

INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT AND ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION ON FACULTY OF EDUCATION UTM
POSTGRADUATES' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation on Faculty of Education (FP) UTM postgraduates' academic performance. This study discovered the level of academic self-concept and the level of academic achievement motivation of FP UTM postgraduates. It also investigated the gender and age differences in academic self-concept, as well as the gender and age differences in academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates. Respondents of this study were master degree postgraduates from Faculty of Education UTM. The sampling method employed was stratified sampling. Questionnaires were distributed to 250 respondents but only 215 sets of completed questionnaires were collected back. Data collected was organized and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 16.0 for Windows. The level of academic self-concept among FP UTM postgraduates were measured using related items in the Self-Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ) III for late adolescents and young adults developed by Herbert William Marsh (1990). The level of academic achievement motivation of FP UTM postgraduates were measured using related items in the Deo-Mohan Achievement Motivation Scale developed by Pratibha Deo and Asha Mohan (1985). From the pilot test, internal consistency reliability for the overall items revealed a coefficient alpha value of 0.83. Independent Samples t-test found that there were significant difference of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates based on gender. Females scored higher than males in both academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation. One-way Analysis Covariance (ANOVA) found out that there was no significant difference in academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates based on age. The influence of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation towards academic performance was found out using Simple Regression Analysis. Findings revealed that academic self-concept had a weak positive influence on academic performance. Person's Coefficient Correlation was used to analyse the correlation between academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation. Results showed a significant and moderate correlation between academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti hubungan antara konsep sendiri akademik, motivasi pencapaian akademik dan pencapaian akademik dalam kalangan penuntut sarjana Fakulti Pendidikan (FP) UTM. Kajian ini berjaya mengenal pasti tahap konsep sendiri akademik dan tahap motivasi pencapaian akademik penuntut sarjana FP UTM. Ia juga mengkaji perbezaan konsep sendiri akademik mengikut jantina dan umur, berserta dengan motivasi pencapaian akademik berdasarkan jantina dan umur dalam kalangan penuntut sarjana FP UTM. Responden kajian ini terdiri daripada penuntut sarjana Fakulti Pendidikan UTM. Kaedah memilih sampel yang digunakan ialah persampelan stratifikasi. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada 250 responden tetapi hanya 215 set yang lengkap telah dikumpul balik. Data yang dikumpul telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) versi 16.0 untuk Windows. Tahap konsep sendiri akademik dalam kalangan penuntut sarjana FP UTM telah diukur dengan menggunakan item-item yang berkaitan dalam *Self-Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ) III* untuk remaja menjelang dewasa dan dewasa muda yang dibina oleh Herbert William Marsh (1990). Tahap motivasi pencapaian akademik penuntut sarjana FP UTM telah diukur menggunakan item-item yang berkaitan dalam *Deo-Mohan Achievement Motivation Scale* yang dibina oleh Pratibha Deo and Asha Mohan (1985). Daripada kajian rintis, kebolehpercayaan konsisten dalaman bagi kesemua item menunjukkan nilai alfa keseluruhan 0.83. Ujian-t mendapati terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara konsep sendiri akademik dan motivasi pencapaian akademik dalam kalangan penuntut sarjana FP UTM mengikut jantina. Perempuan mendapat skor yang lebih tinggi daripada lelaki dalam kedua-dua konsep sendiri akademik dan motivasi pencapaian akademik. Ujian Analisis Varians (ANOVA) mendapati tiada perbezaan yang signifikan antara konsep sendiri akademik dan motivasi pencapaian akademik dalam kalangan penuntut sarjana FP UTM berdasarkan umur. Pengaruh konsep sendiri akademik dan motivasi pencapaian akademik terhadap pencapaian akademik didapati melalui Ujian Regresi Ringkas. Keputusan menunjukkan konsep sendiri akademik mempunyai pengaruh positif yang lemah terhadap pencapaian akademik. Kaedah Korelasi Person digunakan untuk menganalisis korelasi antara konsep sendiri akademik dan motivasi pencapaian akademik. Keputusan menunjukkan terdapat korelasi yang signifikan dan sederhana antara konsep sendiri akademik dan motivasi pencapaian akademik dalam kalangan penuntut sarjana FP UTM.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASC	-	Academic Self-Concept
AAM	-	Academic Achievement Motivation
AMS	-	Achievement Motivation Scale
CGPA	-	Cumulative Grade Point Average
FP	-	Faculty of Education
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Science
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

Education, simply stated means the process of gaining knowledge, inculcating forms of proper conduct and acquiring technical competency (Oak, retrieved 2010). The process of education that is believed to begin in the womb continues throughout life. It consists of defined phases starting from formal education that consists of primary, secondary and higher education and ideally it never ends.

