



EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION, SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS AND ACHIEVEMENT STRIVING AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The pursuit of academic success is a paramount goal for undergraduate students and has gained increasing attention due to the challenging academic and socio-emotional demands students face during their university studies. Emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness are recognised as influential factors in undergraduate student well-being and academic performance. Therefore, this study assessed the influence of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness on achievement striving among undergraduates in public universities in Lagos State.

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and used stratified and random sampling techniques to select the 370 participants of this study. Three validated scales were used for data collection, which was pilot tested through test-re-test. The scales: Subjective Happiness Scale, Students' Emotional Exhaustion Scale, and Achievement striving scale demonstrated good internal consistency reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .810, .690 and .701 respectively. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested. Analysis of data was done using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis fixed at the 0.05 level of significance.

The findings revealed no significant combined contribution of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness on undergraduates' achievement striving ($R = .106$; $R^2 = .011$; $\text{Adj } R^2 = .005$; $F_{(2,338)} = 1.930$; $P = .147 > .05$). There was a non-significant relative contribution of subjective happiness ($\beta = .103$, $t = 1.900$, $p > .05$) and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -.025$, $t = .456$, $p > .05$) to achievement striving. Also, no significant bivariate relationships exist between achievement striving and emotional exhaustion ($r = -.027$, $p > .05$) as well as subjective happiness ($r = .103$, $p > .05$). The study concluded that emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness did not predict undergraduates' achievement striving. Therefore, there is compelling evidence from the outcome of this study to suggest that self-belief in one's abilities and personal achievement-seeking are beneficial for academic success. This research indicates once more how promising it is to put validated intervention into practice with the goal of improving students' domain-specific ability-beliefs in the classroom.

Keywords: Achievement striving, emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness, undergraduates, university

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of a student's academic motivation as well as their unique perceptions of their own efficacy and ability are crucial for success-seeking in higher education. The impact of motivation on student achievement has made it one of the most researched constructs in educational psychology. It has been discovered that intellectual prowess, motivation, and personality all affect academic success in higher education (Ayodele et al., 2022; Rae, 2019). The belief that passion for success or excellence will eventually payoff is one of the core features of the African dream, and it has long been integral to Africans' belief system.

Nigerian universities are found to be home to a diverse group of undergraduates hailing from various socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities. The pursuit of academic success is a deeply ingrained societal value in Nigeria, driven by the belief that education is a pathway to socio-economic mobility and success. Student success from the perspective of higher education administration is an institution's primary goal. Students' achievement striving has become an increasingly important topic in higher education as it relates to academic success and graduation rates (Ayodele, 2023).



According to Ray (2019) students often engage in achievement striving to excel in their studies, enhance their knowledge and skills and prepare for their future careers. The pursuit of academic excellence and success or the desire to excel academically and achieve educational goals is known as achievement striving. It is a key driving force for undergraduate students, often influenced by societal and familial expectations, as well as personal aspirations.

Achievement striving is the process of setting, pursuing and attaining academic goals whether they are related to grades, personal development or career aspirations. It is a fundamental aspect of undergraduate life, encompassing aspirations for academic excellence, personal growth and career advancement (Abosede & Akintola, 2019; Ayodele, 2023). Students often engage in achievement striving as they endeavor to excel in their studies and prepare for their future endeavors. Achievement striving among undergraduate students is a critical aspect of their academic experience significantly influencing their educational outcomes, personal development and future career prospects.

Achievement striving plays a crucial role in the educational journey of undergraduate students. In the context of Nigerian universities, this pursuit is often influenced by a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and educational factors (Emmanuel et al, 2020). Understanding achievement striving among undergraduates in Nigerian universities is essential not only for the improvement of educational practices but also for the broader development and progress of the nation. In the context of Nigerian universities, where higher education plays a pivotal role in individual and societal advancement, understanding academic success from the perspective of achievement striving is of paramount importance.

It was observed that the availability and utilization of support systems, such as family support, peer support, and university resources, play a role in achievement striving (Oyekan, 2020). Other factors that significantly impact students' achievement striving include socio-economic status and background of students (Ogunjimi & Ogunsina, 2018), cultural values and norms (Adekeye, 2019), gender disparities (Oloyede & Olowookere, 2021) and environmental factors (Afolabi, 2020). However, the influence of certain psychological factors such as emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness on achievement striving among undergraduate students in Nigeria has not been thoroughly examined.

