
Article

Academic Self-Concept, Social Support and Scholastic Adjustment of Students in Rivers State Universities

Love Nwamadi¹

1 PhD of Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling Ignatius Ujuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

* Correspondence: johnbrightndashi@gmail.com

Abstract: This study investigates academic self-concept, social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State Universities. The study adopted correlational research design. Three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses guided the conduct of this study. The population of the study consisted 5789 and 9871 first year undergraduate students from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University respectively. Sample size of 370 first year undergraduate students from both universities. Cluster sampling technique was used to select four faculties from each university, making it eight faculties sampled in the study. Furthermore, purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample 270 first year undergraduate students. Three instruments titled Academic Self-concept Scale (ASS), Social Support Inventory (SSI) and Scholastic Adjustment Scale (SAS) were used to collect data from the undergraduates (respondents). A test-retest method was employed to determine the reliability of the instrument using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. A reliability coefficient 0.87 was established for ASS, 0.83 was established for SSI and 0.88 was established for SAS. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study were the following: there is a significant relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities, there is a significant relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities and there is a significant relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends among others that universities in Rivers State should develop and implement programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing students' academic confidence. These programs can include workshops, seminars, and mentoring sessions that focus on building self-esteem, study skills, time management, and effective learning strategies.

Citation: Nwamdi L., Academic Self-Concept, Social Support and Scholastic Adjustment of Students in Rivers State Universities. International Journal on Integrated Education (IJIE) 2024, 7, 53-62.

Received: 7th Jan 2024

Revised: 9th Jan 2024

Accepted: 20th Jan 2024

Published: 26th Feb 2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Keywords: Academic Self-Concept, Social Support, Scholastic Adjustment.

1. Introduction

The University is the highest citadel of learning where the society prepares students for higher placements. However, to secure an admission into the university, requires the

acquisition of a minimum credit in at least five subjects including mathematics and English language in any of the relevant senior secondary school examinations. Companies, industries, firms rely on the graduates of university education in order to fill their high and technical man power needs and so the need for university education cannot be over emphasized. A student's ability to be able to adjust in such an environment that requires high level of intellectual activities is important in molding him/her into becoming a successful individual in the society, this of course means the student's scholastic adjustment.

Adjustment of students to school environment, activities and demands is very crucial in attainment of educational goals and objectives. Most students come from homes and environments that do not guarantee them the kind of unlimited freedom they enjoy in the university environment. This freedom comes with sense of responsibility and challenges every student is liable to confront and overcome, hence the need for scholastic adjustment. The tertiary education level, as explained by Amoah *et al.* (2021) is usually a time of developmental transition during which a person passes from childhood to adolescence. During this period of transformation, students are subjected to a great deal of psychological and sociological strain at school. They face psychological maturation, cognitive shifts, social and parental expectations sifting, contradictory position demands, difficulty in relationships with parents and peers, school and subject selection, and school climate adjustment.

The pursuit of higher education is a transformative journey that involves numerous challenges and adjustments for university students. As they transit from secondary education to higher academia, students encounter a diverse range of academic, social, and emotional demands. These challenges can significantly impact their academic self-concept, social support systems, and overall scholastic adjustment. An individual's perception of self and the level of social support is crucial for facilitating his or her adjustment to school activities and demands.

Academic self-concept, refers to an individual's perceptions and beliefs about his own academic abilities and competence, it plays a pivotal role in shaping learning outcomes and educational aspirations. Wang and Eccles (2012) explained that academic self-concept refers to how individuals perceive their own abilities, competencies, and worth in academic contexts. It plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes, behaviors, and overall adjustment to their academic environment, including university settings. School adjustment refers to the process of adapting to the academic and social demands of the educational environment. A positive academic self-concept can enhance students' motivation to learn and engage actively in their studies (Marsh & O'Mara, 2018). When students believe in their academic abilities, they are more likely to set higher goals, persist in the face of challenges, and invest effort into their academic pursuits. Similarly, a positive academic self-concept contributes to higher levels of self-esteem and reduced levels of stress and anxiety. This positive self-perception can buffer the negative effects of academic stressors and promote overall psychological well-being. Wang and Eccles (2012) maintained that students with a strong academic self-concept tend to perform better academically, their belief in their abilities can lead to increased confidence, improved study habits, and better performance on assignments, exams, and projects.

