
Relationships among School Adjustment, Dispositional Optimism and Academic Achievement between Male and female Undergraduate Students in North West Zone, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This research assessed the gender influence among school adjustment, dispositional optimism and academic achievement of undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria. The design used for this study was triangulation research design, which is a combination of correlation survey and ex-post facto. The population of the study consisted of 14,756 undergraduate students Out of which 378 subjects were sampled guided by Krejcie & Morgan, (1970) sampling procedure, consisting both male and female students. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics of means and standard deviation respectively. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMr) was used and tested hypotheses 1 - 3. Moreover, independent t-test was used and analysed the differences in hypotheses 4 and 5. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 22.0 was used and hypotheses formulated were tested using 0.05 level of significance. The finding/conclusion showed that, there were no gender influence among school adjustment, dispositional optimism and academic achievement. The results further revealed that, there were no differences in school adjustment and dispositional optimism between male and female students. The study recommended that, parents, teachers, school administrators, private agencies and government at large, should help students to increase school adjustment and develop dispositional optimism equally, irrespective of male or female students. This could be achieved through training, counseling, teaching, seminars, journals, workshops and educational policies.

Keywords: School Adjustment, Dispositional Optimism and Academic Achievement

INTRODUCTION

Academic achievement of undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria in recent times has been on the downward trend. Therefore doing well among undergraduate students remains a challenge among researchers, teachers, parents, university administrators and government at large towards ensuring and achieving the realization of the stated objectives of university education in Nigerian National Policy on Education. Quite disheartening is the fact that, student's negative feelings and failure to adjust to the university environment is still a persistent problem facing education. Today undergraduate students are facing difficulty in adjustment with the university environment. Some students look forward to university, eager to experience more freedom and adventure. Others may be enthusiastic initially, but then discover that the experiences fall short of their expectations when they don't feel happy, comfortable, or secured in their new environment. Still others know that leaving home will be difficult and therefore dread the thought of leaving for university.

It is important to note that, if undergraduate students cannot effectively learn and consequently perform poorly academically, it will be difficult to achieve the Federal Government of Nigeria National Policy on Education (2004) as relates to the objectives of the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria, as spelt out in section 1(8) of the policy. It should be noted that, undergraduate students in their peculiar circumstances may likely be exposed to various kinds of academic and psychological traits that may likely hindered their academic achievement. Some of these psychological challenges may include problems with school adjustment and dispositional optimism among others which may hamper the possibility of achieving the aforementioned goals and philosophy of education in Nigeria. No matter what, most of the undergraduate students encountered obstacles they did not anticipate during the transition to university. It remains a challenge for the students on how to adjust to university life and its academic activities.

The psychological traits and negative feeling of pessimist behaviours among undergraduate students may make university students to become anxious to achieve success in their academic outcome at all cost, and this may lead to various examination malpractices. In this case, the students may become more impatience, lack confidence in their studies, may not expect the best and easily

get upset. Therefore, the importance of the stated problem lies in the fact that if students fail to adjust adequately to university environment, maintain high level of dispositional optimism and becoming more satisfied with their academics are likely to drop out of the system. This may therefore affect the manpower development of the nation and particularly the education of the Nigerian youth especially in the North West Zone, Nigeria. It has been a debate over the years on the downfall of education in Nigeria of which majority of the researchers believe that education is falling down in Nigeria, especially in the North West Zone, Nigeria, as such motivated the researcher to investigate on the downfall of education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School adjustment is defined by Fara, Ghazali and Syeda (2013) as a behavioural process by which an individual maintains a balance among various needs that he encountered at a given point in time. Psychologically, school adjustment, refers to the behavioural process by which humans and other animals maintain equilibrium among their various needs or between their needs and the obstacles of their environments. In addition, Schunk, Pintrich and Meece (2010) mentioned that, school adjustment has been construed historically in terms of children's academic progress or achievement. On a broader level, we might think of adjustment as involving not only children's progress and achievement but also their attitudes toward university, anxieties, loneliness, social support, and academic motivation for example, engagement, avoidance and absences. Students' interaction with the university environment involves academic achievement, personal growth and accomplishments within the classroom. Christopher and Thurber (2012) maintained that, undergraduate students develop expectations about university long before they leave home. Some students look forward to university, eager to experience more freedom and adventure. Sangeeta (2012) opined that, with regard to school adjustment in universities today, many undergraduate students are facing contradictions and hence, facing difficulty in adjustment with university environment.

