ATTTITUDE TOWARD ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES OF STUDENTS IN THE POST COVID-19 ERA IN A NIGERIAN POLYTECHNIC: THE PREDICTIVE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SELF-EFFICACY

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic affected all sphere of life including the shutdown of all tertiary institution which invariably has negative implication on the academic morale of students' in the world and in a developing country like Nigeria. However, little information is known about factors that could boost the academic related activities of students' especially in the post COVID-19 era. In order to fill this gap, we examine the predictive role of social support and self-efficacy on attitude toward academic activities. The study used a descriptive correlational design with a purposive and convenient sample of 336 students ranging from 15–30 years (M = 20.54, SD = 2.65). Result showed that there was significant positive association among social support, self-efficacy and attitude toward academic activities. Also, there was joint and independent prediction of self-efficacy and social support on attitude toward academic activities. We concluded that social support and self-efficacy are predictors of attitude toward academic activities. Based on these findings, we recommended that sociologists and psychologists should help organise educational intervention programme such as cognitive therapy and self-efficacy training tailored toward boosting self-efficacy of students' which invariably can improve attitude of students' academic related activities.

Keywords: Academic related activities, self-efficacy, social support, students

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had negative effects on all spheres of life including the education sector since its outbreak in Wuhan, China in December, 2019 and in Nigeria since on the 27th of February, 2020. In a bid to curtail the spread of the deadly virus, lockdown of public places including tertiary institutions, among other measures were put in place by the Nigerian government. During the lockdown the conventional paradigm of face-to-face teaching failed and teaching and learning among students suffered a severe setback in Nigeria which invariably could have affected students' attitude toward academic related activities as the gradual easing of tertiary institutions resumes in the post COVID-19 era. In this study, academic related activities refer to students' academic routines such as attending lectures regularly, doing assignment individually or collectively, attending tutorial classes and sitting for test or examination. Students have different attitude toward the engagement of the aforementioned academic activities in the school environment. Prior to COVID-19 pandemic, there has been consistent report of poor attitude of students toward academic related activities such as absenteeism to lectures, poor attitude toward assignment and overall poor performance of students in Nigeria tertiary institutions' (Tenibiaje, 2009; Olorunsola 2020). Furthermore, the lockdown caused by COVID-19 pandemic have affected students' morale toward engaging in academics related activities (Ogunode 2020). Studies have also revealed that while some students reported that during lockdown, they enjoyed online classes, most reported lack of motivation and adverse attitudes towards online learning as barriers to their academic success (Quacquarelli, 2020). During COVID-19 lockdown, quarantine at home, the closing of educational institutions and adverse family environments were identified as major reasons for students feeling detached from their academics, according to Killan (2020). In Nigeria, only few tertiary institutions which are mostly privately owned organised online classes for their students. Despite the relative success rate recorded during the process, it was still marred with variety of challenges and one remain curious if the online class have any effect on students' academic related activities especially as the lockdown is eased on tertiary institutions in the country. Based on the foregoing background, it therefore becomes paramount for this present study to

investigate factors that can help boost academic related activities of student in the post-COVID era in Nigeria tertiary institutions. There have being studies on academic related activities and performance and its associated factors in Nigeria (Akinsolu 2010; Olanipekun, & Aina 2014; Adelodun, & Asiru 2015; Ogbeide & Ugwu 2016; Nwaukwa, Onyemechara & Ndubuisi 2019; Olorunsola 2020) However, little is known about how the joint impact of self-efficacy and social support on academic related activities among polytechnic students.

Adeyemo and Agokei (2010) described self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to perform successfully. Fakeye (2010) also sees self-efficacy as the assumptions of students in their own ability to perform a task. Koura and Al-Hebaishi (2014) say that a good predictor of human nature and behaviour is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be classified as high and low, according to Bandura (1997). Student with high self-efficacy have the tendency to meets up academic rigour and excels in school related activities while Low self-efficiency are students who hinder successful academic related activities due to a propensity to see themselves as unable to cope with the academic challenge. Ofole and Okopi (2012) say that students with low self-efficacy are at risk academically, while Koura and Al-Hebaishi (2014) claim that high or low self-efficacy is all about thinking about themselves that directly or otherwise affect their academic related activities Such reflective feelings either help their academic related activities or hinder them. It can therefore be said that the level of student self-efficacy can predict their academic related activities