National Education Philosophy (1986) stated that education in Malaysia is an ongoing effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated approach to creating a balanced and harmonious human being physically, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually (JERIS) based on the belief in God. This effort is to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable, competent, moral, responsible and capable of achieving well-being and contribute to the betterment of society and the nation.

The most valuable asset for any country is its people. Human capital development is a determinant of competitiveness and productivity of the country.

Education plays a key role in developing our human capital. Our human capital should have a strong identity and appearance, be personality honorable, knowledgeable and highly skilled to fill the needs of being a developed country by 2020 (National Education Development Plan 2006-2010, 2006). Vision 2020 calls for the nation to achieve a self-sufficient industrialized nation by the year 2020, encompasses all aspects of life, from economic prosperity, social well-being, educational world class, political stability, as well as psychological balance (Jeong, 2007; Hassan, 1995).

Accomplishing Vision 2020 would be problematic if the country does not have enough highly educated people. Hence, it is necessary to focus on producing sufficient quality human resources that gear towards the needs of the nation and K-economy. Human capital to be produced should have critical and creative thinking, problem solving skills, ability to create new opportunities, have the resilience and capability to deal with the global environment of ever-changing. According to Malaysian Education Development Plan 2001-2010, the development plan for higher education aims to improve postgraduate programmes, produce students of excellence and quality, further develop students' character, encourage research and development (R&D) of international standards, inculcate a culture of quality in higher education, and promote lifelong learning.

For the past recent years, the Ministry of Education's great attention and effort to develop the nation at the postgraduate level is noticeable. The Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia has offered programs like *MyBrain 15* in 2010 and *Program Pembiayaan Untuk Pengajian Ijazah Lanjutan Di Bawah Pakej Rangsangan Ekonomi Kedua (Bajet Mini 2009)* to financially support students who were pursuing their postgraduate degree. It is believed that the Ministry of Education is making progress in meeting the growing demand of society for higher education, as well as fulfilling the increasing need for knowledgeable and skilled manpower, as required in the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2001-2010.

1.1 Background of the Study

In the progression of formal education, academic performance is much emphasized in our country (Abu Bakar et al., 2010; Elias & Long, 1984; Education Development Plan for Malaysia 2001-2010, 2001). It has been used to measure the capability and achievement of a student (Abullah Yusof & Mohd. Amin, 1999; Tam & Yusoff, 2003). Students are required to perform well academically as it resembles earning respect and fame from the society, having a better chance of getting academic benefits or job opportunities, and being able to survive and strive better in life. On the other hand, low academic achievers may have to encounter humiliation from all parties and in fact being foreseen as failures of their own future.

Determinants of performance have been the subject of ongoing debate among educators, academics, and policy makers. All of the research reviews support the hypothesis that student performance depends on different socio-economic, psychological, environmental factors (Hijazi & Raza Naqvi, 2006). There have been many studies that sought to examine this issue and the findings of these studies point out to hard work and discipline, previous schooling, parents' education, family income and self motivation as factors that can explain differences in students' grades (Harb & El-Shaarawi, 2006). Factors like race and gender can also affect student's performance. (Hansen, 2000). Siegfried and Fels (1979) concluded that the student's aptitude is the most important determinant of his/her learning.

Over the years, much other research has been done to determine the main factors affecting students academic achievement: social behaviour (e.g. Wentzel, 1993), learning strategies (e.g. Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990), academic engagement (e.g. Gamoran & Nystrand, 1991), parenting styles, academic motivation (e.g. Gronlick, Ryan & Deci, 1991) and self-concept (Aryana, 2010). The researcher is interested in finding out the effects of academic self-concept on academic performance. Self-concept can be referred as person's global judgments of

competency regarding one's self-worth (Harter, 1988). Self-concept can also refer to the general idea we have of ourselves.

