



## Comparative Assessment Between Perceived Social Support and Academic Self-Efficacy on Emotional Adjustment among State-Owned University Undergraduate Students in Kano State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study was conducted to examine relationships between perceived social support and academic self-efficacy on emotional adjustment of undergraduate university students enrolled in public universities in Kano Nigeria. This study employed a quantitative approach with planned data collection and analysis using a cross-sectional survey design to address the research objectives. The developed and validated questionnaire was used to assess students' perceived social support, academic self-efficacy and emotional adjustment respectively. A total of 265 undergraduate students were selected using simple random sampling technique. Findings revealed a significant and positive relationship between students' perceived social support and their overall university adjustment as well as all the four adjustment dimensions namely academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, attachment to university, and academic achievement ( $Beta=0.529$ ,  $R^2=0.280$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Similarly, the finding indicated that, Academic Self-efficacy is a significant variable for Emotional Adjustment among undergraduate students in Kano ( $Beta=0.453$ ,  $R^2=0.205$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This study provides important evidence for undergraduates, lecturers, university administrators, and the community at large regarding the important role of social support and academic self-efficacy in university adjustment. It is recommended among others that, universities should provide support services to assist new undergraduates to overcome their adjustment problems. Similarly, lecturers should be encouraged to establish informal interface with students outside the classroom, as rewarding interactions between students and the lecturers outside the classroom may enhance intellectual development and therefore create greater intellectual integration among undergraduate students within the university system.*

**Keywords:** social support services, emotional adjustment, academic self-efficacy, psychological factors

### Introduction

Education plays a vital role in development of human capital and is linked to an individual's well-being and opportunities for better living. It ensures the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to increase their productivity and improve their quality of life (Battle and Lewis, 2002). Education is also viewed as an important investment in human capital for improving the quality of life and poverty reduction (URT, 2010). With university education, the benefits are far reaching. University is an open system where all members including students, teachers and administrators interact with one another. There is the need, therefore, to establish a conducive social environment, a healthy school environment where there is collective responsibility and effective interpersonal relationship among the different groups of members of the university community (teachers, students, and administrator). Several factors have been identified as contributory to students' academic achievement these include home background, personality and intelligence, parent socio-economic standing, social environment and societal norms. Poor physical, psychological and social aspect of the school environment have effect on academic achievement of students, as a consequence, the goals of university may be jeopardized. The transition from secondary school to university and other tertiary institutions can be considered as a major life changing experience for many students (Abdullah, Kong & Talib, 2014; Salami, 2011). This transition is supposed to be a very interesting and valuable experience for all the students as attending university offers them a great opportunity for psychosocial development (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007; Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Pancer, 2000).



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In the transition to university, students' academic, social, and emotional adjustment are perhaps the three most important domains to consider. Academic adjustment, or how well students deal with educational demands, includes motivation to complete academic work, success in meeting academic requirements, academic effort, and satisfaction with the academic environment. Similarly, previous studies have recounted that the transition to university can be a source of strain and an acute stressor (Friedlander et al., 2007; Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, & Pelletier, 2001). New undergraduates are confronted with numerous new personal and interpersonal challenges. For example, they need to build new connections, to modify existing relationship with parents and family members, and to develop new learning habits in a new academic environment (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan & Majeski, 2004). These new undergraduates are more likely to drop out from university if they fail to meet these challenges (Abdullah, Kong & Talib, 2014). One reason new undergraduates dropped out of university was due to adjustment difficulties. Studies have also demonstrated that adjustment among first year undergraduates has a strong influence on their academic self-efficacy and achievement (Martin et al., 1999; Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson, & Strauss, 2003). According to a study conducted by Ahmad, Noran Fauziah, Azemi and Mohd. Zailani (2002) in public universities, the emotional adjustment problems faced by new undergraduates include academic problems, health problems, financial crises as well as social and personal problems. For example, some of the academic problems faced by students were: unable to register for courses, difficult to understand textbooks written in English, and unable to attend lecture as early as eight in the morning. Financial problems included receiving funds late from the provider or the received amount of fund was not enough to cover the expenses during the course of study. On top of that, students also found difficulty in taking care of their health. Based on the scenario mentioned above, the adjustment process undergone by new undergraduates should be given appropriate attention as serious adjustment problems experienced by these students could lead to the failure in completing their studies. The importance of adjustment among new undergraduates has encouraged a great deal of studies to explore the factors that are related to it. Social support is among the psychological factors that has been identified as an important predictor of college adjustment (DeBerard, Spielmans, & Julka, 2004; Spitzer, 2000) among new university students. In a study conducted by Mattanah, Brooks, Brand, Quimby, and Ayers (2012), it was reported that students who seek support from faculty and peers were more likely to succeed academically.