Asides self-efficacy, social support has been positively linked to performance (Md. Aris Safree & Mariam Adawiah, 2010). Yasin and Dzulkifli (2010) define social support as an exchange of resources between two people such that the person who gives support aimed to improve the well-being of the individual who need the support. Social support refers to the feeling of being appreciated, valued, cared for and loved by those who are present in one's life, according to Gurung (2006). Social support is known to help individuals minimize the amount of stress they have experienced and better manage challenging living circumstances, according to Dusselier, Dunn, Wang, Shelley and Whalen (2008). Yasin and Dzulkifli (2010) argued that social support could come from various sources, such as families, friends, and any related social group. Also, social support can come in the form of practical assistance given by others when needed, including evaluation of various circumstances, successful coping strategies and emotional support. It therefore can be said that the level of social support could help boost academic related activities among students.

Review of Empirical Literature
Self-Efficacy and Academic Related Activities
Past researches according to the researchers' knowledge on self-efficacy and academic related activities are scarce but there is enough documented evidence of self-efficacy and academic performance has been documented in the literature. For instance, Adelodun and Asiru (2015) examined the role of academic self-efficacy on performance in English language among 40 students. The findings of their study showed that academic self-efficacy had a positive link with performance in English language. Nwaukwa, Onyemechara and Ndubuisi (2019) examine self-efficacy as predictor of students' academic performance in accounting among 271 respondents. The findings found out that there was positive connection between students' mastery experience, vicarious experience and academic performance. Studies such as (Phan, 2012; Burnham, 2011; Purzer, 2011) all found positive significant connection between self-efficacy and academic performance. Muraina and Oyadeyi (2014) investigate academic efficacy and self-esteem as predictive role of academic achievement among 300 school going adolescents. The outcome showed that there was an important positive correlation between academic efficacy and academic achievement of students. Balami (2015) examine the relationship among self-efficacy and academic achievement among 768 students. The study showed no significant

relationship between learners' self-efficacy and academic achievement. Sivandani, Koohbanani and Taghi (2013) examine association between self-efficacy and academic achievement among female students. Results revealed significant influence of self-efficacy on academic achievement. Rosander (2010) found that highly self-efficient students conquer daunting tasks and academic hurdles and concentrate on opportunities. Fakeye (2010) also found that there is an important effect of academic self-efficacy on academic success. He found that high-achieving students with high self-efficacy had better results in the study conducted by Merriman (2012).

Social Support and Academic Related Activities

Social support on academic related activities was not found in the literature but we reply on social support on academic performance. Iruloh and Ukaegbu (2017) investigate the role of social support on academic adjustment among 382 first-year university undergraduates. The study found that for first-year university undergraduates, social support statistically significantly predicted academic adjustment. In the study done by Ogbeide and Ugwu (2016) examined the relationship between social support and academic performance among 270 undergraduates. The result showed that social support has significant positive influence on academic performance among the sampled respondents. Steinberg and Darling (2005) examined the link among social support and academic achievement among a sample of students. The study found that social support from family and friends appeared to have significant influence on the academic performance. Similarly, Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline and Russel (2004) examined perceived social support on students' performance. The study found that perceived social support significantly predict students' academic adjustments. Md. Aris Safree and Mariam Adawiah, (2009) carried out a study among 120 undergraduates on the role of social support on academic performance. The study's results found that social support had an important effect on academic success. Friedlander, Reid, Shupak and Cribbie (2007) investigate social support on adjustment among undergraduates. Result showed that increased in social support from friends predicted improved adjustment. The role of social support in academic performance among college students is examined by Cutrona, Cole, Cocangelo, Aaouline and Russel (2007). The findings revealed an important positive relationship between social support and academic performance. Studies have shown that the individual's adaptive ability is closely related to the nature of the available and obtained social support (Nahid and Sarkis, 1994; Holahan, Valentiner & Moos, 1995; Md. Aris Safree & Mariam Adawiah, 2011). From the above assertions, social support could help improve or buffer academic related activities among students.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant positive relationship between social support, self-efficacy and academic related activities among polytechnic students.
2. There will be joint and independent prediction of social support and self-efficacy on academic related activities among polytechnic students

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the theory of academic performance (ToP) propounded by Elger (2007). The theory emphasizes six fundamental concepts in order to shape a framework that can be used to explain performance as well as performance improvements. To act is to attain valued results. A performer can be an individual or a group of people involved in a collaborative effort.

