

Enhancing University Undergraduates' Academic Performance: The Roles of Academic Self-Efficacy, Social Support, and Student-Lecturer Interaction

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Abstract

This study explores the roles of psychosocial factors (academic self-efficacy, social support, and lecturer-student interaction) on the academic performance of university undergraduates. Utilizing a descriptive survey research design, data were collected from 150 students with a mean age of 21.51 (SD = 2.71; range = 15) through a structured questionnaire. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were employed to ensure representation across various faculties domiciled on the main campus of the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE), Nigeria. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with multiple regression analysis, t-test, and ANOVA to test the hypotheses. The results indicated significant positive relationships between academic self-efficacy, social support, lecturer-student interactions, and academic performance. Additionally, gender differences were found, with male students outperforming female students, while no significant differences were observed based on age. These findings highlight the critical role of these psychosocial factors in shaping academic success and suggest the need for targeted interventions to enhance academic self-efficacy, social support, and lecturer-student interaction. The study concludes that addressing these psychosocial factors is essential for improving students' academic outcomes and fostering a supportive academic environment at FUOYE. The results contribute to the broader understanding of educational success determinants and provide valuable insights for policymakers and educators in similar contexts.

Keywords: academic performance, academic self-efficacy, social support, student-lecturer interaction

Introduction

The academic performance of university undergraduates has long been a subject of concern for educators, policymakers, and parents alike. It is widely acknowledged that many psychosocial factors contribute to academic success or failure, ranging from individual traits to broader societal

influences. The increasing body of literature on psychosocial factors shows influences on students' academic outcomes, achievement, and performance at both local and global levels (Chermers & Garcia, 2001 & Robbins et al., 2004). These factors encompass psychological aspects while also incorporating social conditions that

affect students' physical and emotional well-being, subsequently influencing their academic performance (Naz et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2020). According to Kolo, Jaafar, and Ahmad (2017), students' attitudes and social interactions can significantly predict academic success. It has also been suggested that psychosocial factors play a critical role in the academic achievements of college students (Fong et al., 2016). Studies have highlighted that these factors can be crucial predictors of students' success and goal attainment (Hako & Shikongo, 2019; Thomas et al., 2020).

Consequently, the roles of these psychosocial factors on academic performance continue to be pressing issues within the context of university undergraduates, raising questions about how these factors contribute to students' academic outcomes. Psychosocial factors encompass a range of elements, including self-efficacy, social support, and interpersonal interactions, collectively shaping a student's ability to navigate academic challenges (Kolo et al., 2017). Understanding the roles of these factors is crucial, particularly in the context of higher institutions, where students are expected to achieve high levels despite various personal and environmental challenges. For this study, the psychosocial factors investigated are academic self-efficacy, social support, and student-lecturer interaction.

Academic self-efficacy refers to students' belief in their ability to succeed in academic tasks. (Asghari et al., 2014; Fakhrou & Habib, 2022). In Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, people's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviours are all influenced by their ideas about their self-efficacy. According to Schunk and Pajares (2009), children who possess high levels of self-efficacy in the classroom are inclined to establish ambitious objectives, persevere through setbacks, and eventually attain superior academic achievements. On the other hand, students who lack self-efficacy could shy away from challenging assignments, give up quickly, and do worse academically (Iretor-Oscar et al, 2021). Numerous research have clearly shown the link between academic achievement and self-efficacy, underscoring the need to promote self-efficacy in learning contexts (Zimmerman, 2000; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2016; Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Akhtar & Malik, 2021; Olasoji et al., 2022; Mohammed & Ismail, 2023).

Social support, another crucial psychosocial factor, plays a significant role in students' academic experiences. Social support can be understood as the perceived comfort, care, or assistance provided by significant others, including family, friends, and peers (Olayiwola-Adedoja et al, 2024 & Adaramoye et al, 2025). This

support is essential in helping students cope with stressors and challenges that may arise during their academic journey. Jiang, Zhang, & Ke (2018) suggest that social support can act as a buffer against the negative effects of stress, thereby enhancing academic performance. For instance, students who receive strong emotional and academic support from their peers and family members are more likely to perform better academically (Rueger et al., 2010 & Tindle et al., 2022). In contrast, a lack of social support can lead to feelings of isolation and anxiety, which may negatively impact a student's academic outcomes. This assertion aligns with Hefner & Eisenberg (2009), who found that students with low perceived social support were more likely to report depressive symptoms, anxiety, and academic difficulties. Social support was a protective factor for mental health and academic persistence.