Emotional adjustment is the preservation of emotional equilibrium in the face of internal and external stressor, this is facilitated by cognitive process of acceptance and adaption such as maintaining emotional control and coping behavior in the face of an identity crisis (Mallinckrodt 1992) frequently intense and apparently unjustified emotional outburst lead others to judge the individual as immature; suppression of emotional expression result in moodiness, which tends to make the individual rude uncooperative and preoccupied with self a satisfactory state of personal and emotional adjustment may say to be exist when and individual physical and psychological needs can be satisfied by socially acceptable patterns of behavior. According to Shaffer (1999), Emotional adjustment as a means or reaction to the demands and pressures of environment imposed upon an individual coping with maintenance of both internal and external equilibrium of individual personality. The ultimate aim of psychologies is to train the youth to make proper adjustment to the different types of environment in which they have to live. Psychologist have brought to light on the basis of their research that making proper adjustment to the changing nature of the environment is the most important requisite condition for a happy and successful life. An individual is not born adjusted or maladjusted. It is his physical, mental and emotional potentialities that are influenced and directed by the factor and environment in which he finds himself adjusted. Mathur and Pareekl (2003) state that emotional adjustment is a process in which the personality is continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health, both intra-physical and intrapersonal. An emotionally mature person has the capacity to withstand delay in satisfaction of need. He has the ability to tolerate a reasonable amount of frustration, he believes in long-term planning and is capable of delaying or revising his expectation in term of demand of the situation. Determinants of students' emotional adjustment in universities have preoccupied psychological as well as educational research for several decades. Emotional adjustment is a complex problem of human behavior; no single factor can be pin-pointedly as its cause. It is the outcome of multifactor interacting with the developing personality of the student. There are numerous factors in home, society and school which lead to emotional adjustment. Several problems have been identifying to be affecting social and emotional adjustment of student such as physique, long sickness, poverty, broken home, personal inadequacies, parental attitude adoption and emotional shock. Social support is very much important for individuals in their life. Deficits in social support have been shown to be related to many psychological problems such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety (Eskin, 2003).



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Elliot and Gramling (1990) found that social support helps the college students to lessen depression, anxiety, and stress. They also found that social support could help the students manage and lessen their psychological problems. Social support has also been recognized to have significant impact on the achievement of the students. The support received by the students could help to decrease their psychological problems since they feel that someone is there to help them, thus helping them to perform well in academic life. Social support and academic self-efficacy are two important structures to be taken into account while studying the causes of emotional adjustment and academic success. These structures are flexible and improvable through necessary interventions. On the other hand, research has indicated that Social support and academic self-efficacy are positively related to emotional adjustment and both of these variables can predict each other. Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels (Bandura, 1997). In a study trying to investigate the achievement motivation and self-efficacy in relation to adjustment among university students Habibah, Nooreen and Rahil (2010) found that achievement motivation and self-efficacy range from moderate to high levels indicating that they have the potentials to succeed. The three variables namely adjustment, achievement motivation and self-efficacy were found to be correlated positively with one another. A meta-analysis by Crede and Niehorster (2012) further supported the influence self-efficacy had on adjustment, as they found that self-efficacy had the strongest positive relationship with adjustment to university.