Social support refers to the assistance, comfort, resources, and emotional help that individuals receive from their social networks, such as family, friends, colleagues, and community members. It encompasses various forms of aid, both tangible and intangible, that contribute to a person's well-being, resilience, and ability to cope with life's challenges. Cutrona and Suhr in [Hsiu-Chia et al. \(2013\)](#) define a social support category system, which involves five general categories of social support: (a) informational, (b) emotional, (c) esteem, (d) social network support, and (e) tangible support.⁸ Informational support refers to messages that include knowledge or facts, such as advice or feedback on actions. Emotional support is related to the expressions that include caring, concern, empathy, and sympathy. Esteem support is defined as the messages that help to promote one's skills, abilities, and intrinsic value. Social network support is defined as the messages that help to enhance one's sense of belonging to a specific group with similar interests or situations. Finally, tangible support is conceived as physically providing needed goods and services to recipients. Each of the five categories includes several subcategories. Social support plays a crucial role in the scholastic adjustment of university students.

Social support encompasses various forms of assistance, guidance, and companionship that individuals receive from their social networks, such as family, friends, peers, and university staff. Numerous studies have explored the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment, highlighting the significant impact of social support on students' academic success and overall well-being. Social support is linked to better psychological well-being, which in turn enhances scholastic adjustment. A study by Hefner *et al.* (2017) demonstrated that strong social support networks are associated with lower levels of stress and anxiety among university students, contributing to their ability to cope with academic challenges. Additionally, peer support is a critical component of social support in universities. Peers can offer advice, share experiences, and provide a sense of belonging. A study by Ryan and Shin (2011) highlighted the positive impact of peer support on students' adjustment to university life, leading to increased academic engagement and satisfaction.

Furthermore, social support can influence a student's academic performance through various mechanisms, such as reducing stress, providing study resources, and offering encouragement. A study by Demir and Kutlu (2019) found that perceived social support was positively associated with students' GPA and academic achievement. This suggests that students who perceive higher levels of social support tend to perform better academically. Social support is also linked to the psychological well-being of university students. A study by Chen and Lin (2020) revealed that social support significantly predicted students' psychological well-being and helped mitigate the negative effects of stress on mental health. Students who receive adequate social support are likely to experience lower levels of anxiety and depression, which can contribute to better scholastic adjustment.

Other studies have also associated social support to increased academic engagement and persistence among university students. For instance, a study by Purnamasari *et al.*, (2019) found that students who perceived higher levels of social support were more engaged in academic activities and were less likely to drop out. Supportive relationships with peers, professors, and family members contribute to students' motivation and commitment to their academic pursuits.

The relationship between academic self-concept, social support and scholastic adjustment among university students is well-established in research. Academic self-concept and social support positively influence academic performance, psychological well-being, adjustment to university life, and academic engagement. Universities and educators have been encouraged to recognize the importance of fostering a supportive environment to enhance students' overall success and well-being during their higher education journey.

2. Statement of the Problem

The transition to university life is a crucial phase in the academic journey of students, marked by various challenges and adjustments. Within this context, academic self-concept and social support play significant roles in influencing students' scholastic adjustment. However, the intricate interplay between these factors and their collective impact on the scholastic adjustment of university students in Rivers State remains relatively unexplored.

While academic self-concept reflects an individual's beliefs and perceptions regarding their academic abilities, social support comprises the network of relationships that provide emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance. Scholastic adjustment refers to the degree of alignment between students' academic goals, expectations, and the actual academic demands they face. Despite their acknowledged importance, limited research exists that investigates the extent to which academic self-concept and social support contribute to the scholastic adjustment of university students specifically in Rivers State.

Academic self-concept not only affects learners' motivation, engagement, and study habits but also has implications for their overall well-being and academic performance. Similarly, social support, both from peers and family, plays a crucial role in providing students with the necessary resources, emotional encouragement, and guidance that can significantly impact their academic journey. Notwithstanding the theoretical significance of academic self-concept and social support, there is a gap in research within the context of Rivers State regarding how these factors collectively influence the scholastic adjustment of university students. Scholastic adjustment encompasses the process of adapting to the academic demands, expectations, and challenges of university life, and achieving a sense of balance between academic pursuits and personal well-being. This adjustment is particularly critical in a diverse educational landscape like Rivers State, where students come from various socio-economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. By investigating how academic self-concept and social support as they relate to scholastic adjustment of university students, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the factors influencing the scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State Universities. Understanding the dynamics of academic self-concept and social support in this context can provide educators, administrators, and counselors with actionable information to design targeted interventions and support systems that facilitate positive academic outcomes and overall student well-being.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between academic self-concept, social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. In specific terms, the objectives are to:

1. Determine the relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment students in Rivers State universities.
2. Investigate the relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.
3. Ascertain the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide the conduct of this study;

1. What is the relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities?
2. What is the relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of Rivers State universities students in Rivers State universities?
3. What is the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities?

