
Academic Self-Efficacy and Social Support as Determinants of Learning Adjustment of Women Studying through Distance Learning Mode

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Abstract

Absence of face-to-face interaction with instructors and peers in distance learning can lead to a lack of social support which can negatively impact self-efficacy. This study investigated the impact of academic self-efficacy and social support on learning adjustment of women studying by distance learning in Nigeria. This study adopted ex-post facto research design. The design was adopted because the independent variables have already occurred and cannot be manipulated. Simple random sampling was used to select 250 respondents. Three hypotheses guided the study. Questionnaire on Learning Adjustment of Women Studying through the Distance Learning Mode Questionnaire ($r=0.76$) was used to obtain data for the study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, inter-correlation matrix, simple regression analysis and multiple regression analysis. Results showed a high positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and learning adjustment ($r = .501$) as well as between social support and learning adjustment ($r = .791$). It was found that there was a significant joint effect of academic self-efficacy and social support (F -ratio (2, 247) = 183.230) on learning adjustment of women studying by distance learning with an R -value of .773. It was also found that social support ($t = 3.988$, $\eta^2 = .488$; $p < .000$) and academic self-efficacy ($t = 3.012$, $\eta^2 = .388$; $p < .003$) had significant relative effects on learning adjustment of the respondents. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Distance Learning Centre in southwest Nigeria should organise training and workshops for women and ensure a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: Self-efficacy, Distance Learning, Learning Adjustment, Social Support, Women

Introduction

In recent times, distance learning has gained popularity as an educational model in which teachers and students are physically apart (Maijo, 2021). This model's flexibility appeals to students of all backgrounds, but it especially appeals to women who have to juggle other obligations like childcare and work in addition to their studies. However, women face particular challenges when it comes to distance learning, like the absence of in-person interactions with peers and instructors, which can negatively impact their self-efficacy and lead to feelings

of isolation. Other challenges include technical difficulties, internet connectivity issues, or a lack of familiarity with online platforms. Consequently, there may be a detrimental effect on a student's academic self-efficacy, or their confidence in their capacity to achieve in their academics (Maijo, 2021).

Given the importance of social support networks for academic achievement, offering such support to women participating in remote learning programmes may increase their sense of self-efficacy. Studies on the effects of social support and academic self-efficacy on the learning adjustment of women enrolled in distant learning programmes are, nevertheless, scarce (Ali, 2021). According to Ali's (2021) research, self-efficacy for information technology use is a strong predictor of academic self-efficacy among e-learners taking online courses. The study conducted by Vasquez, Esteban, Mamani-Benito, and Caycho-Rodríguez (2022) investigated the relationship between academic self-efficacy and perceived social support in relation to stress management among university students in Peru.

Researchers discovered that academic self-efficacy and perceived social support were variables that significantly predicted the stress-coping means employed by the study participants. Suryaratri, Komalasari, and Medellu (2022) looked into the role that social support and academic self-efficacy had in achieving flow in online learning. They discovered that these variables positively and significantly influenced the academic flow of college students during online learning.

This lack of research is a significant gap in the current literature on the impact of academic self-efficacy and social support on the learning adjustment of women studying through distance mode, and it underscores the need for further investigation. Therefore, this study aims to contribute valuable insights to policymakers and educators involved in shaping and implementing distance learning programmes in southwest Nigeria, by investigating the link between academic self-efficacy and social support as determinants of learning adjustment of women studying through the distance learning mode. The outcome of this study can assist policymakers and educators can create a more inclusive and empowering learning environment for women studying by distance learning mode.

Statement of the Problem

Although distance learning affords women the opportunity to combine studies with family commitment, the absence of face-to-face interaction with instructors and peers in distance learning can be isolating. This lack of social support can negatively impact self-efficacy, especially for women who thrive on collaboration and feedback. The flexibility of distance learning may lead to a situation in which women may struggle with self-discipline and time management, leading to procrastination and ultimately, a sense of inadequacy which can lower self-efficacy. Technical glitches such as internet connectivity issues, or unfamiliarity with online platforms can create frustration and hinder learning progress. Lack of social support and low academic self-efficacy can undermine the academic performance of women studying through distance learning mode.