Performance output is a path, and where the journey takes place is determined by the level of performance. The current level of performance depends holistically on six components: context,

level of experience, levels of skill, identity level, personal factors, and fixed factors. Three axioms are proposed for efficient improvements in outcomes. These include a performer's mindset, immersion in an enriching setting, and involvement in reflective practice. A difficulty for educators is the success theory. Performance related activities are highly correlated with learning-for-understanding (Wiske, 1998). They are inspired to produce results that make a difference as individuals learn and grow. Over the years, a primary goal of higher education has been to work and learn together in ways that make the world better. Relating this theory to this study, students' academic related activities can be improved upon when they have a stable mind-set, enriching environment and involvement in practically inclined activities in school.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Design
The correlational design was adopted in this study. The predictor variables are social support and self-efficacy and the criterion variable is academic performance.

Setting and Participants
The study was carried in The Polytechnic Ibadan. The institution is stated-owned, created in 1970 and it currently has five faculties. The setting was selected because it is one of the few tertiary institutions as at the time of the study in Nigeria that has resumed academic activities after the easing of the COVID-19 lockdown. A total number of three hundred and thirty six (336) participated in the study. Their age ranges from 15-30years with mean age of 20.54 and SD of 2.65. Their gender revealed that 117(34.8%) were males while 219(65.2%) were females. In terms of family type, 252(75.0%) were from monogamous homes while 84(25.0%) were from polygamous homes. Lastly, their religious affiliation revealed that majority 226(67.3%) practiced Christianity, 104(31.0%) practiced Islam while 6(1.8%) claimed they are traditional worshippers.

Sampling technique
The study used purposive sampling technique to select three faculties namely business and communication studies, financial management studies and environmental studies. This is because these are the faculties that the school management approved to start academic activities during the time of the study. Finally, one hundred and twenty (120) respondents were conveniently selected from each faculty.

Measures
Demographics: The questionnaire used in the study consist of demographic bio data of respondents such as sex, age, family type, religious affiliation and marital status, along with some reliable scales as described below:

Academic related activities were measured using the 10 item self-developed questionnaire. The scale was scored on a five-point scale of 1- Strongly agree to 5 - Disagree. Sample of the items includes "I pay more attention in class after the COVID-19 pandemic" and "I often come to class unprepared since the resumption of the COVID-lockdown". Two specialists in psychometrics carried out both face and content validity for the validation of the scale. All their corrections were annexed into the final draft before pilot testing it among 40 students who were not part of the main study. The reliability of the scale showed 0.87 which was an accepted level of reliability suggested by Nunnally (1978) and Clark and Watson (1985). A Cronbach alpha of 0.77 was gotten for this scale in this study.

Self-efficacy was captured with the 10 item self-efficacy scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) The item sample reads " I am confident that I can deal with unexpected

events effectively." The answer format varies from 1 = not true at all to 4 = true precisely. A higher score indicates higher self-efficacy while a lower score shows low self-efficacy .The authors reported a reliability coefficient of 0.82. The scale yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.87 in the study.

Social support was captured using the 12 item Multidimensional scale of perceived social Support developed by Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, and Farley (1988). The scale measures an individual perceives social support from significant others, family and friends. The scale was scored with scores ranging from very strongly disagree' (1) to very strongly agree' on a seven-point Likert-type scale (7). "My family is really trying to help me " and " There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings" are examples of items on the scale. A high score on the scale means high social support while low score on the scale means low social support. The authors of the scale report a reliability of .91. The scale also yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.93 in the main study.

Ethical consideration and Procedure

Firstly, prior to the beginning of the research, approval was obtained from the Polytechnic Management. Secondly, informed consent was collected from respondents and gained. The researcher also explained to the respondents the intent and goals. All respondents who participated in the study were also assured of data confidentiality. The participants were assured the anonymity and confidentiality of their replies, considering the purpose of the study; and they were orally retold about their right to opt out at will. For completion of the questionnaire, no time limit was imposed on the respondent. It takes approximately 5 minutes for a respondent to complete the questionnaire. With the aid of three qualified research assistants, the questionnaire distribution was performed by the researchers. After completing the questionnaire, each of the participants was thanked for their time and effort. In total, in the three faculties used in the study, 360 questionnaires were distributed and 340 were collected from the participants. However for the analysis, the 336 questionnaires that were properly completed were analysed. Practically, from the total number of questionnaires issued, a total answer rate of 93% was obtained.