Social support among adults has been studied extensively over the past few decades. These studies indicated that social support contributes to the physical and psychological well-being of adults, thus reducing the negative effects of life stress experienced by them. A study conducted by Sharifah, Azizah and Rosna (2011) reported that teacher and parental support were significantly related to adolescents' cognitive engagement through their academic efficacy. Other studies showed that support from parents, friends, teachers, and significant others contributed to academic, social and emotional development of first year undergraduates (Friedlander et al., 2007; Tao et al., 2000). Previous studies by Crockett at al. (2007), Yusliza (2011), and Salami (2011) have revealed a positive relationship between social support and adjustment among university students. For example, Lidy and Kahn (2006) in a study involving 111 new students at a public university in the Midwest reported that social support had a direct effect on the dimensions of academic adjustment ( $\beta = .28, p = .01$ ), social adjustment ( $\beta = .39, p = .01$ ), and institutions linkage ( $\beta = .31, p = .01$ ). The relationship between social support and adjustment were also reported in the study by Salami (2011) involving 250 first year college students. Findings in Salami's (2011) study showed that students who have sources of social support from friends and family members, such as guidance feedback, intimacy, positive social interactions and tangible assistance are likely to be able to handle effectively academic, social, and personal-emotional problems in their new college environment. Similar results were also reported by Yusliza (2011) in a study involving 185 international students enrolled in one of the Malaysian public universities. Using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet, F. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988), Yusliza's study revealed that only one dimension of the MSPSS which is the support from friends and significant others was found to show significant relationship with psychological adjustment among the students. Overall, the aforementioned studies had shown that social support contribute to the adjustment of students in university. Social support and academic self-efficacy are an aspects that should be reviewed since it is described as both a buffer against life stressors as well as an agent promoting health and wellness (Dollete, Steese, Phillips, & Matthews, 2004). Researches has shown that social support and academic self-efficacy play an important role in managing psychological problems. Lack of social support has been found to be one of the factors that lead to many psychological problems among students. A growing number of literature and empirical research have indicated the relationship between social support and psychological problems among students. Therefore, this study attempts to understand the role of social support and academic self-efficacy in managing the emotional adjustment problems faced by the undergraduate students of Nigerian universities specifically public universities in Kano.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the effect of Social Support on the Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano.
2. Examine the effect of Academic Self-Efficacy on the Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano



## Research Questions

The following research questions would guide the study:

1. What is the effect of Social Support on the Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano?
2. What is the effect of Academic Self-Efficacy on the Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano?

## Research Methodology

This is quantitative research. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted to collect the relevant data for the evaluation of the effect of perceived social support and academic self-efficacy on emotional adjustment among undergraduate students in Kano. In a cross-sectional survey design, the researcher measures the outcome and the exposures in a survey participant at the same time (Levin, 2006; Setia, 2016). The instrument of data collection is a developed and validated questionnaire tagged '*Social Support, Academic Self-Efficacy and Emotional Adjustment Assessment Scale (SOEAC)*'. The respondents were asked to state their level of agreement based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument was validated by experts after which a pilot test was conducted to assess the construct validity and reliability of the instrument (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). This is deemed to be adequate to be utilize in collecting data in a cross-sectional study of this nature (Setia, 2016; Taber, 2018). The participants in this study were the 265 undergraduate students from two state universities in Kano, Nigeria, which include male and female. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling procedure. This technique was selected because the population is large and that problem at hand affect each and every member of the city (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The questionnaire was distributed directly to the respondents in a face-to-face encounter during some selected open days. It is, therefore, the best selection strategy for study involving large group in a cross-sectional approach (Levin, 2006). The demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Characteristic of Respondents

SN	Characteristic	Frequency	%	
1	<b>Gender</b>	Male	150	56.6
		Female	115	43.4
2	<b>Age Group (Years)</b>	<20	75	28.3
		20-29	135	50.9
		30-39	55	20.7

Descriptive statistical analysis (frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation) were carried out to summarize data. Similarly, descriptive statistics inferential statistical analysis (Regression Analysis) was used to address research objectives and test the study's hypotheses. The statistical program SPSS 25 was utilized to conduct the analyses. 5% level of significance will set for all statistical tests.

