Full Length Research

Psychological factors as correlates of undergraduates students' academic performance in Educational Psychology, Gombe State University

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ABSTRACT: This study examined psychological factors as correlates of students' academic performance in Education Psychology (EDUC 203) at Gombe State University. The study adopted a correlation design. The population used for this study was level two undergraduate students with a total of 781 students. Purposive sampling was used where the whole population was used as sample since the population was accessible in the exams office. Two hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The instrument used for this study was psychological factors scale. It has face, content and constructs validity. It was also reliable with obtaining the alpha value of 0.668 for academic engagement and 0.781 for social engagement. The result revealed that there is significant relationship between academic engagement and performance of students in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203). It was also a significant correlation between social engagement and students' academic performance in Educational Psychology. Based on the findings, it was concluded that there is significant relationship between academic engagement, social engagement and students' academic performance in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203). The study therefore recommend that lecturers should invariably engaged students academically and socially in their studies so as to improve their academic performance.

Keywords: Academic engagement, academic performance, social engagement, students.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of poor academic performance of undergraduate students in Nigeria has become a source of concern to all and sundry. There are a lot of complaints from the students and some members of staff in the Faculty of Education, Gombe State University concerning the failure of students in Educational Psychology course (EDUC 203). Some students blame the course lecturers for their failure in the course. It is common to hear from students saying "Mr. so and so fail me but when they pass no one will hear Mr. so and so pass me". Year in year out, students are afraid of Educational Psychology course. The course was placed and offered in the first semester of each session for level two students. Over the years students

complaints bitterly concerning their failure in the course, for instance in 2017/2018 session 25% of students who took the course failed. In 2018/2019 academic session 30% of students failed the course and recently result of first semester of last academic session (2019/2020) showed that 40% of level two students failed the course. This problem is perpetual for years and it is deems fit of investigation so as to provide a workable solution to the obvious existing problem.

Scrutiny of literature revealed that there are several psychological factors that are capable of influencing students' academic performance. These factors include but not limited to academic engagement and social

engagement (Huang, 2011; Paloş et al., 2011; Alhassan, 2011). These factors can be called as psychological factors. Studies by Moore et al. (2016) revealed that the main potent of the psychological factors in the prediction of students' academic performance are academic engagement and social engagement of students. They also found in their study that academic engagement and social engagement influenced students' academic performance.

With regard to academic engagement however, Huang (2011) sees academic engagement as the amount of intellectual effort that a student puts on in his/her academic life. Researchers consider academic engagement to be among the better predictors of learning and personal development. The idea is that the more students study or practice a subject, the more they tend to learn about it. The more they practice and get good feedback the more serious they become (Pike et al., 2003). Williams (2006) examined the relationship between academic course engagement and subsequent college performance over a 5 to 6 year period among 256 undergraduate students enrolled in a psychology course. Their finding indicated positive relationship between academic engagement and academic performance of students. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) found that students' academic engagement have a strong relationships with students' academic performance.

With respect to social engagement, Huang (2011) views social engagement as the connection that a student establishes with other students and the community. Social engagement influence a student's ability to communicate and work effectively with others. While this seems like something all students have mastered, it is often a skill set they need direct instruction to develop. A good place to start is by setting norms for speaking and listening in your classroom. Ideally, you should involve your students in the norm-setting process, but some non-negotiable should be: When someone speaks, provide them with your full attention; only one person should speak at a time and leave three seconds of quiet between when one person stops talking and the next person starts talking.

Roberts (2001) found a positive correlation between social engagement and academic performance for undergraduate students. Moore et al. (2016), Huang (2011), Valehzaghard et al. (2014) and Eduwem et al. (2017) found that there was a positive relationship between social engagement and academic performance.

Sharma et al. (2016) conducted a study on social engagement: their impact on academic achievement. Although the concept of social engagement is not very new, many scholars have just started to realize their important to life and have begun to study their role in the different aspects of the life of an individual. Social engagement are important because they allow an individual to interact in a well-accepted way in society. This enhances the quality of life by making relationships very strong and close, which in turn leads to sound psychological and physical health that helps students in better adjustments in schools and their peer groups. Social engagement are very necessary for good professional life. Strong social engagement help in facilitating interpersonal interactions which lead to efficient job outcomes. Social engagement are the basic need of an individual's personality traits and determine his/her success in life to a large extent (Huang, 2011).

Jeremy (2005) as cited in Yang (2014) conducted a study on the relationship between social engagement and learning behaviour to academic achievement in a low–income urban elementary school population. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social engagement and the academic achievement of the children who attend a low-income urban elementary school in Baltimore, Maryland. The resulting model comparison indicated that social engagement has direct effects on academic achievement.