Dispositional optimism, on the other hand, in Scheier and Carver (1992) view, dispositional optimism is originated and derived from the Latin word 'optimum' meaning "best." Being optimistic, in the typical sense of the word, ultimately means one expects the best possible outcome from any given

situation. In other words, dispositional optimism is a tendency to expect good things in the futures. Optimistic students are positive about events in daily life, which is usually referred to in psychology as dispositional optimism. Scheier, carver, and Bridge (2000) in other words, believed that, it is not important why people expect good things to happen in their lives (e.g. having good luck, being favoured by God and working hard) but, what is important is the generalized optimistic orientation itself, which is a tendency of an individual to hold generalized positive expectancies even when people are confronted with adversity or difficulty in their lives, by feeling and keeping hopeful in their life. Segerstrom (2010) believed that, the future holds positive, rather than negative events or an outcome, which accompanies a number of adaptive psychological qualities, is termed to be dispositional optimism; individuals who hold positive expectations for the future are assumed to believe that good things will occur in their lives, and tend to see the desired outcomes as attainable and to persist in their goal-directed efforts. When students become more optimistic, would likely have less psychological distress, even when things do not go right in their way. They cope with stressors more actively and more adaptively and thus, makes students perform better in university. Students who are more optimistic are more likely to have more academic success as measured by GPA.

Academic achievement is defined by Ebenuwa (2010) as student's examination or GPA (Grade point average) at the end of a particular semester or programme. It could also be seen as the level of achievement in a particular field of study. Higher scores indicate better academic achievement. In addition, Joseph (2013) believes that, in the past, academic achievement was often measured more by interview. Teachers' observations made up the bulk of the assessment, and today's summation, or numerical, method of determining how well a student is performing. Grading systems came into existence in America in the late Victorian period. Aduwa (2004) reported that on determinants of students' academic success, a student's home environment, their cognitive abilities, self-esteem, self-concept, study habits and motivation affect their academic success. Postsecondary institutions, weak academic achievement and high dropout rates remain persistent problems among undergraduates. Academic achievement is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate your knowledge verbally or on paper. Ugoji (2008) the concept of academic achievement has become a source of concern to

researchers, especially as the academic achievement of the undergraduates is declining. The Nigerian society places great emphasis on education because it is believed to be the only avenue for national development.

Differences of school adjustment by male and female from the reading of literatures revealed that, there is no significant different in school adjustment with regard to male and female. Wing, Agak and Ayere (2011) found no significant difference between male and female in school adjustment. Mahesh and Kaji (2014) also revealed that there is no significant different in school adjustment between male and female. Therefore adjustment of student in university is independent of their male or female student. While Bilal, Habis and Fadi (2012) maintained that on the degree of student adjustment to university, found that there is no statistically significant difference of adjustment to university student by male or female. Similarly, some studies from the reading of literature found no significant different in dispositional optimism by male and female. Shruti and Sunita (2014) believe that, there is no significant different in dispositional optimism across male and female. In addition, Christopher (2014) in his study found that, there is no male or female different in dispositional optimism. Arna (2013) also found no significant effect of dispositional optimism by male or female. Vinayak, Honmore and Jadhar (2015) reviewed and found the absence male and female different in optimistic attitude among students. Singh and Dhyers (2013), Singh and Mishra: 2014, Husnain, Wazid and Hassan: 2014 believe that, one of the important attitudinal disposition of well-being is optimistic attitude and found no significant male and female difference in students' dispositional optimism.

The theoretical framework of this study lies on the Etiological model of adjustment by Stoeber (2001) which examined the causal pathways between variables correlated with school adjustment on academic achievement. This is multi-determined with a number of contributing influences, including university factors, personality factors, family factors, and environmental factors. Academic achievement was predicted by a combination of university factors and school adjustment. Similarly, the dispositional optimism theory used in this study is the self-regulation model of behaviour propounded by Carver and Scheier (1981, 1998). The theory suggested that actions are greatly influenced by expectations about their consequences. The expectations are thus

the element through which dispositional optimism is linked to the model, and it helps in connecting dispositional optimism to a broader context of behaviours and emotions. In addition, the academic achievement theory of this study would be modelled on Educational Productivity theory by Walberg (1981). The theory assumes that, nine factors affect academic achievement, or three groups of nine factors based on affective, cognitive and behavioural skills for optimization of learning that affect the quality of academic achievement.