The interaction between students and their lecturers is another psychosocial factor significantly influencing academic performance. Positive student-lecturer interactions can enhance learning experiences, promote engagement, and motivate students to achieve their academic goals (Komarraju et al., 2010 & Trolan et al., 2016). Lecturers who are approachable and supportive and provide constructive feedback create an environment conducive

to learning, which in turn fosters academic success. On the other hand, negative or distant relationships with lecturers can hinder student motivation and engagement, leading to poorer academic outcomes. The quality of these interactions is essential in higher education, where students are often required to be more independent in their learning but still benefit greatly from meaningful academic relationships. This is in tandem with the study of Kuh and Hu (2001) who showed that frequent and meaningful interaction with faculty members significantly enhances student learning, satisfaction, and academic performance. These effects were consistent across gender and ethnicity.

In addition to self-efficacy, social support, and lecturer interaction, academic performance is also influenced by demographic factors such as gender and age. Research has shown that there are often significant differences in academic performance between male and female students. For example, some studies suggest that female students tend to outperform their male counterparts in various academic domains, particularly in language and social sciences (Voyer & Voyer, 2014). This is corroborated by Spinath, Eckert & Steinmayer (2014) who also report that girls tend to outperform boys in school in areas of self-regulation and academic motivation. These gender

differences may be attributed to various factors, including differences in learning styles, levels of motivation, and societal expectations. Understanding these gender disparities is essential for developing targeted interventions that address the specific needs of male and female students.

While age-related differences in academic performance are often less pronounced than those associated with gender, it still shapes student outcomes. For instance, younger students may struggle with transitioning to higher education due to a lack of maturity and life experience while older students may face challenges balancing academic responsibilities with work and family obligations (Wyatt, 2011). These age-related challenges can affect academic performance, underscoring the need for support systems that address the unique needs of students at different stages of life. Justice & Dorman (2001) found out that older students tend to have better metacognitive skills such as self-regulation whereas younger students may benefit from more structured academic support.

The academic environment itself is also a critical factor in determining student performance. Creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment can greatly improve students' academic performance. This includes access to resources such as libraries, technology, academic support services, and a campus culture that

promotes academic excellence and well-being. In contrast, an environment that is stressful, competitive, or lacking in resources can hinder academic performance and contribute to student's burnout (Pascoe et al., 2020). The role of the academic environment in shaping student outcomes highlights the importance of institutional policies and practices prioritizing student well-being and academic success.

These psychosocial factors are particularly relevant in the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) context. As a rapidly growing institution with a diverse student population, FUOYE presents a unique environment for studying the impact of psychosocial factors on academic performance. The university's commitment to academic excellence and the challenges associated with rapid expansion make it an ideal setting for investigating how self-efficacy, social support, and lecturer interactions influence students' outcomes. Moreover, understanding the specific challenges faced by FUOYE students, such as balancing academic responsibilities with personal and financial challenges, can provide valuable insights into how students' success can be enhanced in similar contexts.

Given the importance of academic performance in determining future opportunities and success, it is essential to identify and address the psychosocial

factors that may hinder or promote academic achievement. This study intends to provide a thorough understanding of the variables influencing academic performance among FUOYE undergraduates by examining the correlations between academic self-efficacy, social support, lecturer interactions, and demographic characteristics. This knowledge will help with the creation of focused interventions and support networks that aim to raise student achievement and promote access to and equality in education.

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the roles of academic self-efficacy, social support, and lecturer-student interaction on the academic performance of undergraduates. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to investigate:

- i. the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance among FUOYE undergraduates;
- ii. the impact of social support on the academic performance of FUOYE undergraduates;
- iii. the relationship between lecturer-student interaction and academic performance among FUOYE undergraduates;

- iv. the significant differences in academic performance based on gender among FUOYE undergraduates; and,
- v. whether age has a significant impact on the academic performance of FUOYE undergraduates.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed to direct the research

(H₀₁): There is a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic

performance of FUOYE undergraduates.

(H₀₂): Social support significantly impacts the academic performance of FUOYE undergraduates.

(H₀₃): There is a significant relationship between lecturer-student interaction and academic

performance among FUOYE undergraduates.

(H₀₄): There are significant differences in academic performance based on gender among FUOYE undergraduates.

(H₀₅): Age significantly impacts the academic performance of undergraduates of FUOYE.

Methods

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey method. A descriptive survey research design is a systematic and structured approach to collecting data from a sample of individuals or entities within a larger population, with the primary aim of providing a detailed and accurate description of the characteristics, behaviors, opinions, or attitudes that exist within the target group.

