

Influence of Selected Socio-demographic Variables on Academic Adjustment of University Students in Southwestern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT This study examined the nature of the university undergraduate students' academic adjustment problems and the influence of selected socio-demographic variables of peer status, gender, age and family background on the students' academic adjustment. A sample of 2106 students was selected by stratified random sampling technique from three purposively selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria. Academic Adjustment Inventory was used to gather information from the subjects. The data were analysed using simple percentages and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results of the data analysis revealed the nature of the academic adjustment problems of the students. Their problems included inability to get suitable place to study (85%); difficulty in understanding the recommended textbooks (82%); enormity of the work given (e.g. assignments, homework and write-up) (85%) having to move from one lecture room to another (87%) and the strictness of the university (87%). Peer status while in secondary school had significant influence on the students' academic adjustment but age and family background did not have significant influence on the students' academic adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Learning to study in a university like studying in a new environment has some challenges as learning to live in a new culture. Karlo (1996) asserted that there would be feeling of uncertainty and one may be unsure of what to do, what to say, who to ask, where to go and how to be assessed. As university students they are required to have wide knowledge of their course of study. The lecturers often are most interested in the students' ability to describe and argue on their own. The classrooms may be very large and can surprisingly be noisy places. It is important to realise that classroom is only one source of information (Cook, 1997). Students are also expected to use the library, Internet and textbooks to gain further information. Assessment in the university may be strange to the students. Assessment varies according to the course. Almost all the courses are internally assessed by tests, assignments, attendance, laboratories or essays during the semester and then by an examination at the end of the semester. In most universities in Nigeria, the pass mark is usually 40E. The grading starts from "A" and ends at "F". "A" grades are for exceptional pieces of work (Cook, 1997).

In their studies, Coie (1990), Parker and Asher (1987) found that rejection during middle childhood and pre-adolescence could lead to

adjustment problems in adolescence and early adulthood. Earlier cross-sectional and longitudinal researches had demonstrated that peer rejection is associated with both concurrent and subsequent academic disabilities and difficulties and below average intelligence (e.g. Wentzel and Asher, 1995; Hazicriston and Hopf, 1996; Bagwell, Newcomb and Bukowski, 1998; Czeschlik and Rost, 1998 and Ialongo, 1998). While given the summary of the results from several studies, Newcomb, Bukowski and Pattee (1993) concluded that rejected children's academic and intellectual abilities were significantly lower than those of other children while popular children showed higher levels of cognitive abilities.

Gender had also been found to be a factor in academic adjustment of students. French (1990) found gender difference in the academic adjustment of both boys and girls but Zettergren (2003) did not find any significant gender difference in the academic adjustment. He observed that both boys and girls were of superior academic standard. Furthermore, Olayinka (1976) and Adebayo (1993) maintained that children from unorganised emotionally unsettled and poor family background usually find it difficult to adjust effectively in to the school system. This shows that the family is primarily responsible for meeting a child's basic, physical and psychological needs. How well a student

adjusts to his new environment may depend to a large extent on the family background.

In sum, the purpose of this present study was to investigate the nature of the university students' academic adjustment and to find out the influence of selected socio-demographic variables on the students' academic adjustment. The study focussed on selected socio-demographic variables of peer status, gender and family background. The peer statuses considered in this study were rejected, average and popular peer statuses, if the students were popular, average or rejected when they were in secondary schools (Zattergren, 2003). The family groups considered were monogamous, polygamous and single parenthood.

METHODS

The study is a survey. A sample of 2106 students (female = 993 and male = 1113) selected by stratified random sampling technique from three purposively selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria constituted the subject of this study.

An instrument tagged "Academic Adjustment Inventory" (AAI) adapted from Bakare (1977) was used to collect information from the student about their academic adjustment.

AAI is an inventory consisting 25 items and it is made up of two sections. Section A consisted items on student gender, family background and peer status. Section B included such items as inability to get suitable place to study, requirement of too much work in some courses, unfriendly attitude of the lecturers and strictness of universities. The instrument was ascertained to be reliable and valid. A test-retest reliability coefficient analysis performed on 30 subjects yielded a value of $r = 0.82$ which is considered significant at .05 level ($n = 30$; $r = 0.82$; $p < .05$). The content validity and construct validity of the instrument were established through experts' judgements and modifications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the findings of the pattern of the students' academic adjustment, it is evident that the students have academic adjustment problems (Table 1). These problems included inability to get suitable place to study (85%), difficulty of recommended textbooks (82%), too much work been given (85%), having lectures in distant lecture rooms (60%), overcrowded lecture rooms (62%), unfriendly attitude of lecturers (69%) and strictness of the university (87%). Previous studies (Karlo, 1996) had shown that these

Table 1: Percentage analysis on the nature of the students' academic adjustment.

