SELFCONCEPT AND ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Academic experiences of students at the university level are different in many ways from what the students have had in secondary schools. As a result of this, most students upon entering the university as first-timers are likely faced with the problems of adjusting to the new academic environment. The thrust of the paper therefore was to ascertain the pattern of academic adjustment of university undergraduates as well as the influence of students’ self-concept on it. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of all university undergraduates in Ondo State. The sample comprised 1,376 students selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. Three universities (One Federal, one State and one Private) were purposively selected based on ownership. From each university, two Faculties were selected using simple random sampling technique. Sixty undergraduates offering compulsory courses from Parts One to Four were selected using convenience sampling technique. Two adapted instruments titled “Academic Adjustment Inventory (AAI)” and “Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)” were used to collect data for the study. The reliability of the instruments yielded Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.83 and Guttman’s results of 0.72 for AAI while SCQ also yielded Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.89 and Guttman’s result of 0.86 respectively. These showed that both instruments were appropriate for the study. The data collected were analyzed using percentage and Chi-Square statistical methods. The results showed that 48.4% of the university undergraduates had good pattern of academic adjustment. It was showed that positive self-concept with 55.2% was the prevalent self-concept among the undergraduates. Finally, the results showed that self-concept had a significant influence on students’ academic adjustment (56.300 at p < 0.05). It was concluded that the level of self-concept of a student played a great part in determining the adjustment pattern of such student.

Keywords: Self-concept, Academic Adjustment and University Undergraduates

Introduction

In the process of someone meeting his/her expectations and value framework, a person needs a sufficient amount of adjustment. Academic experiences of students at the university level are different in many ways from what the students have had in secondary schools. In universities, students are expected to master or accomplish a great deal of tasks as attending classes, taking lecture notes, studying for tests, writing term papers and assignments, reading books and reference materials for different subjects and working for minimum requirements for survival (Yalew, 2003; Moore, 2006; Chong, Elias, Mahyuddin & Uli, 2009). The undergraduates are required to have a wide knowledge of their course of study and it is evident that very many of them have a difficulty doing so. According to Chong et al, (2009), struggling with tests and assignments, coping with academic demands and challenges of lecturers, transitioning into financial and emotional independence can be an overwhelming experience for many students as this demands intellectual and emotional adjustments on the part of the learners.

As students resume to the schools the first time, they are faced with multiple changes. These may be in form of their living arrangements, academic environments, and friendship networks, while trying to adapt to greater independence and responsibility in their personal and academic lives. Although, Gall, Evans and Bellerose (2000) and Wintre and Yaffe (2000) believed that some successfully make this transition to university. To Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson, and Strauss (2003), it is an exciting experience for some students while Wintre and Yaffe (2000) believed that it can be frustrating and overwhelming for many students. This may thereby lead to emotional maladjustment and depression to some students which has a way of affecting the students’ academic performance.

Adjustment is important in one’s life. Adjustment during the period of adolescence will determine to a larger extent what one would be as a person and as an adult. Fabian (2000) revealed...
that students exhibit different range of adjustment patterns associated with cooperation, initiating interaction and self-control. It does matter what the expectations are, nearly every student encounters challenging experiences or obstacles at the new environment. This implies that adjustment is a function of students’ experiences both inside and outside the school environment.

According to Raju and Rahamtulla (2007) adjustment is a process of maintaining harmonious relationships between a living organism and its environment. To Weiten and Lloyd (2003), adjustment is the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Also, Ugodulunwa and Anakwe (2012) described adjustment process as a way in which the individual attempts to deal with stress, tension, conflicts and meet his or her needs while making efforts at the same time to maintain harmonious relationships with the environment. Adeniyi (2014) summarized the adjustment to mean the patterns or ways by which individuals adapt or functions well in a new situation. This implies that the individual and the environment are two important factors in adjustment (Ugodulunwa and Anakwe 2012).

In the meantime, academic adjustment of undergraduates is not in isolation but it includes a connection between the student’s intellectual growth and the intellectual environment of the institution. Sax, Gilmartin, Keup, DiCrisi and Bryant (2000) defined academic adjustment as successfully understanding of what lecturers expect academically, developing effective study skills, adjusting to the academic demands of college and not feeling intimidated by lecturers. In their own view, Abdullah, Ellias, Mahyuddin and Uli (2009) described academic adjustment as how well students deal with educational demands. Thus, academic adjustment can be viewed as the individual student’s formal and informal relationships with the school. It is the individuals’ efforts at setting academic goals, completing academic requirements, the effectiveness of their efforts to meet these requirements, and their academic environment. Therefore, the students who have difficulty in adjusting well to school situations will not do well in their academics.