Self-concept, also called “self-esteem” or “self-regard” by some authors (Ahmed, & Bruinsma, 2006; Carver & Scheier, 2004; Huitt, 2009) affects human at all ages, no matter what roles they are playing. This element has been used to study human being in various areas such as interpersonal relationships, physical ability, career choice and career achievement (Hattie, 1992). The relationship between self-concept and academic achievement among students has also received increasing attention (Baharudin & Zulkefly, 2009). Over-all, the research evidence clearly shows a persistent and significant relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement (Purkey, 1970).

Much of the early research on self-concept was not very theoretically based, good definitions of the construct were not developed, and many researchers assumed that self-concept was a global construct (Wylie, 1974, 1979, 1989). Research now focuses on how students distinguish their self-concept by domain (Byrne, 1984). Whereas there is disagreement about the levels of specificity of the domains, most researchers distinguish among academic, social, and physical domains of self-concept (Harter, 1982, 1998; Wigfield & Karpathian, 1991).

Some results of contemporary studies have shown evidences whereby students' self-concept has impact on their academic achievement, whereas others have taken the opposite position that achievement determines self-concept (Byrne, 1984; Byrne, 1986; Caslyn & Kenny, 1977; Hansford & Hattie, 1982; Marsh & Yeung, 1997a; Marsh, Byrne and Yeung, 1999; Scheirer & Kraut, 1979). Though, the evidences that show students' self-concept has impact on their academic achievement are still not conclusive.

Another aspect of the self that has gained a lot of attention of the researchers is achievement motivation. Motivation is the state arousal that a person experiences when working towards a goal (Calhoun & Acocella, 1978). Motivation influences both efficiency in the execution of an activity (and therefore the level of performance) and persistence or more generally, the time spent in the endeavour (Atkinson, 1974). It is felt that the motivational aspect of the student constitutes an important factor which can promote or impede the scholastic attainment of the student. It can be inferred that if students are not motivated adequately they will not utilize their potentials to the optimum.

Relations between students' academic achievement motivation and school-related outcomes such as academic performance have been routinely established in the literature (see Ames, 1992; McInerney, 2001; Pintrich and Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1991 in Marsh et al., 2006). Findings regarding academic achievement motivation are commonly expressed in terms of intrinsic motivation, mastery goal, performance goal, expectancies and values, interest and motive to achieve (see Barker, Dowson & McInerney, 2005; Eccles et al., 1983; Gottfried, Fleming and Gottfried, 1994; Griffone & Lewis, 1978; Marsh, et al., 2005).

A number of studies have shown a moderate-to-strong relation between motivation and academic achievement (e.g., Skaalvik & Rankin, 1995). Mahyuddin, Elias and Noordin (2009) found a significant but low positive correlation between students' achievement motivation and their academic achievement. However, in Kaplan & Middleton (2002), performance goals demonstrate inconsistent relations with academic performance and achievement.

Having all the above stated evidences, the researcher does not think that students' academic self-concept itself is influencing academic performance. Academic achievement motivation could probably be playing a role with academic self-concept in affecting academic performance. These discoveries have triggered the researcher's curiosity to investigate the way the influences and relationships exist

within academic self-concept, academic achievement motivation and academic performance.

Research in academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation has been focused a lot on primary school students and secondary school students in the literature. Although there are still some research carried out to university students, the research on postgraduate students is largely lacking. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose the FP UTM postgraduates as the sample in this study.

The nature of the academic programmes offered by FP UTM catches the attention of many school teachers to enrol themselves to pursue a higher education degree. Other than this, those who pick up the postgraduate academic programmes are graduates who are really interested in education, and are prepared to enter the education industry. Of course, these postgraduates also consist of those who would like to upgrade themselves into a higher profession to become lecturers. Regardless of their background, it is certain that their aim was to fulfil their academic self satisfaction.

Considering the fact that most FP UTM postgraduates are working people, having high levels of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation have become prerequisites for attaining good academic results, as it is not easy to balance between studies, work and other life courses. Hence, the researcher is interested to know what level of academic self-concept the postgraduates in FP UTM possess and if they also have high level of academic achievement motivation. The researcher is also keen to know if academic self-concept is related to academic achievement motivation, and if they are related, how they are related.

