



ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY AND ACADEMIC ATTITUDE AS PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC RESILIENCE AMONG STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN LAFIA METROPOLIS, LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract

Some children living in our cities face seemingly insurmountable odds, yet they seem able to overcome such factors such as poverty, poor schools, peer pressure and personal trauma inspite of their disabilities. This study, therefore, examined academic self-efficacy and academic attitude as predictors of academic resilience among students with special needs in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State. The study posed three research questions. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of correlation type. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select one hundred and forty-eight participants from senior secondary school two in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State. Three research instruments used were: Academic Resilience Scale ($r = 0.70$), Academic Self-efficacy Scale ($r = 0.69$) and Academic Attitude Scale ($r = 0.74$). Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple regression at 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that academic resilience positively correlates with academic self-efficacy ($r = 0.534$, $p < 0.01$) and academic attitude ($r = 0.424$, $p < 0.01$). The stronger predictor of academic resilience of the two independent variables is academic self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.441$; $t = 987$, $p < 0.01$) and academic attitude ($\beta = 0.151$; $t = 1.705$, $p < 0.01$). The study concluded that self-efficacy and academic attitude were capable of enhancing academic resilience of students with special needs.

Keywords:

Academic self-efficacy, academic attitude, academic resilience, students with Special needs

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Background to the Study

All individuals are unique and special with their strengths and weaknesses. As education binds us together, it has its root in the past and is meant to equip us for the future. It transfers knowledge, culture and values from one generation to the next. It promotes social mobility and ensures the creation of values and welfare for all. For the individual, education is to contribute to cultural and moral growth, mastering social skills and learning self-sufficiency. It passes on values and imparts knowledge and tools that allow everyone to make full use of their abilities and realise their talents. This field of Special Needs Education encompasses heterogeneous groups who demand varied services: visually impaired, hearing impaired, mentally retarded, orthopaedic handicapped, children with behaviour disorders, gifted or talented and finally the learning disabled or children with learning difficulties.

Education must make it possible for an individual or a person to develop so that they can make well-founded decisions and influence their own future irrespective of their special needs. It is all about participating in a society to a maximum extent for a successful life. According to the National Educational Agency (2011), 'students who are resilient have strengths and characteristics that help them succeed in school despite the difficulties they may face in their lives'. Characteristics of resilient people include; social competency, possession of problem-solving skills, critical consciousness, autonomy and sense of purpose and future (Benard & Burgoa, 2002, as cited in NEA, 2011). Secondary education builds upon the basic education acquired in the primary level of education. The curriculum of secondary education in Nigeria as designed in the National Policy on Education is made to expose students to more subjects which include skill-oriented instruction (FGN, 2013). Consequently, secondary education should be able to produce students who are productive and be able to contribute to manpower for social and economic growth of the nation. Furthermore, students who are exposed to the curriculum of secondary level should be adequately prepared for tertiary education.

One of the variables of interest in this study is academic resilience. A person's ability to adapt and rise from academic stress is called academic resilience. In addition, a person's ability to deal with difficult situations that prevent him/her from achieving academic success is called academic resilience (Bernard, 2004). Resilience is defined variously in different social contexts. In psychology, for example, it is defined as the strategies adopted by individuals to respond to a challenging event (Bonanno et al 2010), while in education, it deals with the students' ability to manage with adversities and succeed (Vance et al 2015). In general, the term refers to an effective mechanism for overcoming adverse situations (Ramon et al 2019). Previous studies dealing with the main components of resilience pointed to multiple factors including empathy and sociability (Kim and Kim, 2017; Shin et al 2009) as well as persistence in spite of hardship or discouragement (Martin and Marsh, 2006). The existing literature also confirmed the positive relationship between the resilience and educational success.

Resilience is a successful outcome of healthy adaptations during stressful life events (Rutter, 1990). Resilience is often viewed in the psychological context to refer to the cognitive ability to remain psychologically stable in the aspect of difficulties (Goodley, 2011). It is a psychological phenomenon, a perception of an individual inner strength that allows for the physical manifestation of that strength, which is being able to come out of adversities strong and function to one's highest potential (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2011; Goodley et al 2012). Resilience in individuals is exhibited by their adaptive coping skills and ability to see and take advantage of opportunities for learning and development from stressful events. Therefore, resilience levels in students with special needs and the manifestations of that



resilience are related to effective adaptive resources to academic stress (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012).

