INFLUENCE OF COPING VALUES AND STRATEGIES ON ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

A significant number of Nigerian pupils are not meeting the expected academic standards. This may be attributed to several things, including coping values and methods. This research examined how coping values and techniques affect the academic adaptation of university students in Nasarawa State. This research used a descriptive survey approach. The research included a population of 29,252 undergraduate students located in Nasarawa State. The study's sample consisted of 360 undergraduate students. The data collecting tool used was a researcher-developed questionnaire called the Coping Values, Strategies, and Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (CVSAAQ). The instrument produced a consensus validity index of 0.87 for CVSS and 0.82 for AAS, respectively. The instrument's dependability was confirmed with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.88. The study questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at a significance level of 0.05. The findings revealed that the social skills coping value and strategy have a substantial impact on the academic adjustment of university students in Nasarawa State. The researcher suggested that counseling psychologists could aid university students in managing their social environment by offering guidance on establishing effective study groups and fostering positive peer connections.

Keywords: Coping, values, strategies, academic adjustment, university students.

Introduction

To build and change any country into an economy that can compete on a global scale, education is important. When it comes to developing a country, technology and scientific progress are paramount, and it has always been and will continue to be the most effective tool for social

transformation. According to Bolu-steve and Esere (2017), education is important because it helps people develop their intellectual and functional capabilities. They also note that students gain competencies for different jobs at university, and that their adjustment is a good indicator of how much they have learned.

Improving students' character and conduct is one of education's primary goals. The purpose of higher learning in Nigeria is to provide students with a well-rounded education that includes academic achievement. The curriculum is only one of many factors that contribute to a child's growth and development. Students' academic adjustment demands should be met with logistic growth and the development of their personality traits and other aspects of adjustment in the classroom. Denga (2015) states that...

Students engage in academic adjustment when they learn to manage their emotions and study in a way that yields good grades. Adapting to college life, according to Pascarella and Terenzini (2019), requires both a period of de-socialization and a period of socialization. In reaction to one's experiences at university, one may dis-socialize, or abandon, some of the values, beliefs, and characteristics that one brought with them. When one attends college, they are exposed to a wide range of new ideas, values, attitudes, and viewpoints, which may lead to a process of socialization. As a student, you are also undergoing the process of becoming an integral part of the university's culture, values, and standards of conduct. Students' participation in a variety of university-related activities and their ability to use what they have learned to solve their own issues are further indicators of academic adjustment (Blumeke, Olsen and Suhl, 2016). University education is emphasized as a crucial stepping stone in students' educational journey. Academic adjustment is significant because it is significantly associated with favorable results in academics, the fundamental value of education, and it might also indicate the degree to which a student has achieved their short- or long-term educational objectives.

If a student is making progress in a particular subject area, we say that he or she is academically adjusted if and only if they are gaining the skills and information that their teachers have promised them. Academic adjustment is all about how well you do in school. Therefore, it shows how far a person has come in achieving the objectives that were the main emphasis of classroom activities. It is best seen as a multi-faceted construct that incorporates several areas of learning since it encompasses the learners' multi-faceted talents. Consequently, it is predicted that one would see the indicator used to quantify academic adjustment when defining it (Denga, 2015).

The individual's general intelligence, adjustment motivation, recognition, interest, attitude, aptitude, personality, etc. all have a role in determining the indicator used to quantify academic adjustment. Education, according to Suvarna and Ganesha (2015), should aim to reform all of its domains in order to accomplish this. Taking this into consideration, efforts to better students' academic adjustment are fundamental to the educational system.

Students' coping strategies are another factor that could influence their academic adjustment. In the 1940s and 1950s, the field of psychology was the first to propose the idea of

coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1948) in Goldman's 2022 edition. Defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1948) in Goldman (2022) as "...constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of that person," coping is a core concept in the field. Adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms exist. One example of a maladaptive coping mechanism is the avoidant coping strategy. By avoiding both the issue and the unpleasant emotions that come with it, people who use avoidant coping strategies are attempting to alleviate their distress. When people use avoidant coping strategies, they continue to deny that they have a problem. An individual's surroundings or circumstance is constantly being assessed and re-assessed as part of the stated stage-wise process of coping. Then, in Goldman (2022), Lazarus and Folkman detail the particular elements that affect a person's capacity to cope. Some are called "coping resources" and they might be seen as aspects that keep us safe. Social support, problem-solving abilities, optimistic views, physical health, and mental acuity are all protective factors. Contrarily, we may also refer to "constraints against coping resources" as risk factors. Cultural norms and ideals about emotions and behaviors, environmental limitations like monetary resources, and the degree of danger are all examples of risk factors. A person's coping style is their typical approach to dealing with stressful situations. The basic idea behind coping style was to look at how people's thoughts and actions connected to coping changed over time or in different contexts.