Population

The target population for this study comprised undergraduates at the Federal University Oye Ekiti (FUOYE). FUOYE is a prominent tertiary institution located in Oye Ekiti, Nigeria. The choice of FUOYE as the study site was informed by its diverse student population, which provided a rich context for examining the role of selected psychosocial factors on academic performance across different educational levels. The study was conducted on FUOYE's main campus, where a diverse array of students from various faculties and departments was accessible. The inclusion of participants from different academic levels and disciplines helped ensure that the findings would be generalizable across the student population.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample for this study was drawn from four faculties domiciled on the main campus of Federal University Oye-Ekiti: Faculty of Education, Faculty of Social

Sciences, Faculty of Science, and Faculty of Management Sciences. A combination of stratified random sampling, purposive sampling, and convenience sampling techniques was employed. To ensure representation across academic levels (100 to 400 level), the student population within each faculty was first divided into strata based on levels, and approximately 25% of the available students were randomly selected from each level, resulting in a proportionate stratified sample. Students who were present in lecture rooms or other accessible locations during the data collection period were approached and invited to participate, facilitating efficient data collection within the allocated timeframe. In total, 150 students participated in the study, with the distribution across faculties as follows: Faculty of Education, 40 students; Faculty of Social Sciences, 38 students; Faculty of Science, 36 students; Faculty of Management Sciences, 36 students. Within each faculty, approximately 9 to 10 students were selected per level, resulting in a roughly balanced representation across 100L to 400L.

Instrumentation

The research employed standardized instruments for data collection. The

questionnaire was meticulously designed and tested. It was divided into four sections, labeled A, B, C, and D, each addressing different aspects of the study.

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale: The Academic Self-Efficacy Scale used in this study was adapted from Gafoor and Ashraf (2007). It was developed to assess the academic self-efficacy of secondary school students, grounded in Albert Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory within the broader framework of Social Cognitive Theory. The scale is premised on the idea that students' perceived efficacy across various dimensions of academic work contributes to their overall academic self-efficacy. These dimensions include the learning process, reading, comprehension, memory, curricular activities, time management, teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, utilization of resources, goal orientation, adjustment, and examination. Content and face validity were established through expert judgment, ensuring the inclusion of representative items from all dimensions of the construct. In the present investigation, the researchers utilized the composite score from the scale, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.87.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support: This scale was adapted from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS),

developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley in 1988. It is a widely used psychological instrument designed to assess an individual's perceived social support from three specific sources: family, friends and significant others, and these were adapted to elicit information from the participants on social support. It comprised 12 items in total, with 4 items per subscale, rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree) and demonstrates high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > .85). In the present research, the researchers utilized the composite score and reports a reliability coefficient of 0.78.

Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS): This scale was adapted to elicit information on student-lecturer interaction. It was developed by Pianta in 2001. It examined teachers' relationships with an individual child in their classroom (Pianta, 2001). The 15-item, 5-point scale yields scores on conflict and closeness and has excellent psychometric properties across multiple studies and samples (Pianta, 1992), including internal consistency from .86-.89 in the MTP sample, and predicts children's classroom behavior, school retention, and academic outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). In this present study, the researchers utilized the composite score and reports a reliability coefficient of 0.72.

Academic Performance Scale: A self-constructed questionnaire was developed to assess various academic-related behaviours and attitudes, including time management, attendance, engagement, study habits, help-seeking behaviour, organization, academic performance, goal setting, and concentration. The content and face validity of the instrument were established through expert reviews by educational psychologists, during which some items were revised for clarity and relevance. To determine the reliability of the instrument, the test-retest method was employed, yielding a correlation coefficient of 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of the study were strictly adhered to throughout the administration process. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and participation was entirely voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, understanding that they could withdraw from the study without any negative consequences.

Statistical Analyses

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The study utilized multiple

regression analysis, t-test and ANOVA to test the formulated hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	75	50.00
Female	75	50.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the respondents. Of the total sample, 75 were male (50.0%) and 75 were female (50.0%). Although gender was not used as a stratification criterion during sampling, the equal distribution occurred coincidentally and reflects the composition of the accessible student population at the time of data collection.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	N	%
16-20	51	34.0
21-25	72	48.0
26 years above	27	18.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 2 illustrates the frequency distribution of the respondents' ages. It indicates that there are 51 respondents aged between 16 and 20 years, representing 34.0% of the total sample. In the age group of 21 to 25 years, there are 72 respondents,

