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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Relationship Between Integrity Badges and Students' Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State

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### Author's Contributions

*All authors contributed equally to this research.*

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### ABSTRACT

Active involvement and participation of students in the school activities and programs greatly increase their performances in learning. This study examined the relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The study was guided by one research questions and one hypothesis tested at 0.05 significance level. Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of 19,576 SSII students in the 267 Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State. The Stratified simple random sampling technique was used to draw a sample size of 914 students. Integrity Badges Questionnaire (IBQ) and Students Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) were the instruments used for data collection. The instruments were validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and the reliability to ascertain the consistency of the instrument was established using Cronbach alpha reliability index which yielded coefficients of 0.80 and 0.84 respectively and was considered fit for the study. The administration of the instrument was done through the direct method approach with the help of four research assistants. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer the research question and in testing of the hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed among others that integrity badges have a high positive relationship with students' engagement. The study recommended among others that the government should encourage the school administrators to explore the use badges to motivate students' engagement in school activities and programmes for improved performances.

**Keywords:** Integrity badges; students' engagement

### INTRODUCTION

Education remains a powerful tool which can be used for a nation's transformation. It plays a crucial role in the socio-economic and political reconstruction of any nation. Education is also vital for human capital development. The role of education to the society and its occupants cannot be overemphasized; as it supports immensely an all round development of any nation. In Nigeria, there are four major levels of education which includes the lower basic, upper basic, post-basic and tertiary level of education. The lower basic and upper

basic education are given to children aged 0-11 years. It encompasses early child care and compulsory elementary education. The post-basic education is given to children after a successful completion of the lower and upper basic education, typically to students aged 11 to 18 years (FRN, 2014). In Nigeria Post-basic education is known as secondary schools. It can be established and owned by the government as well as the individuals. Public secondary schools are owned by the government while private secondary schools are owned by individuals. This level of education prepares

its graduates for tertiary institutions or skilled job choices. The tertiary level of education is given after the post-basic education such as university education, polytechnics, colleges of education etc.

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), post-basic education contributes to national development through high level manpower training and offers a diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, disposition, opportunities and future roles. It also inspires students with a desire for self improvement and achievement of excellence. Post-basic education also aims to raise morally upright and well adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour. As spelt out in the National policy on Education (2014), the objectives of secondary education (Post-Basic Education) in Nigeria include providing holders of the Basic Education Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background; offering diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles; provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades; to develop and promote Nigerian languages, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage and inspiring students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence. The objective of the policy also aimed at fostering patriotism and national unity, with an emphasis on the common ties in spite of our diversity; to raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour and to provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job specific skills for self-reliance, and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

This study focused on the post-basic education (secondary level of education) basically concentrating on the public secondary schools. Public secondary schools are those educational institutions attended after basic education which are established and owned by the government (FRN, 2014). Public secondary schools prepare students for continuing education at the tertiary level. There is the essential need to encourage students towards keen interest in learning especially in today's generation where it appears that the zeal and enthusiasm for academic pursuit seems to be overtaken by the quest of social media usage and artificial intelligence. Support on motivation of students

towards interest in learning and improved academic adventure can be achieved through various encouragement strategies amongst which could include presentation of integrity badges to students who are exceptionally successful in academics.

Integrity badges help to build confidence and self-esteem in the students. Integrity badges can be used for recognition of outstanding performances to appreciate efforts of those involved in excellent achievements which remains a worthwhile voyage in educational institutions (Ijeoma, 2016). The essence is to motivate individuals within and around the school system. School administrators through the structure of the administrative process applaud performances of students and teachers at schools to reinvigorate beneficiaries and encourage others towards such desirable behaviours. Specifically, students involved in such exceptional recognition feel honored with a sense of self-confidence and a boast of self-esteem. In another dimension perseverance for success, increase in aspirations and growth of mindset towards learning are kindled in the students, while leaving a feeling of dismay to unwanted behaviours and detestable characters. By extension, these recognitions add new energy to the school administration, improving the school climate, promoting the school culture, engaging the students and reforming the school structural process. Generally, this development enhances the entire school system and principals of schools stand a chance to experience credibility in the school reputation. Interestingly, desired school atmosphere can best be achieved through the offer of integrity badges to outstanding performances in the school.

