self concept had a statistically significant direct effect on motivation of students. That means students who scored high in academic self concept measures were found to have higher level of motivation than those students who rated their academic self concept to be low. This suggests that students who tend to have high self concept in relation to their academic carrier, the level of their motivation parallel their academic self concept.

Moreover, academic self concept had a significant direct effect on academic achievement of students. That means students with high academic self concept were found to have high academic achievement. This result is similar to the findings of Helmke and Van Aken (1995) where they found in their self-enhancement model that an improvement in self-concept will lead to improved academic performance. Moreover, students with low level academic self concept were found to have low academic achievement.

The effect of sex on students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and academic achievement were statistically significant. That means being male or female had a significant effect on their perception of teachers' expectations and academic achievement. The results show that female students tend to perceive their teachers' expectations to be more favorable than their male counterparts. However, the average academic achievement of male students was higher than female students.

The results also indicated that the effect of motivation on academic achievement was not statistically significant. This result is in contrast with the finding of Ormrod (2000) where he found that motivation energizes, directs, and sustains behavior. It influences learning and behavior in several ways: it helps learners focus their attention on particular goals, it helps to instigate behaviors that help learners achieve those goals, influences how learners cognitively process information, determines the specific consequences that are likely to be reinforcing, and ultimately leads to higher achievement in the classroom. But in this study the result was in contrast with previous researches due to different reasons but continuous assessment or the way students were assessed could be the basic reason for their high academic achievement but low motivation to learn.

From the three dependent variables of the study students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations had a statistically significant strong direct effect on their academic self concept and significant yet low effect on their motivation. This indicates that the way students perceive their teachers' expectations highly influenced their academic self concept, which in turn, strongly affected their motivation to learn. The effect of students' perceptions of teachers' expectations on academic achievement and motivation were mediated by the academic self concept of students. It is probable that teachers' expectations, which are usually communicated to the students via various mechanisms, result in affecting the self structure of the learners rather than directly affecting the students' academic performance.

Generally, from the results of this study, we can surmise that teachers' expectations have direct bearing on students' psychological resources, which are the major initiators, energizers and sustainers of behavior that lead to academic performance.

## 5. Conclusion

The expectations teachers have for their students and the assumption they make about their potential and the way students perceive it have effects on students' achievement, motivation and academic self concept. As the study is aimed at investigating on students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations and their impacts on their motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement, the findings indicate that students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations had a statistically significant direct effect on motivation and academic self concept of students. Its effect on academic achievement of students is indirect. Moreover, it had a statistically significant strong direct effect on academic self concept of students.

As a result, it could be concluded that students' perceptions of their teachers' expectations had significant direct effects on their motivation and academic self concept; and indirect effect on their academic achievement. This implies the need to give to teachers' expectations as they affect students learning.

Based on the results of the study, to improve teachers' expectations and the influence they have on students' motivation, academic self concept and academic achievement, teachers should be aware of the impact of their expectations on their students' learning generally and their academic self concept and motivation particularly, as the later ones are critical factors in affecting the quality of learning.

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