Students' academic adjustment may be impacted by their social skills, which are coping mechanisms. One way that students deal with stress is by reaching out to their school community for emotional or practical help. This strategy is called social coping or support-seeking. The strength of one's connections with others depends, in large part, on one's social coping abilities. Higher education has not yet addressed the pressing need to foster students' social competency by instituting structured pedagogical practices that do so (Ramos, Costa, & Feitosa, 2017). The research, however, demonstrates that in order to perform professionally to one's fullest, one must combine the domains of competence (knowledge, abilities, and attitudes) with a solid repertoire of social skills. One way to look at social skills is as a set of diverse behaviors that people use while interacting with others.

One such factor that could influence how well children adapt to school is their approach to problem solving. Ranjbar, Bayani, and Bayani (2013) state that students' mental health impacts their problem-solving abilities, which in turn impacts their academic performance. The ability of psychology students to resolve difficulties and disagreements has received less attention in the field. The ability to solve problems effectively is characterized by a metacognitive process that begins with understanding the problem's nature and continues with the identification of effective solutions to alter the circumstance or one's reaction to it, so adjusting the negative emotions that are evoked. During this mental exercise, participants build a toolbox of efficient replies and learn how to gather pertinent data about their behavior (Monteiro & Soares, 2016). A descriptive correlational research was conducted to validate the association between undergraduates' mental

health and their problem-solving abilities in response to students' reflections on these skills (Ranjbar, Bayani,&Bayani,2013). Various coping techniques have been classified in the past. In Goldman (2022), for instance, Lazarus and Folkman distinguish between problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Reframing an event that created emotional pain or minimizing emotional distress are common components of emotion-focused coping strategies. Emotionally oriented coping may include behaviors like minimizing, making positive comparisons, or seeking the positive aspects in unfavorable situations. Optimism and hopefulness in the face of adversity are the aims of emotion-focused coping strategies. Instead than avoiding feelings, problem-focused coping techniques aim to solve problems. One kind of active coping is issue-focused coping, in which the person takes part in deliberate actions meant to counteract the negative impact of the problem or incident. When a person feels like they can influence the result, they are more likely to adopt problem-focused coping strategies.

When students experience emotional anguish due to the anticipation or knowledge of academic failure, they may be coping with academic stress. Because of the rigorous academic and professional standards, long course requirements, frequent and challenging tests, and the inherent worry and stress that comes from not knowing whether or not they will pass, higher education is among the most stressful areas of study. Academic performance and mental health are both impacted by students' capacity to manage the growing number of expectations placed on them by higher education. There is some good in dealing with stress and worry; it may help with schoolwork. On the other side, pupils' cognitive functioning and learning ability in the classroom may suffer if they are subjected to higher amounts of stress. In order to manage stress and avoid mental health issues, coping is a crucial skill.

The impact of coping mechanisms on academic adjustment has received very little research focus. Considering the rising tide of students, the intensity of their rivalry, and the significance of completing a degree program to one's satisfaction, both academically and emotionally, this is a topic that is gaining more and more attention. There are various approaches to coping that people take. One focus is on the problem, which means trying to change the situation that caused the stress. Another is on the emotion, which means trying to control one's emotional state. Lastly, there's the social support style, which involves other people's support and expects solutions that aren't dependent on the individual's actions (Santos, 2016). And the quality of life the person experiences may change depending on how they deal with stress. When asked to rate their own problem-solving abilities, male and female students often provide different answers. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine how academic adjustment is affected by coping values and tactics among Nasarawa State university students.

Statement of the Problem

The trend and rise in coping values and methods had a significant impact on students' social and academic adjustment across all levels. Researchers in Nasarawa State have paid insufficient attention to the impact of coping values and tactics on adjustment among university students. Students' beliefs and methods, such as their ability to solve problems and interact with others, may have an impact on their academic adjustment, according to the study. In addition to being a tremendous asset to the national economy via the development of human capital, students serve as guardians and transmitters of society's fundamental values (knowledge) from one generation to the next, even those who have not yet been born. Therefore, students may have stress and adjustment issues due to a lack of coping mechanisms, such as social and problem-solving abilities, adequate university housing, a heavy course load, and poorly equipped labs. Violence and campus militancy of various kinds may sometimes emerge from students' lack of coping values and methods. Another significant void in the literature was filled by this investigation. While most research looked at how coping mechanisms affected mental health, this one looked at how kids adjusted to school. So, the question is, is it fair to say that college students' lack of coping values and techniques contributes to their academic success and maladjustment? Consequently, the researcher felt compelled to study how academic adjustment is affected by coping values and techniques among Nasarawa State university students.