<i>Academic adjustment problems</i>	<i>Yes %</i>	<i>No %</i>
Having no suitable to study	15	85
Forced to take course I don't like	42	58
Textbooks are difficult to understand	82	18
I feel restless	7	93
Too little freedom in class	34	66
I find it difficult to use the library	48	52
Too much is required in some courses	64	36
Not getting along with some lecturers	37	63
Lectures are too long	13	87
Lecturers are not showing affection to students	31	69
Not getting personal help from teachers	33	67
Lecturers are not friendly to students	33	67
Lecture duration is too long	13	87
University is too strict	71	29
Too many students in the classroom	62	38
Lecturers are not considerate of students' feelings	34	66
Work given is too much (e.g. home-work, assignments and write-up).	85	15
Many lecturers do not give explanation in class	75	25
Inability to study in the hostel room due to incessant noise	88	12
Not familiar with the grading assessment method	45	55
Having to move from one lecture room to another	87	13
Getting low marks even after much efforts	54	46
Examination time-table does not often give enough breathing space	31	69
Having lectures at distant lecture rooms	60	40
Inability to cope with numerous activities on campus	60	40

problems are some of the challenges the students have to face while studying in the university. These are some of the things to be expected in the university, the students must realise that they are no more in the secondary schools where they were being pampered. In the university the students must learn to work and study on their own. The complaint of the students that textbooks were too difficult and that work given (e.g. homework, assignments and write-up) was too much is not also very strange, it is in line with the finding of Cook (1997). Cook (1997) was of the opinion that at university, one must have good memory and one has to adjust to new ways of studying and work patterns.

Peer status was found to have significant influence on the students' academic adjustment in the university (Table 2). The mean squares for between groups and within groups are 208208.4 and 57920.881 respectively; these yielded an F value of 3.595 that is significant at .05 level. The results of Scheffe multiple comparison analysis further showed that the rejection of the students by their peers while in secondary schools had significant influence on academic adjustment of

the students (Table 3). Popularity with the peers did not have significant influence on the student academic adjustment. These findings corroborate the findings of many studies that had found significant association of peer status with both concurrent and subsequent academic disabilities and difficulties and below average intelligence (Wentzel, 1991; Bagwell et al., 1998; Ialongo et al., 1998; Zettergren, 2003).

This study found no gender difference in the academic adjustment of both female and male students (Table 4). The mean values for both male and female were 79.0806, 88.9524, respectively and the t value was -.938, which is not significant at .05 level. This finding is line with the finding of Zettergren (2003) who found no gender difference in the future academic adjustment of the children he studied. However, the finding does not support the findings of Ialongo et al. (1993) that found similar academic and intellectual outcomes for both genders. Other finding of the study was that family background of the students did not have significant influence on their academic adjustment (Table 5). The mean squares for both academic adjustment and family

Table 2: Influence of peer status on academic adjustment of university undergraduate, students

		Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	F	P
Academic Adjustment Peer Status	Between Groups	416416.9	2	208208	*3.595	<.05
	Within Groups	1.20E+08	2102	57920.9		
	Total	1.20E+08	2105			

* significant $p < .05$

Table 3: Scheffe multiple comparison of influence of peer status on students' academic adjustment

Peer status	Peer status	N	Means difference	Standard error	P
Popular	Average	396	-33.1259	17.766	>.05
	Rejected	1368	5.8288	13.733	>.05
Average	Popular	342	33.1259	17.766	>.05
	Rejected	1368	38.9547	14.550	<.05
Rejected	Popular	1368	-5.8288	13.733	>.05
	Average	342	-38.9547	14.550	<.05

Table 4: Gender difference in the academic adjustment of the students

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	t	Df	P
Female	993	79.0806	-0.938	2104	P >.05
Male	1113	88.9524			

Table 5: Influence of family background on the students' academic adjustment

		Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	F	P
Academic Adjustment Peer Status	Between Groups	416416.9	2	208208	*3.595	<.05
	Within Groups	1.20E+08	2102	57920.9		
	Total	1.20E+08	2105			

background are 56609.817 and 58065.055 respectively. These figures yielded an F value, which is not significant at .05 level.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that the university undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria had various academic adjustment problems and their peer status while in secondary school had significant influence on their academic adjustment. Based on the findings of this study it is thus recommended that there should be an intervention programme organised for the students to promote healthy adjustment. One approach is to provide social support. Social support involves providing avenues such as counselling, tutorial services, support groups and individualised attention to individuals having academic adjustment problems. The other basic intervention technique is to build personal competence or competence training that involves teaching specific skills that are taught to mediate positive adjustment. Such competences could involve goal setting and study skills.

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