Research Hypotheses

On the basis of the research questions, five (5) hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of this study.

1. There is no significant relationship between school adjustment and academic achievement among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between dispositional optimism and academic achievement among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant relationship between school adjustment and dispositional optimism among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria
4. There is no significant difference in school adjustment between male and female undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria.
5. There is no significant difference in dispositional optimism between male and female undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria.

Research Design

The design used for this study was triangulation research design, combining correlation survey and ex-post factor. The correlation survey design was used in the course of this study to test the relationship and ex-post factor was used as a treatment by natural selection rather than by manipulation. While the correlation survey design was used to determine the nature and the strength of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The ex-post factor design was used in this study to test the differences in school adjustment and dispositional optimism, between male and female.

Population/Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population of this study consisted of total number of 14,756 undergraduate students in 200 levels, 2014/2015 academic session from faculties of Arts and Sciences only. These included all the 16 conventional universities from the 7 states in North West Zone, Nigeria (University IMS/Faculty records; 2014). The sampled subjects of this study consisted of a total number of 378 respondents, from the selected universities. The sampling selection was also guided by the sample table developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

Research Instruments

In this study, 2 sets of measuring instruments were used. School adjustment Scale by Baker (2013) was adopted to measure school adjustment. The dispositional optimism scale by Scheier and Carver (1985) was adopted to measure dispositional optimism in this study.

Validity of the Research Instrument

To establish the validity of the instrument, experts have done the checking of the quality of the instruments. As such both face and content validity of the instruments were validated by experts and lecturers in the field of Educational Psychology and Health education, in the Departments of Educational Psychology and Counselling as well as Department of Physical and Health Education, A.B.U. Zaria, respectively. They recommended that, the instrument can be adopted for the purpose of this investigation. The study supervisors of this thesis have also ascertained the authenticity as a standardized instrument.

Reliability of the Research Instrument

A pilot study was conducted to further ascertain the reliability of the school adjustment scale and dispositional optimism scale. The reliability estimate of the instruments obtained was 0.89 or 89% and 0.82 or 82% for school adjustment scale and dispositional optimism scale respectively, by adopting Spearman Brown's formula of $\frac{1+r}{2r}$, where r stands for the Guttman split half correlation coefficients.

Procedures for Data Analysis

The data collected was organised and analysed by the used of simple percentage, descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation and analysed

the demographic data of the respondents. Pearson product moment correlation (PPMr) was used and tested hypotheses 1 – 3. Moreover, independent t-test was used to analyse the differences from hypotheses 4 and 5. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) 22.0 was used and analysed the data at 0.05 level of significance.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

HO 1: There is no significant gender relationship school adjustment and academic achievement among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria

Table 4.2.1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between School Adjustment and Academic Achievement

Variable		N	Mean	SD	Df	r	p. Value
School Adjustment	Score	378	66.042	9.772	376	.804	.000
Academic Achievement	Score	378	3.012.896				

** Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

The analysis of Pearson Product Moment Correlation presented in table above, revealed a correlation of (r)= 0.804 p. which is significant at 0.05, is a high positive correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The decision here is that, the HO 1 is rejected. This means that, there is significant relationship between school adjustment and academic achievement. This implies that the higher the school adjustment the higher the academic achievement of students.

HO 2: There is no significant relationship between dispositional optimism and academic achievement among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria.

Table 4.2.2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation between dispositional optimism and Academic Achievement

Variable		N	Mean	SD	Df	r	p. Value
Dispositional optimism	Score	378	38.005	4.815	376	.710	.000
Academic Achievement	Score	378	3.012.896				

** Correlation(r) is significant at 0.05

The analysis of this table shows that, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed a correlation of (r) = 0.710 p. which is significant at 0.05, is a high

positive correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The decision here is that, the HO 2 is rejected. This means that, there is significant relationship between dispositional optimism and academic achievement. This implies that the higher the dispositional optimism the higher the academic achievement of students.

HO 3: There is no significant relationship between School Adjustment and Dispositional Optimism among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria.