Purpose of the Study

University students in Nasarawa State were the subjects of this study because the researchers wanted to know how their coping principles and practices affected their academic adjustment. In particular, the research plans to:

1. Find out how university students in Nasarawa State cope with social situations and how it affects their academic adjustment.
2. Determine the effect of problem-solving skills as a coping mechanism on the academic adjustment of Nasarawa State university students.

Research Questions

From the foregoing, this research is designed to attempt an answer to these questions.

1. How do university students in Nasarawa State deal with social situations, and how does this affect their academic adjustment?
2. How does a coping technique that involves problem-solving affect the academic adjustment of Nasarawa State university students?

Research Hypotheses

At the 0.05 level of significance, the following hypotheses were evaluated for the research.

1. Nasarawa State university students' academic adjustment is unaffected by their social skills coping strategies.

2.   University students in Nasarawa State do not show any substantial impact of problem-solving abilities coping strategies on their academic adjustment.

Methodology

The researchers in this study used a descriptive survey approach. "That which is directed towards determining the nature of situation as it exists at the time of investigation" is how Anikweze (2013) defines descriptive survey design. According to the Ministry of Education in Lafia (2023), 29,252 undergraduates from 5 different public and private institutions in Nasarawa State were the subjects of this research. Using the method for selecting sample sizes provided by Research Advisor (2006), a total of 360 students were selected for this study's sample. The researchers used a multi-stage sampling technique. Initially, a purposeful sample strategy was used to choose five (5) institutions. Additionally, a total of 360 respondents were obtained by using the proportional stratified sampling approach to choose students from each of the five(5) chosen colleges. In order to ensure that every member of the population had an equal opportunity to be chosen for the sample, the researcher used a basic random sampling approach called the ball and hat method to choose the respondents. In order to carry out this investigation, two instruments were used. Researchers first used a questionnaire they had developed themselves called the coping values and strategies scale (CVSS). The items were scored on a four-point rating scale that included the following options: strongly agree (SA-4), agree (A-3), disagree (D-2), and severely disagree (SD-1). The second tool was the academic adjustment scale (AAS), a 10-item survey that assesses how well undergraduates are adjusting to life in the classroom. The instruments produced a CVSS consensus validity value of 0.87 and an AAS score of 0.82. Researchers and faculty at the sampled universities worked together to administer the survey. The study questions were answered using standard deviation and mean, and the hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at a significance level of 0.05.

Results

The data collected was analyzed and presented in tables as follows;

Research Question 1: What effect does a student's coping strategy based on societal values have on their academic adjustment in Nasarawa State?

Table 1 below shows the results of the data analysis and presentation used to address the first research question;

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on influence of social values coping strategy on academic adjustment of university students in Nasarawa State.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	Std	Remarks
1.	I just concentrated on what I had to do in class and forget about others to balance my academics	73	186	72	29	2.84	.83	agree
2.	I changed my study skills so things would turn out all right for my friends in university	57	173	102	28	2.71	.82	agree
3.	I knew what had to be done, so I doubled my efforts to achieve better	100	159	101	-	2.99	.74	agree
4.	I stood my ground and fought for what I wanted to achieve	115	14	29	72	2.83	1.08	agree
5.	I came up with a couple of different solutions against my mates to achieve	73	186	72	29	2.84	.83	agree
	Cluster mean					2.84	0.86	agree

Field Survey 2023

University students in Nasarawa State may see the average and standard deviation of the impact of social values coping strategies on their academic adjustment in Table 1. Because they all exceeded the standard of a 2.50 mean score, items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were all allowed. The results show that students in Nasarawa State believed that social kills coping strategies had a substantial effect on academic adjustment, with a cluster mean of 2.84 and a matching standard deviation of 0.86.

Research Question Two: How do college students in Nasarawa State deal with stress and how does it affect their ability to succeed academically?

Data was gathered, evaluated, and presented in the table below to address the second study question;

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on influence of problem-solving skills coping strategy on academic adjustment of university students in Nasarawa State

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X̄	Std	Remarks
1.	I become emotional with people around me when assigned with too many responsibilities.	115	144	29	72	2.83	1.08	agree
2.	I find it difficult to attend sporting activities because it does not allow me attend to academics	73	186	72	29	2.84	.83	agree
3	I don't attend social gathering in higher institutions because it does not add to my performance.	57	173	102	28	2.71	.82	agree
4.	I find it difficult to do my classwork Because am not fast at comprehending	100	159	101	-	2.99	.74	agree
5.	I find it difficult to do my assignment because it is a waste of time.	115	144	29	72	2.83	1.08	agree
	Cluster mean					2.84	0.91	agree

Field survey 2023

Table 2 examines the impact of problem-solving value and coping technique on academic adjustment among Nasarawa State university students, together with the standard deviation and mean. Because they all exceeded the standard of a 2.50 mean score, items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 were all allowed. In Nasarawa State, college students' ability to solve problems as a coping mechanism has a significant impact on their academic adjustment, according to the results (cluster mean = 2.84, standard deviation = 0.91).