In recent years, there has been increased awareness by educators that variables other than academic ability may affect an individual’s adjustment to school. In the opinion of Santrock (2006), individuals are likely to react differently in different situations because of the distinctive thoughts, emotions and behaviours that mark the way an individual adapts to this world. It is therefore opined that academic adjustment of an individual is a function of several variables such as individual’s self-concept. Self-concept is more than how one feels about oneself; self-concept is more about one’s knowledge of oneself. Self-concept is viewed as the understanding one has about himself or what he believes about himself (Nwankwo 2010). Also, Weiten and Lloyd (2003) saw self-concept as a collection of beliefs about one’s own nature, unique qualities and typical behaviour. It is about what one knows about life from what one has learned. The way an individual perceives himself goes a long way to shape his behaviour patterns. It is the notion of how individuals feel, think and behave toward themselves. The image someone forms about himself therefore will describe his/her mental well-being and this will ultimately provide him/her an overall understanding about him or herself. In most cases, people behave in a manner which is consistent with the way they view themselves. It is more about what one knows about oneself. Having a strong and positive self-concept involves having the ability to know and understand oneself. A strong self-concept allows one to assess one’s values, strengths, weaknesses, and allows one to be able to calculate what parts of one’s life one needs to (or want to) improve. It is only when an individual is able to control himself that he will be able to tell the kind of person he wants to be.

According to Strage and Brandt (1999), self-concept can be classified into two major types which are positive self-concept and negative self-concept. The positive self-concept is about a circumstance or situation in which an individual is confident and sure of himself, have good interests, be objective and not too sensitive. This individual may accept the criticism from others and may be able to give views and opinions if the circumstances are not logical or rational. On the contrary, a negative self-concept is when an individual has too subjective nature. According to Azizi and Latiff (2005), this type of individual will always have no satisfaction, not happy, will easily sulk and be displeased. Such individuals are often criticized by their parents, teachers, friends or anyone around them. This will cause the individual concerned to have low confidence. This may result in the individual having inferiority complex, passive attitude, and generally not socialize with other students.

At present the development of self-concept among students is worrisome, as most students have negative self-concept and are so passive, which in turn affects their achievement in schools. Fischer (2009) ascertained that academic conditions in higher institutions of learning induce anxiety, a sense
of incapability and feeling of inferiority for many students and this feeling of inferiority is related to having a negative self-concept on the part of some of the students which hinders a successful academic adjustment. How a student behaves depends on his self-concept, which is about what he thinks of himself, including his strengths, weaknesses and personality type. He will use his self-concept while judging whether he will succeed or fail in his effort. Self-concept will also influence his expectations, dreams and actions.

Self-concept does not necessarily reflect the reality. Every person has some kind of perception of what he/she would be in future. This is why Woolfolk, Hughes, and Walkup, (2007) averred that self-concept comprised of a set of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes a person develops about him or herself. While corroborating this, Huitt (2004) believed that self-concept is the cognitive and intellectual aspect of ‘self’ which provides the person with an overall understanding about him or herself. The more the “ideal self” is in congruence with the actual self, the more satisfied the person would be. The failure to achieve the ideal concept leads to the social and psychological incompatibility. On the other hand, self-concept summarized to just what a person imagines about him/herself; it also includes the other’s judgment, real or unreal, especially coming from those present in one’s social environment.

Nasir and Lin (2012) believed that the individuals with positive self-concept have a higher social and emotional compatibility so they have the potentiality to make better progress. In the opinion of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), negative self-concept has a close correlation with vulnerability and depression. Those who have negative perception about themselves often show a lower efficiency and face problems to set up a close relationship with others.

According to the findings of Ybrandt (2008), there is close relationship between self-concept and psychological health of adolescents. For instance, Ybrandt (2008) opined that positive self-concept keeps the youth from the behaviour difficulties, but negative self-concept can lead to social isolation and hence depression. The summary of Ybrandt’s findings is that self-concept is a main factor in social relationship, peer relationship and compatibility with the life events and behavior problems.

Also, researchers are of the strong view that a good understanding of self, ability, self-efficacy, self-concept and being able to balance issues in the environment will enable a student achieve a good academic adjustment even in the face of most distracting factors in the school environment. For instance, Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993) found that whether or not students perceived themselves as adaptable to change and were able to adapt their social and academic skills to new situations and courses was also related to academic adjustment. Also, Cohorn and Giuliano (1999) and Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) found that a sense of self-confidence, enhanced in part by informal contacts with faculty, predicts academic adjustment and persistence.