In a study conducted among 402 high school students in grades 11 and 12 in two high schools in Australia by Martin and Marsh (2006), resilience correlations were computed between resilience and behavioural outcome in school. Academic resilience had positive correlations with planning, control, self-efficacy, persistence and low anxiety. Studies among American students indicate a positive correlation between academic resilience and academic achievement. A study by Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) examined the factors that contributed to academic resilience and achievement of 133 resilient and 81 non-resilient Mexican American High school students. From a population of over 2000 Mexican American students from three high schools in California, they identified “resilient student” as students who reported that their grades so far in high school were mostly A’s. Those students who reported that their grades in high school were “mostly D’s” or “Mostly below D’s” were regarded as non-resilient.

A person’s belief in his ability to succeed in a particular situation is known as self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). Students with high self-efficacy tend to feel confident that they can complete various academic tasks through their abilities and will perceive many academic tasks as challenges that must be resolved immediately. Meanwhile, students who have low self-efficacy will tend to feel unsure and unable to complete academic tasks immediately. Self-efficacy is an important cognitive mediator of performance (Mafla, Divaris, HerreraLópez, & Helf, 2019) because self-efficacy favors cognitive processes; that is, when students have an adequate level of self-efficacy, they can generate beliefs of expectation value, which would allow them to anticipate their actions and emotions in different academic situations (Doménech-Betoret, AbellánRoselló, & Gómez-Artiga, 2017).

Further, self-efficacy has some relation with metacognition, a process that allows monitoring and controlling cognitive processes and executive functions (Gutiérrez-García, Huerta-Córtés, & Landeros-Velázquez, 2020; Medina, Castleberry, & Persky, 2017). Students with low self-efficacy often make more mistakes in metacognition tasks during neuropsychological tests, which result from the underestimation made by the student in relation to his or her judgment of personal performance based on the prediction and monitoring of his or her own performance (Gutiérrez-García & Landeros-Velázquez, 2017). This is relevant because self-efficacy influences how people feel, think and act (Bandura, 1997). A high sense of self-efficacy facilitates information processing and cognitive performance in different contexts, including decision making and academic achievement (Mafla et al., 2019).

Since self-efficacy is the self-perception that each individual has over his or her abilities (Bandura, 1997), students with a high belief in self-efficacy tend to interpret academic work as a challenge to be faced in an efficient manner, whereby they trust their own skills, are more persistent, and make efficient use of acquired knowledge and skills (Honick & Broadbent, 2016). All these positive factors are related to high academic performance (Denovan & Macaskill, 2013; Khan, 2013; Mafla et al., 2019). In contrast, a low perception of self-efficacy is frequently linked to a high rating on an anxiety index (Gutiérrez-García & Landeros-Velázquez, 2018), which in turn is related to low academic performance (Onyeizugbo, 2010). In addition, when certain situations exceed the individual’s abilities, the levels of self-efficacy decrease, and this can be a trigger for anxiety (Morales-Rodríguez & Pérez-Mármol, 2019)



Everly et al. (2015) found that self-efficacy and social support influenced academic resilience. She identified self-efficacy as the driving force behind the emergence of academic student resilience. When a student is driven to learn, he or she is better equipped to comprehend the material and lessen academic stress. This demonstrates that self-efficacy is related to academic resilience since it motivates people to learn and manage academic pressure. Studies such as that of Rachmawati et al. (2021) strengthened the view that self-efficacy and academic resilience share a significant positive relationship. The consequences of researching the relationship between self-efficacy and academic resilience are significant in the educational realm. Self-efficacy is an important component that school counsellors must consider while forming academic resilience and fostering positive social support to promote optimal academic resilience.

Attitude is the values of every people in the whole world, their individual personality on how they act everyday in our daily life. The students who has a good attitude towards studies has a tendency to be a successful someday. Student`s attitude has a great impact to their academic performances. Many students are experiencing failing grades and low academic performance because of not showing attention or interest toward their studies, absenteeism, cutting classes and participating well in class, especially boys. Absenteeism and lack of interest in an activity or discussion are the most problem which can cause low academic performance of a certain student. Attitudes form as a result of personal experience, observation and influence by social norms. The students having positive attitude towards any situation achieve their goal easily. So, development or formation of positive attitude in one`s life is helpful facing any challenge.

Attitudes are defined as “a set of beliefs that we hold in relation to an attitude object, where an attitude object is a person, thing, event, or issue” (Crisp & Turner, 2010). Allport defined attitude as “a mental and a neutral state of readiness organized through experience exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.” Ulbom (2001) defined attitude as an individual perception and reactions to a task which is expected to be carried out or executed in a group, institution, school setting or an organization. Attitude can be said to be positive or high when individual response to the task is favorable and when they show commitment to their duties. It can be negative or low when the students express a non-challenged response with regard to what is expected of them in the given situation. Attitude is an acquired mental construct.