Literature Review

The Role of Academic Self-Efficacy

A student's confidence in their capacity to plan their learning activities, finish their assignments, and achieve academic standards is largely based on their academic self-efficacy. Students who have higher levels of academic self-efficacy are more likely to set high standards for themselves, feel confident in their abilities to succeed, and participate in academic activities, according to Schunk (2021). This self-belief can enhance academic achievement and lower the risk of dropping out of school (Peguero & Shaffer, 2021). Numerous researches have demonstrated the strong correlation between academic success and self-efficacy. According to Waseem and Asim (2020), students who have a higher level of academic self-efficacy typically do better in the classroom. Additionally, a reciprocal association between the two factors has been proven by research.

Students with high academic self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenging tasks, view mistakes as opportunities for growth, and seek help when needed. In contrast, students with low academic self-efficacy can become easily discouraged by academic setbacks, experience higher levels of stress, and be less likely to seek help when needed. Therefore, it is essential for educators to help students develop their academic self-efficacy. By providing students with opportunities to succeed, setting high expectations, and encouraging a growth mindset, educators can help their students feel confident in their ability to succeed academically. Additionally, offering support and resources to students who may be struggling can help them build their self-efficacy and achieve their academic goals.

The Importance of Social Support

According to Ige and Daramola (2020), Okeke and Njoku (2019, and others in their social network, social support is the help, concern, gratitude, and security that people receive from one another. This support can come in a variety of forms, including information that is given verbally or nonverbally, emotional support, evaluation, and instrumental help (Ige et al., 2020). Social support is seen to be essential for people's psychological health because it gives them a feeling of community, boosts their self-esteem, and produces happy emotions (Daramola, et al., 2019). Research has indicated that social support has a major impact on predicting success when it comes to academic achievement (Rodríguez, Tinajero & Páramo, 2017; Serbic, Zhao & He, 2021). Pre-university grades and family support have been found to be important mediators of the association between academic achievement and social support (Rodríguez et al., 2017). Furthermore, students can benefit from the emotional affirmation, useful help, and feeling of community that a robust social support network made up of friends, family, peers, and teachers can provide (Serbic, Zhao & He, 2021). In addition to offering helpful academic advice and boosting students' self-efficacy, this support can increase their academic achievement and happiness with their university experience (Kaur & Beri, 2020).

Learning Adjustment

Zhang, Su, and Geng (2023) define adjustment as the capacity of an individual to fulfill psychological needs, accept oneself, take on social duty, and engage in social activities without encountering difficulties. On the other hand, learning adjustment is a more comprehensive idea that explains how children adjust to the behavioral, social, and intellectual standards of the classroom (Husaini & Shukor, 2023). It includes a range of elements, including conduct, social skills, academic achievement, and general well-being. An individual's learning adjustment process is influenced by their skills, abilities, adjustment characteristics, and interpersonal context. Researchers have also found that learning adjustment is connected to various elements of the educational process, including school involvement, readiness, performance, and experiences (Husaini & Shukor, 2023). Learning adjustment is important since it is linked to both general well-being and academic success. Academic challenges, social isolation, and mental anguish are more common among students who find it difficult to adapt to school. On the other hand, pupils who adjust to school well are more likely to achieve academic, social, and emotional success (Husaini & Shukor, 2023).

Distance Learning

Through online media, including information and communication tools and electronic communication devices, students from diverse backgrounds engage with instructors in the context of distance education, which eliminates the need for physical proximity between the two parties (Maijo, 2021). Olayemi, Adamu, and Olayemi (2021) define distant learning as a type of instruction that relies mostly on printed materials and electronic media, with little in the way of in-person interactions between instructors and students. According to Muthuprasad, Aiswarya, Aditya, and Girish (2021), peer learning is facilitated by the instructor, and students take part in student-centered distant learning. According to Fidalgo, Thormann, and Kulyk (2020), there has been a gradual evolution of distant learning into distinct phases. Information and communication technology (ICT) in the recent past has shown that distance learning is a subject of study and manner of instruction that is developing. According to Muthuprasad et al. (2021), distance learners can succeed in their studies with the quality of study materials that are now available. Tamrat and Teferra (2020) noted that through synchronous and asynchronous contact between facilitators and learners, distant learning offers significant opportunities in teaching methods and material management.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories are considered in relation to the two independent variables in the study. They are social cognitive theory postulated by Bandura (1986) and the social support theory formulated by Cohen and Wills (1985). The social cognitive theory posits that self-efficacy beliefs, one's confidence in one's ability to succeed in specific situations, influence academic achievement and adjustment. Students with high academic self-efficacy are more likely to persist through challenges, set goals and cope with academic stress in distance learning environment. The Social support theory suggests that perceived social support from family, friends and peers buffers the negative effects of stress and foster positive academic adjustment. These theories interact as social support from peers and instruction can boost academic self-efficacy, while academic self-efficacy can motivate students to seek out social support network.