Emotional exhaustion (EE) is a component of burnout syndrome, and it corresponds to the manifestation of the initial phase of stress, in which a student experiences emotional and cognitive distance from academic activities (Dominguez, 2013). Thus, it can be defined as a psychological state, where a decrease in energy, a feeling of emotional and physical exhaustion, and a perception of frustration and failure predominate (Barreto & Salazar, 2021). The literature shows that in the university environment, it is common for students to have psychological manifestations depending on the level of academic demands they face (Chau & Saravia, 2016). However, not everyone can get through and successfully overcome the challenges of higher education. Many students are overloaded with activities and suffer from emotional exhaustion (Asikainen et al., 2022).

Emotional exhaustion is a prevalent issue in the lives of undergraduates in contemporary society, who often experience high levels of stress due to academic, social and personal pressures as they navigate the rigorous academic requirements of their programmes. Adeyemo and Nwoke (2019) observed that rigorous academic standards can lead to high levels of emotional exhaustion among students. Studies have shown that emotional exhaustion is prevalent among undergraduates. Piazza and Hambrick (2019) reported that over 50% of surveyed undergraduate students experience high levels of emotional exhaustion.

Emotional exhaustion has been associated with a decreased sense of accomplishment, lower academic performance, and an increased likelihood of dropping out of university (Ayodele, 2023; Ouweneel, Schaufeli, & Le Blanc, 2019). However, studies on the impact of emotional exhaustion on achievement striving among undergraduate students have



been scarce. Research has shown a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and academic performance. High levels of emotional exhaustion may lead to reduced cognitive functioning, decreased motivation, and lower academic achievement (Fimian et al., 2019).

On the other hand, subjective happiness has been found to be associated with key psychological outcomes. However, there is paucity of research that assessed how subjective happiness is related to a number of positive student outcomes in the educational setting. The concept of subjective happiness is not universal and can be influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Subjective happiness reflects an individual's overall sense of well-being and contentment with life (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 2018). It has also been described as an individual's cognitive and emotional evaluation of their overall well-being and life satisfaction, and is an intrinsic indicator of a person's contentment with life (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2018). It is an important emotional state for students as it can influence their motivation, coping strategies, and overall satisfaction with their academic journey.

Happy individuals tend to exhibit greater resilience and better problem-solving abilities, which may help them navigate the challenges of university life more effectively (Lyubomirsky et al., 2018). Subjective happiness is a critical factor in students' motivation and their ability to strive for academic success. It has been linked to positive mental health and can influence a student's motivation to achieve their academic goals (Okeke & Afolabi, 2020). Multiple studies have found that a significant proportion of undergraduates report moderate to high levels of subjective happiness (Liu & Huang, 2022).

Subjective happiness can play a crucial role in motivating students to strive for academic success. Students who experience high levels of happiness may have a greater drive to set and achieve their academic goals (Lyubomirsky et al., 2018). Understanding this motivation is vital for comprehending the relationship between subjective happiness and achievement striving. The concept of subjective happiness is a vital aspect of undergraduates' well-being. The determinants of subjective happiness include social relationships, academic factors, resilience and coping strategies. Understanding and promoting subjective happiness among undergraduates are essential for fostering a positive and healthy college experience.

However, emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness and achievement striving are significant dimensions that may affect the overall wellbeing and academic success of undergraduate students in Lagos State, with its diverse population, vibrant urban environment and competitive educational landscape. It has been observed that students face numerous challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, financial constraints, and the need to maintain high GPAs for academic success (Ugwu, Onyishi, & Ugwu, 2019). This study therefore seeks to investigate how emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness influence achievement striving among undergraduate students in selected universities in Lagos State.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated and will be tested in this study.

- Ho1: There is no significant combined contribution of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness to achievement striving among undergraduates in selected universities in Lagos State.
- Ho2: There are no significant relative contributions of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness to achievement striving among undergraduates in selected universities in Lagos State.
- Ho3: There are no significant bivariate relationships between emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness and achievement striving among undergraduates in selected universities in Lagos State.



METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design which enabled the researcher to collect data from the study participants without manipulating either of the independent or predictor variables (emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness) but measuring them as they pre-exist among the participants in this study.