5. Hypotheses

To further guide the study, the following corresponding null hypotheses were formulated;

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities

6. Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. Three research questions and three corresponding null hypotheses guided the conduct of this study. The population of the study consisted 5789 and 9871 first year undergraduate students from Ignatius Ajuru University of Education and Rivers State University respectively. Sample size of 370 first year undergraduate students from both universities. Cluster sampling technique was used to select four faculties from each university, making it eight faculties sampled in the study. Furthermore, purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample 270 first year undergraduate students. Three instruments titled Academic Self-concept Scale (ASS), Social Support Inventory (SSI) and Scholastic Adjustment Scale (SAS) were used to collect data from the undergraduates (respondents). All the items in the instruments were responded to on a 4-points modified likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D) =2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 respectively. The instruments were validated by three experts in Measurement and Evaluation, Educational Psychology and

Guidance and Counselling respectively from the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling and educational foundations from the state-owned universities in Rivers State who vetted and made corrections. A test-retest method was employed to determine the reliability of the instrument using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. A reliability coefficient 0.87 was established for ASS, 0.83 was established for SSI and 0.88 was established for SAS. The researcher administered the questionnaire personally to the respondents. This was done to ensure return of the instruments. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1. Research Questions and Hypotheses

- **Research Question One:** What is the relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities?
- **Hypothesis One:** There is no significantly relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

The responses of the students on the relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method.

Table 1. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Academic Confidence and Scholastic Adjustment of Students

	Scholastic Adjustment	Academic Confidence
Scholastic Adjustment	Pearson's Coefficient	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.38**
	N	0.044
		370

Result in Table 1 indicates that the relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities, Rivers State ($r=0.38$). This result shows that there is a positive weak relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. This result indicates that as students' score on academic confidence increases, there is no corresponding score on scholastic adjustment of students. Table 1 further reveals that the p-value (0.044) is less than 0.05 which is the level of probability. Thus, the null hypothesis was one rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

- **Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment students in Rivers State universities?
- **Hypothesis Two:** There is no significantly relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

The responses of the students on the relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment students in Rivers State universities were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation Method.

Table 2. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of School Self-Concept and Scholastic Adjustment

		Scholastic Adjustment	School Self-Concept
Scholastic Adjustment	Pearson's Coefficient	1	0.35**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.042
	N	370	370

Result in Table 2 reveals the relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment university students in Rivers State universities ($r=0.35$). This result shows that there is a positive moderate relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. This result indicates that as student's score on school self-concept increases, there is also a corresponding score on scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. Furthermore, Table 1 reveals that the p-value (0.042) is less than 0.05 which is the level of probability. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

- **Research Question Three:** What is the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities?
- **Hypothesis Three:** There is no significantly relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

The responses of the students on the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

Table 3. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of Social Support and Scholastic Adjustment

		Scholastic Adjustment	Social Support
Scholastic Adjustment	Pearson's Coefficient	1	0.47**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.032
	N	370	370

Result in Table 3 reveals the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of Rivers State universities students in Rivers State universities ($r=0.032$). This result shows that there is a positive moderate relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of Rivers State universities students in Rivers State universities. This result indicates that as student's score on social support increases, there is also a corresponding score on scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. Furthermore, Table 3 reveals that the p-value (0.032) is less than 0.05 which is the level of probability. Thus, the null hypothesis three was rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities.

8. Discussion and Findings

The result of the indicated in Table 1 revealed that there is a positive weak relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. However, the result showed that there is a significant relationship between academic confidence and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. This result is in agreement with Ram and Madan (2021) who conducted a study titled adjustment and self confidence among secondary school students. The findings revealed that the most significant factors impacting school adjustment are kids' self-confidence, their willingness to put out effort to advance academically, and the support of their instructors.

The result of the study indicated in table 2 that there is relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. The relationship between school self-concept and scholastic adjustment of Rivers State universities students in Rivers State universities means that as students' score on school self-concept increases there is a corresponding increase in their scores on scholastic adjustment. This result is in agreement with Ogoamaka et al (2018) who carried out a study to investigate relationship between students' self-esteem and their academic achievement In Imo State. The study adopted the correlation research design. Twenty-three secondary schools selected through purposive sampling technique with a total population of 6872 students were used in the study. The instrument used for measurement of student's self-esteem is Hare Self-esteem Scale. The result of the study also revealed that students' self-esteem has positive significant relationship with their academic achievement in both English Language and Mathematics.