These two theories are adopted for the study because they relate to the variables under investigation. For instance, a woman studying by distance learning mode who possesses high confidence in her own ability to succeed in her study stands a better chance to adjust to learning in spite of family commitment, seek social support and succeed academically. Students with high academic self-efficacy

are more likely to persist through challenges, set goals and cope with academic stress in distance learning environment. The social support that such a woman gets from family, friends and peers can help her to overcome the negative effects of stress and enhance positive learning adjustment, which is a necessity for academic success.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship that exists among the variables (academic self-efficacy, social support and learning adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning)?
2. What is the predictive effect of academic self-efficacy and social on learning adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning?

Hypotheses

Three hypotheses guided this study and were tested at .05 level of significance. These are:

3. There is no significant relationship between each of the independent variables (academic self-efficacy and social support) and learning adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning.
4. There is no significant joint effect of academic self-efficacy and social support on social adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning.
5. There is no significant relative effect of academic self-efficacy and social support on social adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning.

Methodology

This study adopted an ex post facto research design. The research design was used because the independent variables under investigation (academic self-efficacy and social support) cannot be manipulated as they already occurred. The study population are all women studying by Distance Learning in southwest Nigeria. Multistage sampling was used to select 250 respondents for the study. The first stage involved random sampling of 5 states out of the 6 southwest states. The second stage was proportionate sampling of female Distance Learning students from each of the 5 Distance Learning centres in each of the five states. The selected distance learning centres, the number of women enrolled for distance learning studies as at the time of carrying out this study and the sample selected are presented below: Centre for Distance learning, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State had 182 women while 65 women were sampled; Distance Learning Institute, University of

Lagos, Lagos State had 123 while 48 women were sampled; LAUTECH Distance Learning Centre, LAUTECH, Ogbomoso, Oyo State has 109 women while 42 women were sampled; Open and Distance Learning Centre, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State had 141 women but only 55 women were sampled; Open and Distance Learning Centre, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State had 103 women but only 40 women were sample. The total sample for the study is 250. Data was collected using Questionnaire on Learning adjustment of Women studying by Distance Learning (QOSAW-DL) designed by the researcher. The test-retest reliability coefficient derived was 0.80. Data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, inter-correlation matrix, simple regression analysis and multiple regression analysis.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1

Socio-demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	N	%	Mean	SD
<i>Age (Years)</i>				
17-21	87	34.8		
18-26	109	43.6		
27 & above	54	21.6	1.55	.499
Total	250	100.0		
<i>Course of study</i>				
Arts	73	29.2		
Engineering	31	12.2		
Humanities	73	29.2	2.25	1.011
Sciences	73	29.2		
Total	250	100.0		

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic information of the respondents. The table shows that women studying by Distance Learning in the age range of 18-26 years accounted for 43.6, those within the age range of 17-21 years accounted for 34.8% and those who were 27 years and above accounted for 21.6% with mean and standard deviation distribution of 1.55 and .449 respectively. The percentage of students in Arts, Humanities and Sciences was 29.2% each while those in Engineering accounted for 12.2% with mean and standard deviation distribution of 2.25 and 1.011 respectively. The table therefore shows the slightly skewed distribution of the respondents across gender, age and course of study.

Table 2
Inter-correlation Matrix showing Relationship among the Variables

Variable	Academic Self-efficacy	Social Support	Learning adjustment
Academic Self-efficacy	1	.501	.556
Social Support		1	.791
Learning adjustment			1

Table 2 shows that each of the independent variables significantly correlated with learning adjustment. It shows that a high positive relationship existed between academic self-efficacy and learning adjustment ($r = .556$) as well as between social support and learning adjustment ($r = .791$). It also reveals that a high positive correlation exists between academic self-efficacy and social support ($r = .501$).