Integrity badges could be seen as those visual symbols or presentations awarded to individuals who demonstrated exceptional qualities and achievements. Gillern (2016), referred to integrity badges as a structure of symbols that people can earn through accomplishing various tasks that illustrate their knowledge and skills. Abramovich, Schunn and Higashi (2018), perceived badges as external motivators. Presentation of integrity badges to students can encourage and reinforce students' behaviour. It can also inspire and stimulate the students for increased zeal towards engagement in learning activities. Chientzu and Shi-Jen (2016), concurred that integrity badges can be effective to incentivize learners to complete specific tasks or increase learning participation. Integrity badges can be reflected as participation badges, leadership badges, community

service badges, certification badges, perseverance badges, skill badges, self improvement badges, as well as teamwork badges (Abramovich, Schunn and Higashi, 2018). Students who have devoted their time in voluntary services within and out of the school community can be motivated through presentation of visual symbols and garland. Niguidula (2020), opined that students get badges on fulfilling requirements by selecting one of a given set of tasks. Integrity badges can be vital tools for motivating, inspiring, supporting and facilitating students' engagement to promote academic interest and greater academic achievement. Students' engagement can be defined as active involvement and participation of the learner in school activities. Students' engagement encompasses the involvement of both the cognitive and affective domain of learning as well as the psychomotor. Zepke (2018), defined students' engagement as a construct used to identify what students do, think about, and feel when learning, and how teachers can improve that doing, thinking, and feeling in instructional settings. Every learner has the opportunity to excel in school learning activities considering one's interest in a preferred learning domain. According to Zhao, Zheng, Pan and Zhou (2021), students' engagement shows degree to which students engage in educational learning tasks in school related coursework and learning activities. Students' engagement can increase interest towards learning facilitating academic motivations and desires. Li and Li, (2021) asserted that high students' engagement can lead to academic motivations and positive emotions to learning. This study focused on integrity awards and badges to relate students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Principals and teachers are at the central pivot of students' engagement activities in schools. They are saddled with the responsibility of coordinating and integrating supportive administrative activities into the teaching and learning processes to promote students' engagement. Sadly, active and effective students' engagement are still far-fetched, especially in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Nweke (2019) revealed that there are still flaws in consistent students' engagement causing an increased rate of dropouts. Nweke, emphasized that pursuit of business ventures and unwillingness in academic related activities affects most promising students. The researcher observed that some students in public secondary schools in Anambra State still lack the zeal to be engaged in school learning

activities. There are still records of poor interest and desires to engage in schooling in public secondary schools. This could be linked to poor motivating factors and actions that can stimulate students to be actively engaged in school activities. Okwuoma and Uzoeji (2019), observed that some students with creative ideas construct modern housing estates with wooden and paper materials, electrical engine machines with metals and wires, invent mini palm oil metal machines etc and stood around strategy corners in the town to seek and gain support and encouragement. The administrators of their schools ought to encourage and motivate these students for more creative ideas.

More personal observations show that encouraging and motivating students to embrace teaching and learning with unflinching zeal and keen interest will relate to more effective learning engagement outcomes. Prospectively, integrity badges could be of great essence for such engagement on students in public secondary schools in Anambra State. When students' engagement in school activities are attained, teachers, parents and other stakeholders will be impressed. Some scholars have conducted different studies to address students' engagement, but the problem has not been fully resolved. Meanwhile, there has not been any known recent study on integrity badges in relation to students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Due to this problem and gap in the existing studies, the researchers were motivated to find out the relationship integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It cannot be ruled out that over the years students' active involvement in school programmes and events for keen participation in the learning activities has been of great concern to teachers, parents, governments, educators and other stakeholders. Students' engagement in school programmes are expected to be given more attention. When students involve themselves in the learning activities and participate fully in the school programmes, their performances will greatly improve. Hence, to get the students engaged becomes crucial in schools. The researchers observed that some secondary school students do not have the willingness to be engaged in school activities; rather they take delight in street hawking, peasant job earnings and other side hustling. Teachers devote committed time during the teaching and learning process, applying improved teaching methods and also

using various related instructional materials to make teaching and learning interesting. In some cases, school principals organize end of the session prize giving.