1.2 Problem Statement

Discussions in the background of the study have illustrated the importance of academic self-concept in contributing to academic performance. It is also mentioned that students' achievement motivation plays very essential role during the process. However, only very little literature is written on postgraduates. Therefore, it would be necessary for the researcher to conduct this study in order to add on the findings for the postgraduate group. Following all these information, the researcher is interested in knowing the level of academic self-concept and the level of academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates. The researcher also wants to investigate gender and age differences in academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates. The influences of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation on academic performance will also be identified. The relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation will be investigated.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the academic self-concept level of FP UTM postgraduates.
2. Identify the academic achievement motivation level of FP UTM postgraduates.
3. Investigate the gender and age differences in academic self-concept among FP UTM postgraduates.

4. Investigate the gender and age differences in academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates.
5. Identify the influences of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation on academic performance.
6. Investigate the relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

1. What is the level of academic self-concept (high, moderate, low) among postgraduates in the Faculty of Education in UTM?
2. What is the level of academic achievement motivation (high, moderate, low) among postgraduates in the Faculty of Education in UTM?
3. Are there significant gender and age differences in academic self-concept among postgraduates in the Faculty of Education in UTM?
4. Are there significant gender and age differences in academic achievement motivation among postgraduates in the Faculty of Education in UTM?
5. Are there significant influences of academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation on academic performance?
6. Is there a significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The null-hypotheses are employed in this study whereby there will be no bias in the results obtained. The null-hypotheses that are determined include:

Ho 1: There is no significant difference in academic self-concept based on gender.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference in academic self-concept based on age.

Ho 3: There is no significant difference in academic achievement motivation based on gender.

Ho 4: There is no significant difference in academic achievement motivation based on age.

Ho 5: Academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation have no significant influence on academic performance.

Ho 6: There is no significant relationship between academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation.

1.6 Importance of the Study

This study is hoped to provide an opportunity for FP UTM postgraduates to identify factors affecting their academic achievement motivation and knowing their level of academic self-concept. This will encourage postgraduates to introspect and improve on their academic self-concept which consequently improves their achievement motivation and academic performance.

This study is also hoped to benefit postgraduates of other faculties in UTM and postgraduates in other higher learning institutions. Although there are significant differences in the context of student group, yet, this study can be a new approach to a student in the aspect of self-concept. This more or less helps students to work out in improving academic performance. If not, it is hoped that this study provides a chance for students to understand themselves better.

Another purpose of carrying out this study is also to supply other researchers with a guide to conduct similar researches in other settings so that the above beneficiaries get more information on academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation. With the findings of this research also prospective researchers may widen their scope in their study to obtain more accurate data regarding this research topic.

This study provides a chance for the researcher to experience and be exposed to a research study project. The researcher will also obtain all kinds of knowledge about academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation, and hopes to help others in improving their academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation, since it is an important factor that affects academic performance.

This study will also create awareness among members of the society. Burns (1979) mentioned that until 1950, many researchers only place their attention on variables that influence academic performance, which include IQ, social status, demographic background and so on. Ebuka believe factors that can influence academic performance include socio-demographic characteristics, past academic performance, socio-economic status, environment, psychological factors and study skills. In fact, in the actual situation, these variables could only explain some parts of influence in academic performance. Therefore, through this study, it is hoped that members of the society such as parents, educators, administrator of the education industry and others are aware of the importance of the self-concept factor and place more attention to it. Although this factor looks intrinsic, it also plays an important

role in explaining and showing significant differences towards academic achievement.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

