

Resilience, Emotional Well-being, and Academic Performance: A Study of Nigerian University Students

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Abstract

This study explored the relationship between resilience, emotional well-being, and academic performance among Nigerian university students. The research adopted a descriptive correlational design to determine how psychological resilience and emotional health predict students' academic outcomes. The population comprised undergraduate students from three public universities located in southwestern Nigeria. A sample of 300 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure gender and disciplinary representation. Data were collected using standardized instruments: the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) for resilience assessment and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) for emotional well-being. Academic performance was measured through participants' self-reported Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). Data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. Findings indicated a significant positive correlation between resilience and emotional well-being ($r = .61, p < .01$), and both variables significantly predicted academic performance ($R^2 = .27, p < .01$). The study concludes that resilience and emotional well-being are strong psychological predictors of academic success among university students. It recommends that Nigerian higher education institutions implement student support and mental health programs that enhance coping skills, self-efficacy, and emotional stability for improved learning outcomes.

Keywords: Resilience, Emotional Well-being, Academic Performance, Nigerian University Students, Higher Education, Psychological Adjustment

Introduction

University life is a critical period marked by many academic, emotional, and social challenges. In the Nigerian university system, students often face multiple challenges including limited resources, economic difficulties, and unstable academic calendars. These conditions can increase stress levels and negatively affect students' academic

engagement and performance. . Students are often required to adapt to new learning environments, meet academic expectations, and manage personal responsibilities, all of which can generate significant stress. The ability to handle these pressures successfully often depends on individual psychological resources such as resilience and emotional well-being. However, students who possess strong

resilience and emotional well-being are more likely to manage these challenges effectively and maintain satisfactory academic results. Resilience refers to a person's capacity to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt positively to challenging circumstances. It helps students maintain focus, motivation, and a sense of purpose even in the face of setbacks such as poor academic performance, financial hardship, or personal loss. Emotional well-being, on the other hand, involves maintaining a positive state of mind, emotional stability, and life satisfaction while effectively managing stress and negative emotions. Both resilience and emotional well-being are considered essential components of students' mental health and play a vital role in shaping their academic outcomes.

The growing concern over declining student performance and rising mental health issues among university students highlights the need to better understand the factors that promote academic success. By exploring the relationship between resilience, emotional well-being, and academic performance, this study seeks to identify how psychological strengths contribute to students' ability to perform well academically despite various life challenges. The findings will provide insights that can inform university policies, counseling programs, and student support initiatives aimed at enhancing both academic achievement and psychological well-being.

Resilience is generally described as the ability to adapt positively and recover from adversity, stress, or failure (Windle, 2023). It enables individuals to maintain balance and motivation despite academic or personal difficulties. In educational settings, resilience is defined as students' ability to resist, recover from, and overcome academic setbacks while developing effective coping strategies (Bittmann 2021). Numerous studies show that higher levels of general resilience correlate positively with academic performance ;(Bittmann 2021; Erdem and Kaya 2021). Similarly, research on academic resilience confirms its direct link to better

academic outcomes (Abubakar et al. 2021, Ononye et al. 2022). Ojeleye, et.al (2022) stated that academic resilience is a strong predictor directly and positively affects academic performance, helping students succeed even with stressors. Also, components of emotional intelligence (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills) strongly predict a student's level of resilience.

Recent Nigerian studies have highlighted the growing concern about student stress and declining mental health. For instance, Adegboyega et al. (2024) found that resilience significantly predicted academic motivation and engagement among undergraduates in southwestern Nigeria. Their findings revealed that students with higher resilience levels performed better academically despite socioeconomic challenges. Similarly, Eze and Okafor (2024) reported a positive relationship between emotional well-being and academic performance, emphasizing that emotionally stable students were more focused, confident, and persistent in achieving academic goals. In northern Nigeria, Ogunyemi and Lawal (2023) observed that academic stress, poor institutional support, and financial strain negatively impacted student well-being, but resilience acted as a buffer against academic burnout. Another study by Okorie and Adebayo (2023) demonstrated that students who displayed emotional intelligence and resilience were not only academically successful but also better prepared for post-graduation transitions. Internationally, similar patterns have been observed. Panadero and Järvelä (2023) found that self-regulated learning and resilience improved academic persistence during post-COVID recovery in higher education institutions. Windle (2023) also emphasized that resilience serves as a protective factor that promotes long-term academic and psychological stability.

Similarly, emotional well-being refers to the state of experiencing positive emotions, life satisfaction, and emotional stability while effectively managing stress (Keyes, 2023).