Table 4.2.3 Pearson Product Moment Correlation between School Adjustment and Dispositional Optimism

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Df	r	p. Value
School Adjustment Score	378	66.42	9.772	376	.593	.000
Dispositional Optimism Score	378	38.05	4.815			

** Correlation(r) = 0.593 is significant at 0.05 level

The analysis of Pearson Product Moment Correlation presented in table above, revealed a correlation of (r) = 0.593 p. < 0.05, which is a high positive correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The decision here is that, the HO 3 is rejected. This means that, there is significant relationship between school adjustment and dispositional optimism. This implies that the higher the school adjustment the high the dispositional optimism of students.

HO 4: There is no significant difference in school adjustment between male and female undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria

Table 4.2.4: Independent t- test for School Adjustment between Male and Female

Variable	Status	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p. Value
School Adjustment Score	Male	179	66.086	9.717	376	.824	.410
	Female	199	66.003	9.828			

**t (376) = 1.960 ≤ 0.05

The above independent t-test table revealed that, there is no significant difference in school adjustment between male and female. The t calculated = .824 ≤ 1.960 t Crit. at 376 df. Based on the obtained data, the mean difference of school adjustment score of both male (M = 66.86) and female (M = 66.03) undergraduate students was insufficient to reject the null hypothesis. This is

not significant at 0.05. The decision here is that, the HO 4 is retained and this implies that, there is no significant difference in school adjustment between male and female students.

HO 5: There is no significant difference in dispositional optimism between male and female undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria

Table 4.2.5: Independent t-test for Dispositional Optimism between Male and Female

Variable	Status	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p. Value
Dispositional optimism Score	Male	179	38.038	4.811	376	1.274	.204
	Female	199	37.075	4.810			

**t (376) = 1.960 ≤ 0.05

Information from the table above, on dispositional optimism between male and female, that, t calculated = 1.274 ≤ 1.96 t Crit. at 376 df. Based on the obtained data, the mean difference of school dispositional optimism score of both male (M = 38.38) and female (M = 37.75) students was insufficient to reject the null hypothesis. This is not significant at 0.05. The decision here is that, the HO 5 is retained and this implies that, there is no significant difference in dispositional optimism between male and female students.

Major Findings of the Study

1. HO 1 shows a high positive correlation between school adjustment and academic achievement of students, since the correlation (r) = 0.804 and p. ≤ 0.05 level of significant. This means the higher the school adjustment, the higher the academic achievement.
2. HO 2 shows a high positive correlation between dispositional optimism and Academic achievement of students, since the correlation (r) = 0.710 and p. ≤ 0.05 level of significant. This means the higher the dispositional optimism the higher the academic achievement.
3. HO 3 shows a higher positive correlation between school adjustment and dispositional optimism, since the correlation of (r) = 0.593 and p. ≤ 0.05. This means the higher the school adjustment, the higher the dispositional optimism of students.

4. HO 4 indicates that, there is no difference in school adjustment between male and female, since $t \text{ calculated} = .824 \leq 1.960 t \text{ Crit. at } 376 \text{ df.}$
5. HO 5 revealed that, there is no difference in dispositional optimism between male and female, since $t \text{ calculated} = 1.274 \leq 1.960 t \text{ Crit. at } 376 \text{ df.}$

Contributions to Knowledge

1. There are significant relationship among school adjustment, dispositional optimism and academic achievement.
2. There is no difference in school adjustment between male and female students.
3. There is no difference in dispositional optimism between male and female students.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that, school adjustment, dispositional optimism and academic achievement are related to each other, among undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria. As well, there is no difference of school adjustment and dispositional optimism with regard to male or female. The study further concludes that, the higher the school adjustment and dispositional optimism, the higher the academic achievement among male and female student. As well as, the higher the school adjustment, the higher the dispositional optimism and the higher the academic achievement among male and female undergraduate students in North West Zone, Nigeria

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made as follows that, Parents, teachers, school administrators, private agencies and government at large, should therefore help students through training, counselling, teaching, seminars, workshops and educational policies to;

1. Increase school adjustment for high academic achievement.
2. Develop dispositional optimism for high academic achievement.
3. Increase school adjustment for high dispositional optimism.
4. Increase school adjustment equally irrespective gender.
5. Develop dispositional optimism equally irrespective of gender.

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