## Presentation of Results

The results of this study was presented as described in the preceding section of Methodology. The results obtained using descriptive statistics inferential statistical analysis are presented in the following order to address the research objectives. Thus; Tests of Normality, in order to conduct the parametric inferential statistical analyses as well as regression analysis to determine the influence or effect among the study variables, it is recommended that the initial data be tested for normality. To apply the parametric inferential statistical, data should be normally distributed and where the data violate the normality assumption a non-parametric inferential statistical should be applied. Similarly, an essential means of determining the normality of data is to conduct a nonparametric test (Shapiro-Wilk test). Thus, the test of normality conducted in this study is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Tests of Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)

Statistic	Variable	df	Sig.	
a. Li	Academic Self-Efficacy	0.783	265	0.321
	Perceived Social Support	0.783	265	0.321
	<u>Emotional Adjustment</u>	<u>0.884</u>	<u>265</u>	<u>0.125</u>



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As presented in the above table, two normality tests were run. However, in this study, Shapiro-Wilk test statistics was considered. Shapiro-Wilk test is used because the requirement for a data set smaller than 2000 elements for normality can use it and for dataset of 2000 elements and above can use Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. In the case of this study, there are only 265 elements. Thus Shapiro-Wilk test is used (George & Mallery, 2010). The test results showed that the p-value for the entire study variables are generally greater than 0.05. This means that the data comes from the normal distribution. Therefore, parametric inferential statistics is more appropriate to be used in addressing the hypothesis.

**Research question 1:** *What is the effect of Social Support on the Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano?*

The *F*-ratio in the ANOVA test presented in Table 3 shows whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data in this study. The result table reveals that the independent variable statistically significantly predict the dependent variable,  $F(1, 263) = 132.215, p < .05$ . This means that the regression model has good fit for the data.

Table 3: ANOVA Test

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	12.034	1	12.034	132.215	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	30.947	263	.091		
Total	42.981	264			

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), Social Support*

The result presented in Table 3 revealed that, the correlation between Perceived Stress and the predictor (Emotional Adjustment) is .529. The R Square value of .280 means that, 28% changes in Emotional Adjustment is explained by Social Support among Undergraduate Students in Kano.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.529 <sup>a</sup>	.280	.278	.30170

a. *Predictors: (Constant), Social Support*

b. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment*

This finding means that, the Social Support significantly influence Emotional Adjustment of Undergraduate Students in Kano. Further information revealed in Table 5 using the sample size of (n=342), revealed that the Social Support is the main variables for Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano.

Table 5: Coefficient and Significance of the Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	B	t	
1	(Constant)	1.817	.103	17.682		.000
	Flexibility	.361	.031	.529	11.498	.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment*

The above result showed that, significantly, on the overall Social Support contributes 28% variance (R Square= .280) in the Emotional Adjustment in this study. The information in this Table means that Social Support (Beta=.529,  $p < .05$ ) provide 28% variance (R Square=.280) in the dependent variable in this study (Emotional Adjustment). The finding of this research question on the overall revealed that, Social Support is a significant variable for Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano. The significant relationship found between social support and university adjustment have provided significant information pertaining to the importance of the availability of social support perceived by students in relation to their adjustment to the university. Findings also revealed that social support among the undergraduates contributed not only to their overall university adjustment, but also to all the four adjustment dimensions (academic adjustment, social adjustment, emotional-personal adjustment, and university attachment). This finding concurred with the



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 findings of previous researches which reported similar results (Abdullah, Kong & Talib, 2014; Salami, 2011; Friedlander et al., 2007; Tao et al., 2000). This finding provides evidence that students who perceived that social support was available in campus were likely to be able to cope effectively with their academic, social, and personal-emotional problems. They were also predicted to show a higher degree of commitment to educational-institutional goals and higher degree of attachment to the institutions they were attached to.