Population

University of Lagos (UNILAG), Nigeria and Lagos State University (LASU), Nigeria, are the two public universities in Lagos State. These universities attract students from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and academic disciplines. Therefore studying these universities allowed for insights into a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. UNILAG and LASU collectively represented a significant portion of undergraduate students in Lagos State and the target population for this study consisted of all the 9,379 undergraduate students of two public universities. There are currently 5,253 and 4,126 undergraduate students of University of Lagos and Lagos State University respectively, according to data obtained from the Registry Department of the institutions.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample of 370 undergraduate students was determined by the Cochran's formula for finite population and selected from the population through the stratified random sampling technique. This involved an initial division of the population into two strata, being the two public universities in Lagos State. Students for inclusion in the sample were selected from both strata through the proportional simple random sampling technique, such that the number of students selected from each stratum/university was proportional to the relative number of students in the stratum. The two institutions were selected because they are the two public universities located in Lagos State, and the inclusion of both universities guarantee a more comprehensive representation of the population in the sample.

The population sizes of undergraduates in the University of Lagos and Lagos State University are 5,253 and 4,126 respectively, giving a total population size of 9,379, and 370 students are to be selected from the two institutions. The number of students selected from each university was done proportionally, such that $5,253/9,379$ of 370 students = 207 students were selected from the University of Lagos, while $4,126/9,379$ of 370 students = 163 students were selected from the Lagos State University. Undergraduates were then selected from each of the universities through the simple random sampling technique which gave every student an equal opportunity of being selected. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample.

Table 1: Distribution of the Sample

	Name of University	Population Size	Sampling Fraction	Sample Size
1	University of Lagos, Akoka	5,253	0.5601	207
2	Lagos State University, Ojo	4,126	0.4399	163
	Total	9,379		370

Instrumentation: Three standardized scales were used in this study. These are:

Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS): The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) was developed by Adegunle (2014) to measure subjective happiness among undergraduate students. The SHS contains 21 items which are rated as a 4-point Likert-type instrument having responses ranging from SD = strongly disagree to SA = strongly agree. The developer reported test-retest reliability coefficient of .76 with a two-week interval between two administrations and a



Cronbach's alpha of .81 for the scale. The possible range of scores on the SHS is 1-84, with higher scores reflecting greater happiness levels.

Students' Emotional Exhaustion Questionnaire (SEEQ): The Students' Emotional Exhaustion Questionnaire (SEEQ) was developed by Alaka (2013) as a measure of emotional exhaustion among adolescents and young adults. The SEEQ contains 20 items which are rated as a 4-point Likert-type instrument having responses ranging from SD = strongly disagree to SA = strongly agree. The higher the scores the more individuals are emotional exhausted. The developer reported a significant test-retest reliability coefficient of .69 with a one-month inter-test interval.

Achievement Striving Scale (ASS): Achievement striving scale was developed by Goldberg, Johnson, Eber, Ashton, Cloninger, & Gough (2006). The Ten (10) item scale was used by Akintola (2012) to test achievement striving construct of Yoruba youth engaging in entrepreneurship with cronbach's alpha which was found to be 0.78. Achievement Striving Scale was based on 4 point Likert scale with 1 demonstrating "strongly disagree" and 4 demonstrating "strongly agree". Higher score in ASS indicates high subjective career success. The predictive validity coefficient of .701 was found for ASS, showing that the scale is valid.

Procedure

The researchers obtained a letter of introduction from the Department of Education, School of Education and Humanities, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo and tendered this letter on visits to the Director, Student Affairs Department in each of the selected universities for consent and cooperation. Thereafter, the researcher met the students in their lecture halls and informed them about the purpose of the research and its associated benefits. The students were informed of their freedom to participate or not to participate in the exercise, and those who participated were encouraged to give frank and honest responses to the questionnaire items with the assurance that information disclosed by them are treated as strictly confidential. The instruments were administered. To guarantee the integrity of data collected, the researcher gave necessary additional explanations where such are required. Thereafter, the researchers collected the completed questionnaires immediately and thank the respondents and Director for their cooperation and participation in the study.

Data Analysis

The demographic data of participants were analyzed by means of descriptive statistical techniques of frequency counts and percentages. The research questions were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation. The first and second hypotheses were tested by means of Multiple Regression Analysis, while the third hypothesis was analyzed using the Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients at the .05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis of composite influence of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness on undergraduates' achievement striving

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	42.288	2	21.144	1.930	.147 ^b
Residual	3702.292	338	10.954		
Total	3744.581	340			
R = .106; R ² = .011; Adj R ² = .005; Std. Error = 3.30961					

a. Dependent Variable: achievement striving

b. Predictors: (Constant), emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness



Undergraduates' achievement striving yielded a coefficient of multiple regression (R) of .106 and a multiple regression square of .005. Table 2 also indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced an F-ratio value insignificant at .147 level ($F_{(2,338)} = 1.930$; $P = .147 > .05$). Therefore, emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness did not combine to influence undergraduates' achievement striving. Therefore, the hypothesis that stated "There is no significant composite contribution of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness to the prediction of achievement striving among undergraduates" was upheld.