This research work is anchored on self-determination theory espoused by Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasizes the satisfaction of basic human needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness as key driver of motivated behaviour. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that concerns people’s innate psychological needs. It pertains to the motivation behind people’s choice in the absence of internal influences and distractions. SDT focuses on the degree to which human behaviour is self-motivated and self-determined. Humanistic psychology is interested in looking at a person’s psyche and personal achievement for self-efficacy and self-actualization. It is also an emerging best practice when working with certain populations such as individual with special needs.

Thus, the application of self-determination theory to the context of academic resilience of student is that it provides a theoretical perspective for the construct of resilience. The assumptions from self-determination theory that pertain to resilience include human behaviour which is a continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors and this behaviour is self regulatory in nature. Then, it further explains



that individual is able to select, organize and transform stressors that affect them to obtain mastery and competence and perceived self-efficacy impacts coping efforts and stronger the self-efficacy, the more active the efforts.

The recent studies conducted by Abun (2018) and Fitzsimmons and Douglas (2005) confirmed the consistency of attitude and behavior. Abun (2018) measured the relationship between environmental attitude and environmental behavior, whereby environmental attitude predicted the environmental behavior of the students and employees toward the environment. Further, he also conducted a study on the entrepreneurial attitude and future intention to establish a business and the finding also indicated a correlation. The study of Fitzsimmons and Douglas (2005) also found that entrepreneurial attitudes are significant in explaining career decisions in the future and their intention to go into business. Many studies were conducted on academic resilience of students with special needs but few done in Northern Nigeria and none was found by the researchers to have been undertaken in Nasarawa State. The researchers therefore, filled the gap by examining academic self-efficacy and academic attitude as predictors of academic resilience among students with special needs in Lafia metropolis.

Statement of Problem

Low level of resilience among students with special needs constitutes a major problem leading to students attrition. The challenges faced by students with special needs which in one way or the other affecting their academic performance and unable to adapt to these challenges caused poor performance which includes socio-amenities, personality types, students' attitude towards learning, financial constraints, teaching methodologies, school environments and among others. Indeed, daily environmental condition combating with resilience and underachievement still prevails. This could be so because most students experience inadequate financial and social support both at home, among peers and in the schools. Most parents cannot afford needed learning materials for students with special needs and they expected to make do with inadequate libraries as those prevalent within the Nigerian communities. In view of this, such students with special education needs are denied of teaching and learning at the same pace with classmates who have all the resources materials. Further still, some of these students are expected to trade before coming to school and after leaving school, leading to no time or inadequate study period to go over what has been taught. It is on this background that this study is designed to investigate academic self-efficacy and academic attitude as predictors of academic resilience among students with special needs

Purpose of the Study

The broad purpose of this study is to investigate the academic self-efficacy and academic attitude as predictors of academic resilience among students with special needs in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa state. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to;

- (i) examine the relationship that exists among academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience
- (ii) investigate the composite contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of academic resilience among students with special needs
- (iii) find out the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) on dependent variable (academic resilience) of the students with special needs

Research Questions



The following research questions were formulated and answered

1. What is relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience of students with special needs?
2. What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of academic resilience among students with special needs?
3. What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) to academic resilience of students with special needs?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design of correlation type. This research design was employed in the study in order to examine the relationships that exist between the variables of interest in the study. The population of the study was all secondary school students with special needs in five secondary schools in Lafia metropolis of Nasarawa state. The Stratified Random technique was used to select one hundred and forty-eight (148) participants, (male 79, female 69) as sample size. Three instruments were used for data collection. The Academic Resilience scale used as a measure for Academic resilience was developed by Neil and Dias (2001) with test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.70. The Academic Self-Efficacy was measured using an adapted and modified version of the Downs (2005) scale with 20 items and a reliability index of 0.69. Academic Attitude scale was self-developed by the researchers, to establish content validity; three experts in the field of special education examined the extent to which the items measured academic attitude. Their suggestions were used to restructure some of the items. Academic attitude contain 13 items and underwent pilot testing with reliability coefficient of 0.74. The data was collected and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Results Research Question 1: What type of relationship exists between academic self-efficacy, academic attitude and academic resilience among students with special needs?

Table 1: Summary of correlation matrix showing the relationship that exists between academic self-efficacy and academic resilience and between academic attitude and academic resilience among students with special needs

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	r	p-value
Academic resilience	149	48.1	6.349	.534**	< .01
Academic self-efficacy	149	59.66	7.62		
Academic resilience	149	48.1	6.349	.620**	< .01
Academic attitude	149	44.56	7.334		

Table 1 reveals the relationship that exists between the independent variables (academic self-efficacy, academic attitude) and the dependent variable (academic resilience). The result shows that academic resilience positively correlates with academic self-efficacy ($r= 0.534$, $p<0.01$) and academic attitude ($r= 0.424$, $p<0.01$). This implies that increased academic self-efficacy and positive attitudes to learning would improve academic resilience of students with special needs.