**Research question 2:** *What is the effect of Academic Self-Efficacy on the Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano?*

The *F*-ratio in the ANOVA test presented in Table 6 shows whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data in this study. The result table reveals that the independent variable statistically significantly predict the dependent variable,  $F(1, 263) = 87.752, p < .05$ . This means that the regression model has good fit for the data.

The result presented in Table 7 revealed that, the correlation between shows that the correlation between Emotional Adjustment and the predictor (Academic Self-Efficacy) is .453. The R Square value of .205 means that, 20% changes in Emotional Adjustment is explained by Academic Self-Efficacy among Undergraduate Students in Kano

Table 6: ANOVA Test

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression 8.817	1	8.817	87.752	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	263	34.164	263	.100
Total	42.981	264			

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment*

b. *Predictors: (Constant), Academic Self-Efficacy*

Table 7: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.453 <sup>a</sup>	.205	.203	.31699

a. *Predictors: (Constant), Academic Self-Efficacy*

b. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment*

This finding means that, the Academic Self-Efficacy significantly influence Emotional Adjustment of undergraduate students in Kano. Further information revealed in Table 8 using the sample size of (n=342), revealed that the Academic Self-Efficacy is the main variables for Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano.

Table 8: Coefficient and Significance of the Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	B	t	
1	(Constant)	2.126	.093	22.846		.000
	Suitability	.247	.026	.453	9.368	.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Adjustment*

The above result showed that, significantly, on the overall Academic Self-Efficacy contributes 20% variance (R Square=.205) in the Emotional Adjustment in this study. The information in this Table means that Academic Self-Efficacy (Beta=.453, R Square=.205,  $p < .05$ ) provide 20% variance (R Square=.205) in the dependent variable in this study (Emotional Adjustment). The finding of this research question on the overall revealed that, Academic Self-Efficacy is a significant variable for Emotional Adjustment among Undergraduate Students in Kano.

In addition, the present study indicated a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and undergraduate student adjustment and this finding has further supported the importance of social support in undergraduate student adjustment. Overall, the findings from this study implies that the more social support perceived by new undergraduates in the university



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environment, the better they are in adjusting themselves to campus life (in terms of physical and psychological well-being). These findings concurred with the findings of previous studies which demonstrated the positive impact of social support on university adjustment (Abdullah, Kong & Talib, 2014; Crockett at al., 2007; Friedlander et al., 2007; Salami, 2011; Smith & Renk, 2007; Yusliza, 2011; Mattanah et al., 2012; Md Aris Safree & Mariam Adawiah, 2011).

## Conclusions

This present research has provided evidence that social support and academic self-efficacy is an important predictor in determining emotional adjustment among new undergraduates in Kano. Hence, it is important for those who are involved in tertiary education such as lecturers, academic advisors, and university administrators to provide support services to assist new undergraduates who experience emotional adjustment problems and to prepare them to proceed on their studies with less problems.

## Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, discussions and conclusion it is recommended among others that;

1. Lecturers need to have frequent contact with students to stimulate their learning. Besides the lecturers, the involvement of senior students as mentors or tutors to new undergraduates should be encouraged as senior students are found to significantly influence junior students' social and emotional adjustment.
2. Lecturers should be encouraged to establish informal interface with students outside the classroom, as rewarding interactions between students and the lecturers outside the classroom may enhance intellectual development and therefore create greater intellectual integration among undergraduate students within the university system.
3. Needs analysis' of new undergraduates relating to emotional adjustment should be carried out before planning any intervention programs or support services in relation to social support. This is to confirm that the programs and support services proposed are in line with the resources required by the undergraduate students.
4. In view of the limitation of this study, future study should be conducted to examine the influence of other factors on undergraduate emotional adjustment such as demographic factors and other psychological factors which may include students' emotional regulation ability, coping ability, self-esteem and self-regulation.

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