Data analysis

We analyzed data using version 24 of the IBM SPSS. Using descriptive statistics, demographics were defined, while inferential statistics such as zero order correlation were used as a preliminary study to explain the potential use of two step-hierarchical multiples. Before we computed hierarchical multiple regression, some assumptions were considered. We ensured that there was a direct relationship between the variables of the independent and the dependent, and no high interrelations between variables were observed to indicate the multicollinearity problem (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Therefore, a two step-hierarchical multiple regression analysis was sufficient to be used.

Results

Table 1. Zero order Correlation, mean, and standard deviations of all variables (N = 336)

	Variables	Mean	SD	N	1	2	3
1	Self-efficacy	27.38	7.74	336	-		
2	Social support	53.94	20.70	336	.49**	-	
3	Academic related activities	23.85	5.19	336	.26**	.23**	-

Note: ** p <.01, * p <.05, M = mean, N-number of respondents, SD – standard deviation

The result above shows that there was significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic related activities [r (334) = .26, p<.05]. This finding implies that increase in self-

efficacy of students tends to increase in academic related activities. Also, there was significant positive relationship between social support and academic related activities [r (334) = .23 p<.05]. The finding also implies that increase in social support of students tends to increase in academic related activities.

Table 2: Summary of two- model hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting academic related activities of students (N = 336)

	Model I		Model II	
Predictors	β	t	β	t
Self-efficacy	.26	5.05**	.20	3.32**
Social support			.13	2.19**
R	0.26		0.29	
R²	0.07		0.08	
Adj R²	0.06		0.15	
R2 change (%)	0.06		0.07	
Df	1,334		2,334	
F	25.50**		15.30**	
F change	25.50**		11.04**	

**p < .01

The result in Table 2 showed that at first model, self-efficacy significantly predicted academic related activities (R^2=0.06, F(1,334) = 25.50, p<.01) and accounted for 6% of the variation in academic related activities. Addition of social support in second model led to a significant increase to 7% of variation in sexual compulsivity with joint contribution to the regression model (R^2=0.07, F(2, 334) = 15.30, p <.01). Similarly, at the second model, self-efficacy (β = .26, p <.01) and social support (β = .13, p < .01) independently predicted academic related activities among students.

Discussion

The study examined the relationship and predictive role of self-efficacy and social support on academic related activities among students in a Nigerian polytechnic. Findings revealed that there was significant positive relationship between self-efficacy, social support and academic related activities. This suggests that the more students are high in self-efficacy and social support, the more they have improved academic related activities. The finding was in line with study done by Phan, 2012; Burnham, 2011; Purzer, (2011) who all found positive link among self-efficacy and academic performance. The study was in accordance with Iruloh and Ukaegbu

(2017) who found that social support statistically significantly predicts academic adjustment. Also, social support and self-efficacy jointly predicted academic performance. The finding corroborates with Fakeye (2010) who found that academic self-efficacy and social support has significant influence on academic performance. The study findings also correlate with Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline and Russel (2004) who found that perceived social support and self-esteem were significantly predictive of the students' academic adjustments. The justification why this finding was so is because social support and self-efficacy are two important protective factors that can help boast academic related activities of students.

Conclusion, Implication and Future Directions

In view of our findings, we concluded that self-efficacy and social support contributed in explaining level of academic related activities among students with social support having higher impact. It therefore implies that these two variables need to be given serious attention by behaviourist, polytechnic management and concerned stakeholders in a bid to improve or boast academic related activities of student in the post COVID-19 era. Based on this implication, we therefore recommend that sociologists and psychologists should help organise educational interventions such as cognitive therapy and self-efficacy training tailored toward increasing or boosting students' self-efficacy which could help improve students' academic related activities during the post COVID-19 era. Also, polytechnic management should design appropriate social support system for students' as this would also help improve their academic related activities during the post COVID-19 era. Finally, friends and family should also offer support either in form of tangible or intangible, as this could also go a long way to improve academic related activities students' during the post COVID-19. Despite the relevance of this study to literature, its sample size is relatively small for generalization; therefore, increasing the sample size for better generalization of results is necessary for future studies. It is also not possible to create causal relations in this analysis. Future research can also use longitudinal study. Furthermore, this study only explored the effect of two factors on academic related activities (self-efficacy and social support). The two predictors contributed only 7% variance in students' academic related activities, indicating that the remaining 93% may account for another variable, not included in this study. Future studies should also extend the scope of this research by exploring the results of other psychosocial variables such as resilience, family type and optimism on students' academic related activities and performance.

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