Marsh (1993) attested that while there is a relationship between self-concept and academic achievement, general self-concept and non-academic self concepts are not related to academic achievement. Self-esteem is negatively correlated with loneliness, which, in turn, predicts student adjustment (McWhirter, 1997). Students who have difficulty meeting people and making new friends or who tended to cope with difficult situations by isolating themselves had more difficulty adjusting than those who were more social (Tinto, 1993).

Although these studies provide important information about the relationship between self-concept and academic adjustment, Most (nd) defined self-concept or self-esteem as a global construct and develop rather limited measurements to assess this variable. Research that uses a more sensitive instrument to assess self-concept is needed to determine the extent to which self-concept is an important predictor of academic adjustment. Moreover, most theorists agree that self-concept is multi-dimensional (Neemann & Harter, 1986). Few studies have treated self-concept as a complex construct, and explored the relationship between one or more specific domains of self-concept and academic adjustment.

In a study by Awan, Noureen and Naz, (2011), self-concept was seen as the general confidence that individuals felt about themselves and the levels of an individual’s self-concept predict the extent to which he or she was able to accomplish academic tasks successfully or unsuccessfully. They further argued that much of the earlier interest in the self-concept versus achievement relationship stemmed from the belief that academic self-concept had motivational functions and thus, changes in academic self-concept would lead to changes in subsequent academic achievement.
Consequent upon the above arguments, it is germane to ascertain the pattern of academic adjustment of university students in Ondo State, as well as the influence which the self-concept has on the academic adjustment of students. This therefore is the thrust of the paper.

**Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study were to:

a. ascertain the pattern of academic adjustment of university undergraduates in Ondo State;
b. investigate the prevalent self-concept among university undergraduates; and
c. determine the influence of self-concept on academic adjustment of university undergraduates.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the pattern of academic adjustment of university undergraduates in Ondo State?
2. What is the self-concept that is prevalent among university undergraduates?

**Hypothesis**

There is no significant influence of self-concept on academic adjustment of university undergraduates in Ondo State

**Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population consisted of all University undergraduates in Ondo State. The sample comprised 1,376 students selected using the multi-stage sampling technique. Three universities (One Federal, one State and one Private) were purposively selected based on ownership. From each university, two Faculties were selected using simple random sampling technique. Sixty undergraduates offering compulsory courses from Parts One to Four were selected using convenience sampling technique. Two adapted instruments titled “Academic Adjustment Inventory (AAI)” and “Self-Concept Questionnaire (SCQ)” were used to collect data for the study. The AAI was divided into two sections. Section A comprised items on demographic variables such as the name of school, part or level, sex and faculty. Section B comprised 25 items that sought information on the undergraduates’ academic adjustment. The instrument was adapted from the work of Ohuakanwa, Omeje and Eskay (2012). The original version of the instrument contained 21 items. Some of the items were reconstructed for easy understanding of the respondents. The respondents were required to respond to the items following a Four-Point Likert rating scale of “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” which were coded 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The internal consistency of the instrument was conducted on 80 undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Thus the reliability results yielded Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.83 and Guttman’s result of 0.72. The second instrument i.e. SCQ was adapted from the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS) which was modified by Fitts (1971). The original version contained 100 items but was reduced to 23 items. The instrument sought for information on the students’ self-concept. Respondents were also asked to respond to the items using a Four-Point Likert rating scale of “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree” and “Strongly Disagree” which were coded 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Also, the instrument was duly validated and reliability test was carried out. The results showed the Cronbach’s Alpha and Guttman’s Split-half reliability coefficients results of 0.89 and 0.86 in that order. The results authenticated the appropriateness of the instruments for the study. The data collected were analysed using percentages and Chi-square Statistical Method.

**Results**

**Research Question One:** What is the pattern of academic adjustment of university undergraduates in Ondo State?

The results in Table 1 showed the patterns of academic adjustment between male and female students across all the levels. From the Table, the results showed that 49% of the male students had poor adjustment as against 51% of the female students. It showed that 57% of the male possessed fair adjustment and 43% had fair adjustment. Further, it was shown that 55% of the male students had good adjustment pattern while 45% of the female had good adjustment pattern. The overall results revealed
that 48.4% of the respondents had good pattern of academic adjustment, 26.9% had fair pattern of academic adjustment while the remaining 24.7% of the respondents had poor pattern of academic adjustment. From the results above, it can be concluded that most sampled university undergraduates demonstrated good pattern of academic adjustment.