Hypothesis One: Nasarawa State university students' academic adjustment is unaffected by social kills coping strategies.

Table 3: t-test on influence of social skills coping strategy on academic adjustment of university students in Nasarawa State

Variable	x̄	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Social Skills Coping strategy	2.84	0.86	1	.05	102.91	.000	sig.
Academic Adjustment	2.80	0.71					

Table 3 displays the results of a t-test examining the impact of social skills coping strategies on the adjustment of Nasarawa State university students. A $t(359) = 102.91$, $p = 0.000$, is shown in the result. $p = .000$ or $p < .05$ was therefore used to reject the null hypothesis. So, coping strategies including social skills have a substantial impact on academic adjustment among Nasarawa State university students.

Hypothesis Two: Nasarawa State university students' academic adjustment is unaffected by their problem-solving skill plan.

Table 4: t-test on influence of problem-solving skill strategy on academic adjustment of university students in Nasarawa State.

Variable	$\bar{x}$	std	df	α	t	p.val	Remark
Problem Solving value	2.84	0.91	1	0.05	99.03	0.000	Reject.
Academic Adjustment	2.80	0.71					

Table 4, displays the results of the t-test conducted on the impact of problem-solving strategies on the academic adjustment of Nasarawa State university students. The obtained t-value is 99.03 with a p-value of 0.000. P=.000 or p<.05 was therefore used to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that the academic adjustment of Nasarawa State university students is significantly impacted by their problem-solving skill plan.

Discussion

Based on the research question and hypotheses, this part discusses and reports the study's outcomes and findings.

College freshmen in Nasarawa State might attribute their academic success to the social skills coping strategies they use, according to the results of the first study question and hypothesis. This result is in line with what Asagware and George (2012) found: that students' academic adjustment is improved when they are able to form successful connections with their professors. Similarly, Apu (2015) found that classes where teachers are socially inept could have trouble adjusting to their students' needs. Additionally, according to Eroh (2011), elements like home interface, interpersonal skills, and so on determine whether a student has a favorable academic adjustment. This suggests that kids' academic adjustment may be hindered by a lack of social skills. Furthermore, Ekpenyoug (2011) found that students' academic adjustment is impacted when they lack social skills due to stress, which in turn affects the quality of their work execution in the university setting. Ogon (2017) found that students' social skills with members of the higher institution's community/organization are affected when they are stressed out due to job overloads, home pressures, and societal obligations. Consequently, it is discovered that pupils without social skills struggle to adapt to their academic environments. University students in Nasarawa State were found to have a notable impact of problem-solving coping strategies on their academic adjustment, according to the results of study question two and hypothesis two. In line with the findings of MacCann and colleagues (2011), who found that coping styles reduced the correlation between problem solving and academic adjustment, we find that students with higher levels of emotion management also exhibited more problem-focused coping, which is an effective strategy for managing stress because it gives a sense of control over the threat or stressor and leads to better grades.

Without problem-focused coping techniques, the connection between emotion management and better GPA was non-significant. This suggests that coping style might have an effect on academic adjustment and even improve it. In a similar vein, Struthers et al. (2010) found that students' grades are unaffected by emotion-focused coping mechanisms. Similarly, Madhyastha et al. (2014) discovered that medical students desperately require stress management programs and training to strengthen their coping abilities so that they may better handle stress and establish healthy coping mechanisms. Similarly, Balila et al. (2014) found that college students who are well-prepared with efficient coping techniques have a better academic life and do better academically.

Conclusion

University students in Nasarawa state had their academic adjustment impacted by their coping values and tactics, according to the study's conclusions. The research in Nasarawa State, Nigeria, predicted that college students' academic adjustment would be significantly affected by the factors of social skills coping strategy and problem solving value.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made,

1. Thus, the ability to interact with others, Developing healthy coping mechanisms is crucial for college students' academic success; psychologists may help university students navigate their social environments by outlining best practices for study groups and encouraging them to maintain positive connections with their peers.

2. Consequently, students' ability to handle issues has a direct bearing on their academic adjustment; counseling psychologists may help students develop this ability by providing them with instruction and direction while they face the challenges of university life.

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