Based on this contextual background, this study investigates the relationship between the psychological factors (academic engagement and social engagement) and the academic performance of undergraduate students of education taking Educational Psychology course in Gombe State University.

Hypotheses

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following null hypotheses were raised:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between academic engagement and students' academic performance in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203).
H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between social engagement and students' academic performance in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203).

METHODOLOGY

A correlation design was used for this study. The study focused only on education students offering Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education, Gombe State University who took the course for the first semester of 2019/2020 academic session with a total population of 781 students. A purposive sampling technique was used. The researcher used the whole population (781) as sample since the population already exist and accessible.

To collect data for this study, psychological factors scale developed by Huang (2011) was used. Academic performance of the students was assessed using their first semester examination scores in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203) for 2019/2020 academic session. The Huang (2011) psychological factors scale measures psychological factors namely academic engagement and social engagement. Each targeted psychological factors

Table 1. Result of Pearson correlation between academic engagement and academic performance.

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	r	p	Remark
Academic engagement	781	15.74	3.81	0.760	0.000	Rejected
Academic performance	781	31.20	6.67			

Table 2. Result of Pearson correlation between social engagement and academic performance.

Variables	N	Mean	S.D	r	p	Remark
Social engagement	781	15.46	4.51	0.835	0.000	Rejected
Academic performance	781	31.20	6.67			

dimension has eight items on a 5 point Likert scale thus, a total of 16 items constituted the psychological factors scale. In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the researcher and other educational researchers established face/content validity, wording simplicity, and scale precision. The researcher conducted confirmatory factor analysis on a small sample of 50 subjects that were not included in the final study. A correlation matrix was used in checking item by item correlation of the subscale of the psychological factors scale and it was found that all the items were significant for used. The decision of the sample size for pilot study was based on the suggestion by Bell et al. (2018) that sample size for pilot study should be between 10 to 15% and this study used 10% of the sample population. The Cronbach alpha coefficient index of internal consistency of academic engagement was 0.668, and social engagement was 0.781. The overall alpha index of 0.971 was found for the internal consistency of the instrument which shows that the instrument is reliable.

The instruments was administered to the respondents by the researcher and two research assistants during the second semester of the 2019/2020 academic session. The data collected for this study were statistically analyzed using SPSS. The parametric test of Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses.

RESULTS

The result in Table 1 revealed that there is significant relationship between academic engagement and academic performance among undergraduate students of education taking Educational Psychology at Gombe State University. From Table 1, the correlation value of r = 0.760 represents the correlation between academic engagement and academic performance while the p-value of p = 0.000 represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value (r = 0.760, p = 0.000, p < 0.05), a statistically significant relationship exist between academic engagement and undergraduate students academic performance in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203).

Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected.

The result in Table 2 revealed that there is significant relationship between social engagement and academic performance among undergraduate students of education taking Educational Psychology at Gombe State University. From Table 2, the correlation value of r = 0.835 represents the correlation between social engagement and academic performance while the p-value of p = 0.000 represents the significance level. Based on the obtained correlation value (r = 0.835, p = 0.000, p < 0.05), a statistically significant relationship exist between social engagement and undergraduate students academic performance in Educational Psychology (EDUC 203). Based on the obtained result, the stated null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The results in Table 1 revealed that there is significant relationship between academic engagement and academic performance of students in Educational Psychology. This finding is in line with that of Moore et al. (2016), Tenaw (2013) and Huang (2011) whom in their separate studies found a significant relationship between academic engagement and academic performance of students. It is also in tandem with the study findings of Pike et al. (2003) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) who in their separate studies found significant relationship between academic engagement and academic performance of students.

Table 2 also revealed significant relationship between social engagement and student academic performance. This finding is in consistent with that of Robert (2001), Moore et al. (2016), Tenaw (2013) and Huang (2011) who in their separate studies found strong relationship between social engagement and students' academic performance. It is also in consistent with the finding of Sharma et al. (2005) who in their theoretical study found that social engagement is very important psychological variable that enhance students' academic performance at all levels of education. The study is also in line with that of Jeremy

(2005) as cited in Yang (2014) who found significant relationship between social engagement and academic performance of students. This implies that psychological factors of academic engagement and social engagement have effect on students' academic performance in Educational Psychology

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that academic engagement and social engagement have strong relationship with students' academic performance in Educational Psychology in Gombe State University.

Recommendations

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

1. Since academic engagement has relationship with students' academic performance lecturers should invariably engaged students academically in their studies so as to improve their academic performance.
2. Since social engagement has significant relationship with students' academic performance. Lecturers should emphasize to their students about the importance of social engagement and let them engaged themselves socially so as to improve their academic performance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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