which accounts for 48.0%. Additionally, 27 respondents are aged 26 years and older, making up 18.0% of the entire sample, majority of participants are therefore within the 21 to 25-year age range.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and

academic performance among FUOYE undergraduates.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic

performance among undergraduates of Federal University Oye-Ekiti

Variables	N	Mean
Academic self-efficacy	150	2.31
Academic Performance	150	2.29

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic performance among undergraduates at Federal University Oye-Ekiti. The data indicates a significant correlation between academic self-efficacy and academic performance, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.307$ ($p < 0.05$). This suggests that there is a notable relationship between the two variables,

implying that undergraduates who score higher in academic self-efficacy tend to also achieve higher academic performance. Consequently, the first hypothesis is accepted, reinforcing the conclusion that academic self-efficacy significantly relates to academic performance among undergraduates.

Hypothesis Two: There is a significant relationship between social support and academic

performance of FUOYE undergraduates.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and correlation between social support and academic

performance among undergraduates of Federal University Oye-Ekiti	Variables	N	Mean
Social support			
Academic Performance			

Table 4 contains descriptive statistics and correlations between social support and academic performance. As shown in Table 4, social support significantly correlates with academic performance ($r = -.439$; $p < .05$). This indicates that there is a positive relationship between social support and academic performance. University

undergraduates who scored high in social support also scored high in academic performance and vice versa. Hypothesis two is therefore accepted. This further implies that social support has a significant positive relationship with academic performance among undergraduates in FUOYE.

Hypothesis Three: There is a significant relationship between lecturers’ interaction and

academic
performance among
FUOYE
undergraduates.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and correlation between lecturers’ interaction and academic performance among undergraduates in Federal University Oye-Ekiti.

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Lecturers’ interaction	150	2.05	1.06
Academic Performance	150	2.29	.586

Table 5 contains descriptive statistics and correlation between lecturers’ interaction and academic performance. As shown in Table 5, lecturers’ interaction significantly correlates with academic performance ($r = -.278$; $p < .05$). This indicates that the

relationship between lecturers’ interaction and academic performance is positively significant. This implies that university undergraduates who have good interaction with their lecturers performed better academically and vice versa. Hypothesis three is therefore accepted. This further implies that lecturers’ interaction has a significant relationship with academic performance among university undergraduates.

Hypothesis Four: There is a significant difference in the academic performance of male and female undergraduates at Federal University Oye-Ekiti.

Table 6: T-test showing the significant difference in the level of academic performance among male and female university undergraduates

Variable	N	X	SD	T
Male	75	2.35	.546	5.558
Female	75	2.24	.541	
$r = -.278^*$			.000	
			.586	

The result from Table 6 shows that the value of ($t = 5.558$, $df = 148$, $p < 0.05$). Since $p < 0.05$, therefore, there is a significant difference in the level of academic performance among male and female university undergraduates at Federal

University Oye-Ekiti. This result indicates that gender could be a factor affecting academic performance as the male mean score is slightly significantly higher than the female mean.

Hypothesis Five: There is a significant difference in the level of academic performance

among university undergraduates based on age

Table 7: Analysis of Variance showing the significant difference in the level of academic performance among university undergraduates based on age

Academic Performance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	1.695	2	.848	2.523	.084	NS
Within Groups	49.398	147	.336			
<i>Total</i>	<i>51.093</i>	<i>149</i>				

From the analysis of variance in Table 7, there is no significant difference in the level of academic performance among undergraduates based on age. The F-ratio ($F(2, 149) = 2.523, P>.05$) further affirms the non-significance of the finding. Hence, there is no significant difference in the level of academic performance among university

undergraduates of Federal University Oye-Ekiti. The hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Discussions

The first hypothesis tested in this study was that there is a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance among FUOYE undergraduates. The results showed a significant positive correlation, indicating that students with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to achieve better academic results. This finding aligns with recent research by Honicke and Broadbent (2016), who conducted a meta-analysis of studies on self-efficacy and academic performance, revealing a moderate to strong positive relationship. Their analysis suggested that students with elevated self-efficacy are more likely to employ effective learning

strategies and persist in facing challenges, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes. Additionally, Putwain et al. (2019) and Akeredolu et al. (2024) further support this conclusion, highlighting that self-efficacy significantly predicts academic resilience and performance in higher education. Collectively, these studies reinforce the current findings, underscoring the essential role of self-efficacy in enhancing students' academic performance.