Research Question 2: What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of academic resilience among students with special needs?

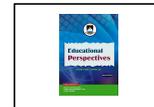


Table 2: Regression summary showing the combined effect academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience of students with special needs

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	1784.87	2	892.437	31.161	.000
Residual	4181.41	146	28.64		
Total	5966.28	148			

R = 0.547; R² = 0.299; Adj. R² = 0.290

Table 2 reveals the combined effects of the independent variables (academic self-efficacy and Academic attitude) to the prediction of the dependent variable (Academic resilience). The regression yielded a multiple R value of 0.547, R² = 0.299 and Adj.R² = 0.290 respectively. When the independent variables are pulled together, they account for 29% variance on academic resilience while the remaining percentage un-accounted for in this study is as a result of variables outside the model. Hence, there is a significant joint effect of academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience of students with special needs; F_(2,146) = 31.161, p<0.01.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) on academic resilience of students with special needs?

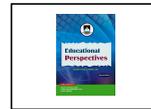
Table 3: Regression summary showing the relative contribution of academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience of students with special needs.

	Unstand. Coef.		Stand. Coef.	t	Sig.
	B	SE	β		
(Constant)	20.395	3.539		5.764	.000
Academic self efficacy	.367	.074	.441	4.987	.000
Academic Attitude	.13	.076	.151	1.705	.000

Table 3 reveals that the two independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) are good predictors of academic resilience. The stronger predictor of academic resilience of the two independent variables is academic self-efficacy (β =0.441; t=4.987, p<0.01) and academic attitude (β =0.151; t=1.705, p<0.01). This implies that increased academic self-efficacy and positive attitude to learning would bring about positive increase in academic resilience of students with special needs by 44.1% and 15.1% respectively.

Discussion

The first research question states “what type of relationship exist between academic self-efficacy, academic attitude and academic resilience among students with special needs” The result of the findings revealed that academic resilience positively correlated with academic self-efficacy and academic attitude of students with special needs. The implication of this outcome was that improved academic self-efficacy and positive attitude to learning were springboard to increase academic resilience of students with special needs. The outcome of



this study support the findings of Martins and Marsh (2006) that academic resilience had positive correlations with planning, control, self-efficacy, persistent and low anxiety. The findings in this study is line with the work of Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) indicated in their studies among Mexican American students from three high schools in California, they identified “resilient students” as students who reported that their grades so far in school were mostly ‘A’s. Those students that reported that their grades in high school were mostly ‘D’s or mostly below D’s were regarded as non-resilient.

The second research question states” what is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of academic resilience among students with special needs” The result showed that there was significant joint effect of academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience of students with special needs. It means that the combined effects of independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) to the prediction of the dependent variable. The findings in this study agrees with Evely et al (2015) that established that self-efficacy and social support influenced academic resilience. They identified self-efficacy as the driving force behind the emergence of academic students resilience. This study also supports Abun (2018) which established that environmental attitude predicted the environmental behaviour of the students and employees toward the environment.

The third research question states “ what is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) on academic resilience of students with special needs” The outcome of this study revealed that the two independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) are good predictors of academic resilience. The implication of this result implies that academic self-efficacy and positive attitude to learn predispose positive increase in academic resilience of students with special needs. The findings of the study support the outcome of the findings of Martin and Marsh (2006) that reported that self-efficacy is one of the factors promoting positive predictive influence on academic resilient students.

Conclusion

In this study, the researchers examined academic self-efficacy and academic attitude as predictors of academic resilience among students with special needs. The result showed that academic resilience positively correlated with academic self-efficacy and academic attitude of students with special needs. It was also revealed that there was significant joint effect of academic self-efficacy and academic attitude on academic resilience of students with special needs. Also, the outcome of the study affirmed the two independent variables (academic self-efficacy and academic attitude) are good predictors of academic resilience among students with special needs.

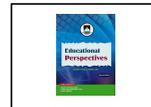
Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Teachers must integrate resilience in their delivery of instruction to minimize the risk of failure and drop out among students with special needs.
2. Counselling Psychologists should take steps in the right direction to enhance students academic resilience through the use of proper counselling techniques, appropriate mentoring and implementation of suitable programs and practices which will ultimately lead to better academic resilience achievement among students with special needs.



3. Educational institutions must integrate fostering resilience techniques at their classroom settings through government intervention fund which will assist to create positive learning environment and teachers must promote good teacher-students relationship to enhance resilience of at-risk students.



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