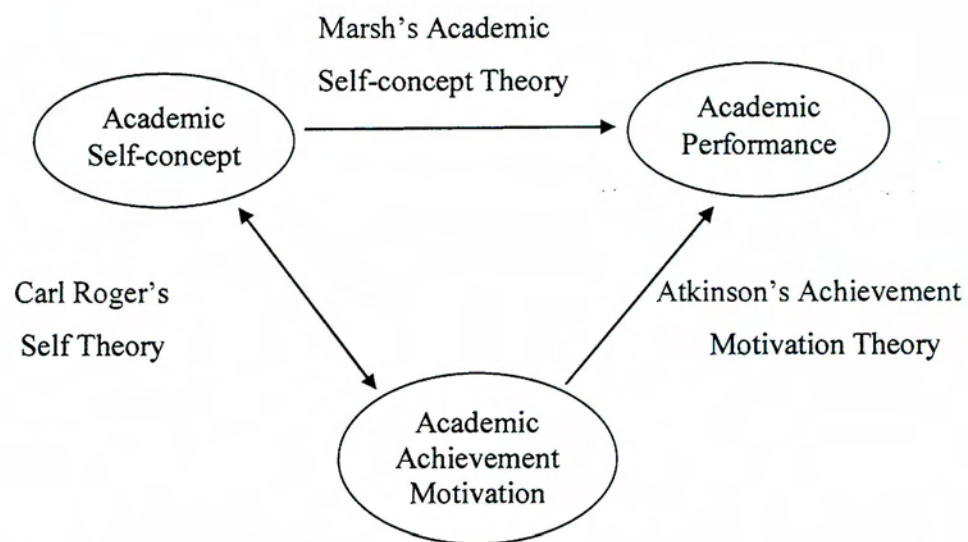


Figure 1.1: The Relations of Academic Self-Concept, Academic Achievement Motivation and Academic Performance

Academic self-concept, a more general sense of how well one does in school, and related traits correlate with, if not directly influence, academic performance (Moulton, Brown & Lent, 1991). Research evidences have clearly shown a persistent and significant relationship between the self-concept and academic achievement (Byrne, 1996; Cockley, 2003; Cockley et al., 2001; Harter, 1982; Hattie, 1992; Marsh, 1990; 1992; Purkey, 1970, Reynolds et al., 1980). Academic self-concept has been strongly linked to academic achievement (Marsh, 1990). A higher academic self-concept has been associated with greater academic achievement among students (Marsh, 1990).

Although it was widely accepted that prior academic self-concept was one determinant of academic performance, the critical question is whether there also exists a causal link from prior academic self-concept to subsequent achievement (Marsh, 2003). Combs & Syngg (1949) together with Rogers (1963) proposed that the basic drive (motive) of the individual is the maintenance and enhancement of the self. Rogers (in Purkey & Schmidt, 1987) believe in every human being there is a tendency toward self-actualization and growth so long as this is permitted by the environment. The actualizing tendency is the fundamental motivational construct in Roger's Self Theory (1963).

From the perspective of approaches to motivation, several studies have shown the importance of motivation in determining academic performance at all levels of education. Motivation is the driving force behind our actions and affects our needs, desires and life ambition (Rabideau, 2005). The most recent embodiment of the motives-as-goals tradition is achievement goal theory (e.g. Ames 1992, Dweck 1986, Urdan 1997, Urdan & Maehr 1995). The basic contention of achievement goal theory is that depending on their subjective purposes, achievement goals differentially influence school achievement via variations in the quality of cognitive self-regulation processes (Covington, 2000; Elliot, 1999 in Elliot & Thrash, 2001). Achievement goals, are cognitive representations that guide behavior in a particular direction (Elliot & Thrash, 2001). A complete explanation of motivation must identify not only the direction (aim) of behavior, but also the energization of behavior (i.e., the reason(s) that one is aroused by or inclined to desire the aim). A person may be trying to do better than others in an achievement setting (a performance goal), and this goal may be pursued in order to demonstrate to others that he/she has positive characteristics, experience the pride of success, and/or win the acceptance or approval of others, or any of several other plausible reasons (Elliot & Thrash, 2001).

Evidences of how academic self-concept influences academic performance and how academic self-concept is related to academic achievement motivation to influence academic performance have been discussed. Overall, Deci & Ryan's self-determination theory (1985) would best explain the whole concept of this study.

People are self-determined they show greater initiative and persistence (Deci & Ryan, 1987), have higher satisfaction and trust (Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989), perceive themselves to be in better control of decision making, and take more responsibility of the outcomes of the event (Deci & Ryan, 1985) than when they are controlled. In addition, Deci et al. (1991) proposes that self-determined motivation is related to various educational outcomes from early elementary school to college. In some of these studies, it was emphasized that students who had high self-determined forms of motivation for doing school related work were more likely to stay in school, achieve, show evidence of conceptual understanding, and to be well adjusted than those who had low self-determined motivation (see Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Daoust, Vallerand, & Blais, 1988; Vallerand, 1991 in Isiksal, 2010).