Table 3
Joint Effect of Academic Self-efficacy and Social Support on Social Adjustment of the Respondents
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.773 ^a	.597	.594	9.886

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	35812.200	2	17906.100	183.230	.000 ^b
	Residual	24137.944	247	97.724		
	Total	59950.144	249			

a. Dependent Variable: Learning adjustment

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Support, Academic Self-efficacy

Table 3 above shows the joint effect of academic self-efficacy and social support on learning adjustment of the respondents. The table shows that the F-ratio at $df = 2, 247$ is significant ($F\text{-ratio}(2, 247) = 183.230$). The R-value of .773 is also significant as it implies that the prediction of learning adjustment of the respondents is determined by over 77.3% of the contribution of the two independent variables.

Table 4

Relative Effect Academic of Self-Efficacy and Social Support on Social Adjustment of the Respondents
Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-90.331	10.694		-8.447	.000
1 Academic Self-efficacy	.944	.313	.338	3.012	.003
Social Support	1.149	.288	.448	3.988	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Learning adjustment

Discussion of Findings

The study found a high positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and learning adjustment as well as a high positive correlation between social support and learning adjustment of women studying by distance learning. This result is in line with that of Alyami, Melyani, JohaniUllah, Alyami, Sundram, Hill, and Henning (2017), who discovered a favorable correlation between students enrolled in distant learning programme's academic self-efficacy and their ability to adjust to new learning environments. It also aligns with the findings of Nasir and Iqbal (2019), who discovered a strong and positive correlation between academic achievement and self-efficacy and concluded that overestimating one's own self-efficacy may have a negative impact on academic achievement, and Waseem and Asim (2020), who found a highly positive relationship between self-efficacy and social support of Open University students.

However, this result refutes the findings of Alyami et al. (2017), who found that among psychology students who completed an online self-efficacy scale, there was a small but substantial link between academic achievement and self-efficacy. Salami, Lawson, and Metzger's (2021) finding that academic social support and learning adjustment have a substantial positive link is supported by this study as well, suggesting that students who strongly believe in their academic skills would be better able to adjust to the demands of university life. It was also found that self-efficacy and social support have significant predictive effects on the learning adjustment of women studying by distance learning. Tinajero et al. (2020) found that social support predicted the academic adjustment of women enrolled in distant learning programmes, which is consistent with Frazier's findings. Self-efficacy and social support have been shown to have strong predictive effects on the learning adjustment of women enrolled in remote learning programmes, according to Frazier, Gabriel,

Merians, and Lust (2019). It was found that academic self-efficacy and social support had a significant joint effect on learning adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning. This is consistent with the findings of a study by Alhadabi and Karpinski (2020) who revealed that self-efficacy predicts and social support have composite effects on academic performance by increasing the positive effects of mastery and performance approach goals while reducing the negative effects of avoidance goals. Nasir and Iqbal (2019) also showed that self-efficacy plays a mediating role in the influence of social support on learning adjustment of women studying by distance learning.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that academic self-efficacy and social support play crucial roles in the learning adjustment of women studying by Distance Learning. The study reveals that these two factors have significant predictive effects on students' learning adjustment, and when they work together, they have a powerful joint effect on learning adjustment. Therefore, Distance Learning Centres need to provide adequate support and resources to enhance students' academic self-efficacy and social support, which may ultimately lead to better learning adjustment and academic success for women.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that Distance Learning Centres should focus on enhancing the academic self-efficacy and social support of women students. To achieve this, Distance Learning Centres should:

1. Offer training and workshops to help women students develop their academic skills and confidence. This could include sessions on time management, study skills, and effective communication. This will help enhance the academic self-efficacy of women studying through distance learning mode.
2. Work to create a supportive learning environment by providing resources such as online study materials, virtual tutorials, and access to academic support services. This will assist in providing support for women studying through distance learning mode.
3. Provide academic counselling services to help women students develop their academic skills and confidence. This will provide social support for women studying through distance learning mode.
4. Create opportunities for women students to interact with their peers, either through virtual group discussions or online forums. This will help to create a supportive learning environment and provide social support to women studying through distance learning mode.

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