Table 1: Showing Simple Percentage Analysis of Patterns of Academic Adjustment of University Undergraduates in Ondo State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Poor Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Fair Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Good Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68 (20%)</td>
<td>26 (7%)</td>
<td>33 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51 (15%)</td>
<td>48 (13%)</td>
<td>73 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27 (8%)</td>
<td>59 (16%)</td>
<td>113 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20 (6%)</td>
<td>78 (21%)</td>
<td>147 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>167 (49%)</td>
<td>211 (57%)</td>
<td>366 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78 (23%)</td>
<td>11 (3%)</td>
<td>20 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>58 (17%)</td>
<td>33 (9%)</td>
<td>53 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24 (7%)</td>
<td>41 (11%)</td>
<td>100 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14 (4%)</td>
<td>74 (20%)</td>
<td>127 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>173 (51%)</td>
<td>159 (43%)</td>
<td>300 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Total (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>340 (24.7%)</td>
<td>370 (26.9%)</td>
<td>666 (48.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Two: What is the self-concept that is prevalent among university undergraduates in Ondo State?

Table 2: Showing Simple Percentage Analysis of Self-Concept Prevalent among University Undergraduates in Ondo State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of self-concept</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above showed that 55.2% of the undergraduates possessed positive self-concept while the remaining 44.8% possessed negative self-concept. This result showed that most of the undergraduate students in Ondo State possessed positive self-concept.

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant influence of self-concept on academic adjustment of university undergraduates in Ondo State.

Table 3: Chi-square test of the influence of self-concept on academic adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-concept</th>
<th>Academic Adjustment</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results in Table 3 revealed that respondents with positive self-concept (55.2%) were better adjusted academically than those with the negative self-concept (44.8%). The chi-square value obtained is 56.300 at $p < 0.05$. This means that there is significant influence between independent and dependent variables. Hence, the null hypothesis which was stated that there is no significant influence...
of self-concept on academic adjustment of the undergraduates was rejected.

Discussion

The findings from the above have revealed that quite a number of undergraduate students in Ondo State demonstrated good academic adjustment. Although it was also revealed that few of them demonstrated fair adjustment pattern as it has been established by Fabian (2000), that students exhibited different range of adjustment patterns. Still it could be concluded that most students demonstrated good adjustment pattern. The inference from the above findings was that a considerable number of students try to demonstrate resilience no matter what circumstances they faced in their new environment. Apart from this, it was also made possible for some students (Pre-degree and Direct Entrants) to adjust fast to the new university academic activities because of their pre-knowledge. In fact, this was established in Oluwafemi (2015)’s study that those students who got admission into the university through pre-degree and direct modes did adjust fast and better than the university students who were admitted through University Matriculation Examination.

Also, the findings revealed that most undergraduate students in Ondo State possessed positive self-concept. Another major finding of this study was that the prevalent level of self-concept among the university undergraduates was positive self-concept. From the above, the findings had provided the clear evidence that most undergraduates in the study area possessed the positive self-concept. It was believed that good understanding of self, ability, self-efficacy, self-concept and being able to balance issues in the environment would enable students achieve good academic adjustment, Holmbeck and Wandrei (1993). That is why the findings supported Sharifah (1998)’s previous study that majority of students had positive self-concept. Thus, findings confirmed the existed relationship between self-concept and students' academic adjustment.

Finally, the results revealed that there was a significant influence of self-concept on academic adjustment of university undergraduates. In essence, a significant influence could be attached to the self-concept of an individual when assessing the way he adjusts to situations. The findings of the study showed that on the whole, majority of students had positive self-concept. The findings corroborated Azizi et. al (2005) and Awan et. al (2011) that those who had positive self-concept usually adjusted well to the new university experiences. Also, Areta (2009) observed that prevailing problems of students like dropping out of school and negative attitude towards teachers, peers and adjustment in school were often due to the negative self-concept. It was established that self-concept is the cognitive and intellectual aspect of self. Therefore, it was possible for the students with positive self-concept to quickly develop positive feelings, attitudes and awareness towards the new university situations.

1. Conclusion/ Recommendation

Arising from the above findings, it can thus be concluded that most of the university undergraduates in Ondo State had good pattern of academic adjustment and this had predisposed them to cope well in their studies. Besides, it can also be concluded that the level of self-concept of an individual greatly determined his adjustment pattern in the school. In view of the above, it is recommended that the students should be sensitized and made to participate in activities that will increase their awareness and ability to adjust satisfactorily when faced with challenges that are peculiar to academic activities. To help them in this direction, university authorities may need to organize a well-packaged orientation programme to sensitize the new students about the academic tasks ahead of them. Apart from this, constant colloquium with students will help keep them abreast of the situations in the university. Lastly, organizing and encouraging students to participate in the various co-curricular activities will be of immense benefit for students to familiarize them quickly with the new university experiences.

References


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