In this research study, the analysis of the theoretical framework shows academic self-concept as the factor determining academic performance. However, the process would be more conclusive with the existence of academic achievement motivation. Byrne (1984) belief that academic self-concept has motivational properties such that changes in academic self-concept will lead to changes in subsequent academic achievement.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

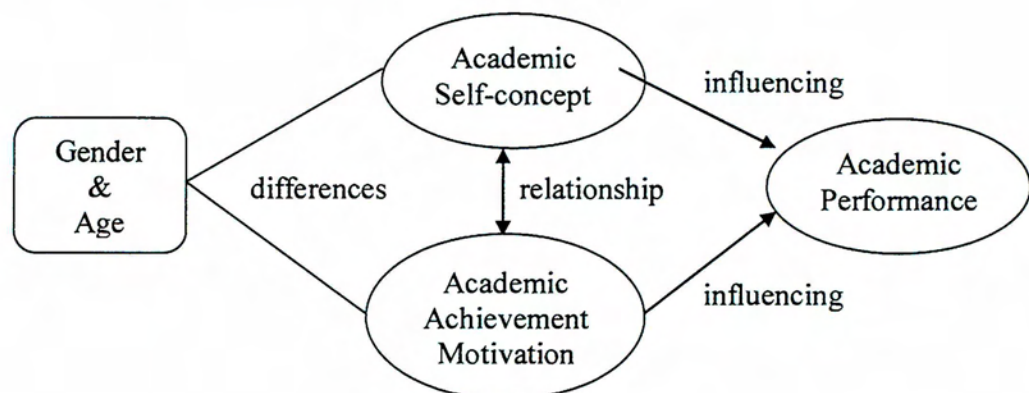


Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework.

The conceptual framework for this study is constructed based on the research objectives and literature review as shown in Figure 1.2. The independent variables are gender and age whereas the dependent variables are academic self-concept, academic achievement motivation and academic performance. The researcher would like to investigate significant differences in academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation among FP UTM postgraduates based on gender and age. Besides, researcher would like to know how academic self-concept affects academic performance and also find out if academic achievement motivation has a role in affecting academic performance through academic self-concept in the context of FP UTM postgraduates.

1.9 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was carried out only to postgraduates in the Faculty of Education in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia during the second semester of 2010/2011 session. The study only focuses on the academic self-concept and academic achievement motivation of the respondents, not the general self-concept and the general achievement motivation. Questionnaire that covers the variables of the study are distributed to obtain responses from the respondents.

1.10 Definitions of Terms

1.10.1 Academic Self-Concept

Calhoun and Acocella (1978) define self-concept as one's own personal view about himself or herself. Multon et al. (1991) describes academic self-concept as a more general sense of how well one does in school. In this study, academic self-concept refers to the perception of UTM Education Faculty postgraduates on how well they themselves are doing in their studies.

1.10.2 Academic Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation as defined by McClelland *et al.* (1953) is the positive and negative effects aroused in situations involving competition with certain standards of excellence where performance in such situations can be assessed as success or failure. Abu Bakar et al. (2010) explains academic achievement motivation as one's inner drive to achieve success in academic. In this study, academic achievement motivation refers to the motivated intension of scoring the best in academic by UTM Education Faculty postgraduates.

1.10.3 Academic Performance

Academic performance refers to something that a student has done successfully in school or university (Steel, 2000). In this study, academic

achievement refers to the academic result of a postgraduate student in UTM Education Faculty which is measured in terms of Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

1.10.4 Postgraduates

Postgraduates refer to a group of people who are doing further studies at a university after completing their first degree (Steel, 2000). For this study, postgraduates refer to those who are doing Master and PhD studies at UTM, Skudai. Only those postgraduates in the Faculty of Education engaged in coursework or mixed modes learning will be selected as respondents. Postgraduate students who are involved in full research are omitted as they do not have academic performance in terms of CGPA.

1.11 Conclusion

In summary, Chapter One contains the introduction of the research, background of the study, problem statement, research questions, research hypotheses, scope of the study, theoretical framework, conceptual framework of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, and definition of terms. This chapter presents a general introduction on three variable of this study: academic self-concept, academic achievement motivation and academic performance. The literature review concerning these three variables will be discussed in the next chapter.

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