The result of the study indicated in Table 3 on the relationship between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities. The relationship social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities means that as students' scores on social support increase there is a corresponding increase in their scholastic adjustment. The result showed that the deference between social support and scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities is significant at 0.05 level of probability. The result is because university students with high level of social support can adjust properly in their scholastic pursuit. This result is in agreement with the study conducted by Iruloh and Ukaegbu (2017) who carried out a study on social support, coping strategies and academic adjustment of first year university undergraduates in Rivers State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that social support statistically significantly predicted academic adjustment of first year university undergraduates; coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused) taken together statistically significantly predicted academic adjustment of first year university undergraduates; on the basis of individual contribution, problem-focused was a significant contributor to academic adjustment of first year university undergraduates while emotion focused was not.

9. Conclusion

Academic self-concept, which refers to a student's perception of their own academic abilities and potential, has been shown to significantly influence their scholastic adjustment. When students have a positive self-concept, they are more likely to approach their studies with confidence, resilience, and a growth mindset, which can lead to better

academic performance and overall adjustment to university life. Social support, on the other hand, provides a vital source of emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance for students. A strong support system, whether it comes from peers, family, or university staff, can help students navigate the challenges and stressors that often accompany the transition to university. This support can bolster their self-esteem, motivation, and overall well-being, contributing to a smoother scholastic adjustment process.

The scholastic adjustment of students in Rivers State universities, as in any academic setting, is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. These include a student's academic self-concept, the level of social support they receive, the quality of their academic experiences, and their ability to adapt to the demands of university life. Academic self-concept and social support are integral components of a student's scholastic adjustment in Rivers State universities, as well as in educational institutions worldwide. Arising from the findings, this study concludes that academic self-concept and social support relate to scholastic adjustment of first year students in Rivers Universities.

10. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the paper recommends as follows:

1. Universities in Rivers State should develop and implement programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing students' academic confidence. These programs can include workshops, seminars, and mentoring sessions that focus on building self-esteem, study skills, time management, and effective learning strategies.
2. Educators should implement regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to gauge students' academic confidence and scholastic adjustment. This can be done through surveys, focus group discussions, or one-on-one meetings.
3. Educators, parents and significant other stakeholders in the educational industry should recognize the significance of social support in students' scholastic adjustment. Universities should actively work on enhancing their support structures. This can involve creating peer support groups, counseling services, and mentorship programs.

References

1. Amoah, S. O., Acheampong, H. Y., Sefah, E. A., Britwum, F. & Adjei, E. (2021). Academic self-concept and academic performance of college of education students. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 12(24), 34-40.
2. Chen, H., & Lin, Y. (2020). The effects of social support on psychological well-being in college students: The mediating role of resilience and loneliness. *Journal of College Student Development*, 61(1), 109-123.
3. Demir, M., & Kutlu, M. (2019). The relationship between perceived social support and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 19(3), 581-598.
4. Hefner, J., Eisenberg, D., & Byrd, B. (2017). Social support and mental health among college students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87(6), 619-625.
5. Iruloh, B. N. & Ukaegbu, H. M. (2017). Social support, coping strategies and academic adjustment of first year university undergraduates in Rivers State, Nigeria. *British Journal of Psychology Research*, 5(1), 21-31.

6. Marsh, H. W., & O'Mara, A. (2008). Reciprocal effects between academic self-concept, self-esteem, achievement, and attainment over seven adolescent years: Unidimensional and multidimensional perspectives of self-concept. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(4), 542-552.
7. Ogoamaka, O. E., Sylvia, O. J. & Ekejiuba, O. A. (2018). Relationship between students' self-esteem and their academic achievement in Imo State. *Hofa: African Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(1), 24-32.
8. Purnamasari, R. D., Asbari, M., Zubaidah, S., & Sugiarti, T. (2019). Social support and academic engagement in predicting student college persistence. *Journal of Psychology and Counseling*, 2(1), 14-20.
9. Ram, M & Madan, P. (2021). Adjustment and self confidence among secondary school students. *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(10), 2962-2971.
10. Ryan, G., & Shin, R. Q. (2011). Predicting persistence among Asian American and White American college students: A structural model. *Social Psychological Education*, 14(4), 407-423.
11. Wang, M. T., & Eccles, J. S. (2012). Social support matters: Longitudinal effects of social support on three dimensions of school engagement from middle to high school. *Child Development*, 83(3), 877-895.