In spite of these efforts, there is still a decline in students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This situation has kept the teachers, principals and other stakeholders worrisome. Some researchers have worked on factors such as classroom management practices, teaching methodologies and lack of adequate learning materials as those that could affect students' engagement but the problem has not been fully resolved. This situation motivated the current study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to find out the relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### **Research Questions.**

The following research question guided the study:

- What is the relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

- There is no significant relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Correlation research design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of 19,576 SSII students in the 267 Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State. The stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select 978 SS2 students from the total population and this formed the sample size for the study. Two sets of researchers' developed questionnaires titled Integrity Badges Questionnaire (IBQ) and Students Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ) were the instruments used for data collection.

The questionnaires were subjected to face validation using three experts who are lecturers; two in the Department of Educational Management and Policy and one from Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, all in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Cronbach alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency (reliability) of the items. The reliability coefficients of the instrument on integrity badges (IBQ) was 0.80 while the reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained for the instrument on students' engagement (SEQ). The instruments therefore considered reliable.

The researchers with the help of 4 research assistants administered the instrument directly to the respondents. Pearson product moment was used to answer research questions and in testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance

### **RESULTS**

**Research Question:** What is the relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1. Pearson (r) correlation on the relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State

| Source of Variation                   | N   | r     | Remark                     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-------|----------------------------|
| Integrity Badges Students' Engagement | 914 | 0.704 | High Positive Relationship |

Results in Table 1 showed that Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) of 0.704 was obtained. The coefficient is between 0.61 and 0.80 showing a high positive relationship. This means that there is a moderate positive relationship existing between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Analysis in Table 2 shows that there is a significant relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The calculated r (0.704) had a P- value of 0.01 less than 0.05 level of significance level ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement was therefore rejected.

Table 2. Test of significance of Pearson's correlation

between integrity badges and students' engagement in

public secondary schools in Anambra State.

| Source Of Variation                   | N   | r     | p-value | Remark      |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-------|---------|-------------|
| Integrity Badges Students' Engagement | 914 | 0.704 | 0.000   | Significant |

## DISCUSSION

Relationship Between Integrity Badges and Students' Engagement in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State.

The findings in Table 1 shows that there is a high positive relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The null hypothesis testing in Table 2 revealed that there is a significant relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

This finding underscores the need for integrity badges in schools to foster students' engagement. It revealed that the majority of students in the public secondary school place value on integrity badges as it showcases a scenery of dignity, self worth and self respect to them. The findings also showed that students agreed that badges boost their self esteem and willingness to learn. This is in line with Dana (2017), who noted that badges in the classes at high school reveal the potentials in boosting students' engagement and motivation to learn. Similarly, Schunn and Higashi (2018), agreed that badges are external motivators that encourage and reinforce students. The finding is also in tandem with Chientzu and Shi-Jen (2016), who concurred that integrity badges are effective to incentivize learners to complete specific tasks or increase learning participation.

Another interesting finding is that integrity badges are not limited to a particular or specific skill. It encompasses every aspect of accomplishment that the students can achieve. This implies that every student has a chance to be celebrated as diverse achievements are recognized. This finding supports Niguidula (2020), who opined that students get badges on fulfilling requirements by selecting one of a given set of tasks. This is to say that integrity badges are all inclusive. It is believed that when students are presented with integrity badges from different aspects of accomplishment, it will motivate their desire for engagement in school. Alejandro et' al. (2019), agreed with this finding and pointed out that badges encourage the spirit of

willingness and involvement in being part of the various related school services and programmes.

Further findings of the study also showed that there is a significant relationship between integrity badges and students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This indicates that recognition of students' integrity badges relates to students' engagement. This simply means that receiving integrity badges encourages the students to be engaged in school services and functions. This finding indicates that students who are exceptional in rendering school services, school functionaries and school assistance programs which are motivated with integrity badges are seemingly engaged in school. This significant relationship agreed with Breakouter (2023), who found out that badges remain a popular tool which serves as a way to motivate and reward student progress. Similarly, Minh (2024) supported the finding, opining that integrity badges show evidence of skill acquired, knowledge learned, and accomplishment earned.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that integrity badges has a positive and significant relationship with students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Thus, the study concluded that presentation of integrity badges to students with outstanding performances in school programmes and activities increases students' engagement in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Anambra State Post Primary School Service Commission should also encourage the principals to introduce the use of different forms of integrity badges in their schools to stimulate students' interest towards the school engagement programmes.

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