The second hypothesis explored the relationship between social support and

academic performance. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation, indicating that students who perceive higher social support are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes. This result aligns Jiang et al. (2018), which demonstrated that peers, family, and teachers support students' academic success. Their study emphasized that both emotional and instrumental support enhance students' motivation and their ability to manage academic stress, ultimately leading to improved performance. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Wang et al. (2020) confirmed that social support is essential in alleviating the effects of academic stress while promoting positive educational outcomes. The current study contributes to this body of research by reinforcing that social support is a vital factor in academic success, particularly among undergraduates.

The third hypothesis tested the relationship between interactions with lecturers and academic performance. The results indicated a significant positive correlation, suggesting that students who engage positively with their lecturers tend to achieve better academic results. This finding is supported by observations from Kim and Lundberg (2016), which identified student-lecturer interactions as a significant predictor of academic success and student engagement in higher education. Their

work suggested that students who frequently interact with their lecturers are more likely to receive valuable academic guidance, feedback, and encouragement, contributing to enhanced academic outcomes. Additionally, Cotten and Wilson (2021) highlighted the importance of meaningful student-faculty interactions in improving students' learning experiences and academic performance. The findings align with these earlier studies, emphasizing the necessity of fostering positive relationships between students and lecturers to enhance academic success.

Regarding gender differences in academic performance, the study found a significant difference between male and female students, with the male students slightly outperforming the females. This result aligns with some recent studies that have reported gender differences in academic performance of students. For example, Voyer and Voyer (2019) found that males tend to perform better in certain academic disciplines, particularly in STEM fields, whereas females generally perform better in languages and social sciences. The findings suggest that gender-related differences may be influenced by various factors such as motivation, societal expectations, and subject matter. However, it is essential to note that these differences can vary depending on the context and educational setting, as other studies have

shown that females often outperform males in different academic environments (e.g., Li & Lerner, 2021). The present study contributes to this ongoing discussion by providing evidence of gender differences in academic performance among Nigerian undergraduates.

Finally, the study tested differences in academic performance based on age and found no significant difference among students of different age groups. This finding is consistent with research by Stewart and Lowenthal (2022), who found that age is not a significant predictor of academic performance when controlling for other factors such as study habits and academic engagement. Similarly, Richardson et al. (2019) argued that older students often bring valuable life experiences and motivation that can compensate for age-related challenges, leading to academic performance comparable to that of younger students. The lack of age-related differences in the present study suggests that academic performance among undergraduates of the Federal University Oye-Ekiti is not significantly influenced by age, reinforcing the importance of focusing on other factors such as self-efficacy, social support, and lecturer interactions.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study have significant implications for understanding the factors that contribute to academic performance among undergraduates at Federal University Oye-Ekiti. The results highlighted academic self-efficacy, social support, and positive lecturer interactions as crucial predictors of academic success, reinforcing the need for interventions that strengthen these areas. Additionally, the study revealed gender differences in academic performance, with male students outperforming their female counterparts, while no significant differences were found based on age. These insights underscore the importance of considering psychosocial factors in educational planning and policymaking to enhance students' outcomes. The study also adds to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence from a Nigerian university context, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the global factors influencing academic performance.

Future research should explore the interplay between these factors and other potential influences, such as technology use and learning environments, to develop more targeted strategies for improving academic success. By focusing on enhancing students' self-efficacy, providing robust social support systems, and fostering positive student-faculty interactions, educational institutions can create

environments that are conducive to academic achievement. Ultimately, these efforts will contribute to the development of well-rounded graduates who are equipped to excel in their academic and professional pursuits.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed to enhance academic performance among university undergraduates:

- i. Enhancement of academic self-efficacy: educational institutions should develop programs and workshops aimed at boosting students' confidence in their academic abilities. By fostering a strong sense of self-efficacy, students are more likely to set ambitious goals, employ effective learning strategies, and persist through academic challenges.
- ii. Strengthening social support networks: universities should create and promote support systems that include peer mentoring, counseling services, and family engagement initiatives. Ensuring that students have access to robust social support can help mitigate academic stress and contribute to better academic outcomes.
- iii. Fostering positive lecturer-students' interactions: lecturers should be encouraged to engage more actively

with students, offering guidance, feedback, and encouragement. Educational institutions can provide training for lecturers on effective communication and mentorship techniques to enhance the quality of these interactions.

- iv. Addressing gender disparities: efforts should be made to identify and address the factors contributing to gender differences in academic performance. This could include tailored support for female students in areas where they may be underperforming and encouraging equal participation in all academic disciplines.
- v. Continuous monitoring and research: institutions should regularly assess the impact of these interventions and continue research to explore additional factors influencing academic performance, ensuring that strategies remain effective and responsive to students' needs.

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