Table 3: Coefficients of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the Relative Contribution of Emotional Exhaustion and Subjective Happiness to Achievement Striving

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	22.938	3.638		6.306	.000
Subjective Happiness	.089	.047	.103	1.900	.058
Emotional Exhaustion	-.020	.043	-.025	-.456	.649

Dependent Variable: Achievement Striving

The results in Table 3 revealed the strength of causation of the predictor variables (subjective happiness and emotional exhaustion) on the criterion variable (achievement striving). The results showed that subjective happiness ($\beta = .103$, $t = 1.900$, $p > .05$) and emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -.025$, $t = .456$, $p > .05$) did not relatively or individually predicted undergraduates' achievement striving.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix for the Relationship between Emotional Exhaustion, Subjective Happiness and Achievement Striving

	Emotional Exhaustion	Subjective Happiness	Achievement Striving
Emotional Exhaustion	1.000	-.024	-.027
Subjective Happiness		1.000	.103
Achievement Striving			1.000

Table 4 showed no significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and achievement striving ($r = -.027$, $p > .05$); subjective happiness and achievement striving ($r = .103$, $p > .05$); and emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness ($r = -.024$, $p > .05$). Therefore, the earlier set null hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The hypothesis stated that there is no significant combined contribution of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness to achievement striving among undergraduates. There are no significant relative contributions of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness to achievement striving among undergraduates and there are no significant bivariate relationships between emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness and achievement striving among undergraduates in selected universities in Lagos State. This finding is not in line with that of Adebayo and Oni (2020) who examined the relationship between emotional exhaustion and academic resilience among undergraduates of public universities in Oyo State, Nigeria, and revealed that emotional exhaustion was negatively related with academic resilience among undergraduates. In other words, higher levels of emotional exhaustion were associated with lower levels of academic resilience, and, by extension, achievement striving.

Also, this finding does not conform to that of Okoli and Nwosu (2021) who carried out a study on emotional exhaustion and academic resilience and revealed that emotional exhaustion had adverse impact on each of students' motivation, goal setting, and achievement striving.

Findings also showed that there are no significant relative contributions of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness to achievement striving among undergraduates in



selected universities in Lagos State. This finding is not similar to that of Ojo and Oluwole (2019) who carried out an investigation on subjective happiness and academic achievement among university undergraduates in South-West Nigeria. Data were subjected to regression analysis at .05 alpha level. Findings revealed that subjective happiness contributed significantly and positively to academic achievement among the students.

However, Smith, Johnson and Garcia (2020) carried out a study with a sample of 500 undergraduate students from multiple universities in a metropolitan area which was followed over two academic years. Measures of emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness and achievement striving were collected to examine the combined contribution of emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness on achievement striving. Result revealed that emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness did not significantly predict achievement striving when examined together. Furthermore, neither emotional exhaustion nor subjective happiness made a significant relative contribution to achievement striving in the multiple regression model. Bivariate correlations showed non-significant relationships between emotional exhaustion, subjective happiness, and achievement striving. Contrary to expectations, the results suggest that emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness do not combine to influence achievement striving among college students.

Conclusion

As Nigeria continues to struggle with quality education and degree attainment, higher education administrators and policymakers seek additional evidence on the strategies and interventions designed to improve academic outcomes. This study provided a critical examination of the research on factors influencing achievement striving. These factors are emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness.

The results of this study showed that emotional exhaustion and subjective happiness will not predict undergraduates' achievement striving. It is therefore concluded that since achievement striving is important in the overall wellness of students, it is suggested that a positive school environment is a key factor that should be considered together to improve undergraduates' achievement striving.

Recommendations

In view of the findings stated earlier, the following recommendations were made in line with the findings:

1. There is compelling evidence from the outcome of this study to suggest that self-belief in one's abilities and personal achievement-seeking are beneficial for academic success. This research indicates once more how promising it is to put validated intervention into practice with the goal of improving students' domain-specific ability-beliefs in the classroom.
2. Students get motivated when their needs are met. It is important for the school to address their interests and needs. Consequently, the curriculum ought to be designed with the requirements and interests of the students in mind, as well as their real-world experiences and situations.
3. There is the need for social support. Academic key social agents in a student's environment, such as teachers, parents, and friends, have a significant impact on their striving for success and motivation. The idea that students' motivation increases when parents and teachers value their independence and competence is supported by research.



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