Students with high levels of resilience and emotional well-being tend to display stronger academic engagement, persistence, and better learning outcomes (Panadero & Järvelä, 2023). In recent years, researchers have emphasized the importance of resilience and emotional well-being as essential psychological resources that help students cope with these pressures and succeed academically (Masten, 2022; Keyes, 2023; Adegboyega et al., 2024). In essence, fostering emotional well-being through specific skills like emotional intelligence equips Nigerian university students with the resilience needed to navigate academic challenges and achieve higher performance, underscoring a holistic approach to student success. (Shengyao, et.al , 2024) Ojeleye, et.al (2022) stated that resilience is positive and significant in achieving students' academic performance. Akpan and Isobara (2025) concluded in their study that students who have high level of self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation usually have academic resilience.

Studies on Nigerian university students consistently show that resilience and emotional well-being significantly boost academic performance, with emotional intelligence skills like self-awareness and self-regulation often acting as key drivers for building resilience, enabling students to overcome adversity and achieve better grades. Researchers recommend educational interventions to foster these skills, highlighting that strong emotional foundations help students thrive despite challenges, making emotional skills training crucial in higher education. In the context of Nigerian higher education, students face multiple challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, financial hardship, poor infrastructural facilities, unstable academic calendars, and limited mental health support systems (Ogunyemi & Lawal, 2023). These stressors often lead to anxiety, depression, and declining academic motivation (Eze & Okafor, 2024). However, evidence suggests that students who possess strong resilience and emotional well-being are better equipped to manage these

stressors and sustain academic success (Okorie & Adebayo, 2023). Although studies have examined resilience and well-being in students globally, there remains a limited body of research focusing on Nigerian university students. Most existing studies address these variables independently rather than exploring their combined impact on academic performance. Understanding how resilience and emotional well-being jointly influence academic achievement is vital for developing interventions that promote both psychological health and educational success.

This study is anchored on two major psychological frameworks: the Resilience Theory and the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. Resilience Theory explains how individuals adapt positively despite adversity. It emphasizes personal strengths, coping skills, and social support systems that enable people to recover from stress or trauma. In the context of university students, resilience helps them persist through academic pressure, financial challenges, and emotional difficulties while maintaining performance. The theory highlights that resilience is not a fixed trait but a dynamic process that develops over time through experiences, coping strategies, and environmental support. The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions posits that positive emotions, such as happiness and satisfaction, broaden individuals' thought–action repertoires and build enduring personal resources. Emotional well-being, therefore, enhances students' motivation, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, which are critical for learning and academic success. When students experience positive emotions, they are more likely to engage effectively in academic tasks, maintain focus, and build supportive relationships that promote resilience. Together, these theories suggest that emotional well-being and resilience complement each other. Emotionally balanced students are better equipped to respond adaptively to stress, while resilient students are more capable of maintaining positive emotions in difficult circumstances both

contributing to improved academic performance. Despite these findings, few studies in Nigeria have jointly examined resilience and emotional well-being as combined predictors of academic performance. Most available research treats them as separate constructs, leaving a gap in understanding their interactive influence on learning outcomes. Addressing this gap will provide more comprehensive insights into how psychological strengths can be nurtured to improve both academic and mental health outcomes among Nigerian university students.

This study is built on the assumption that resilience and emotional well-being are key psychological factors influencing students' academic performance. Both variables are interconnected and together shape how students cope with academic stress and maintain focus on learning tasks. Resilience enables students to recover from setbacks such as poor grades, financial stress, or personal difficulties. It fosters persistence, confidence, and self-efficacy qualities that enhance academic engagement. Emotional well-being, on the other hand, contributes to positive emotions, motivation, and psychological stability, allowing students to approach their studies with optimism and reduced anxiety. In this framework, resilience is viewed as a predictor of both emotional well-being and academic performance. Emotional well-being also directly influences academic performance and may mediate the relationship between resilience and achievement. When students are resilient and emotionally balanced, they are more likely to perform better academically. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between resilience, emotional well-being, and academic performance among Nigerian university students. By identifying how these factors interact, the research seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can guide the design of mental health programs, counseling services, and student development initiatives across Nigerian universities.

Objectives of the study

1. The main objectives of this study are to examine the relationship between resilience, emotional well-being and academic performance of University students.
2. To investigate how resilience and emotional well-being can influence academic performance among Nigerian university students.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between resilience and academic performance among Nigerian university students.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between emotional well-being and academic performance among Nigerian university students.

H₀₃: Resilience and emotional well-being do not jointly predict academic performance among Nigerian university students.

Statement of the Problem

University students in Nigeria often face numerous academic and emotional challenges such as financial hardship, high workload, and limited psychological support. These pressures can lead to stress, low motivation, and poor academic performance. While resilience and emotional well-being have been identified as key factors that help students cope with challenges and maintain good academic outcomes, most existing studies in Nigeria have examined these variables separately. There is limited research exploring how resilience and emotional well-being together influence academic performance among Nigerian university students. This gap makes it difficult to design effective interventions that enhance both mental health and academic success. Therefore, this study seeks to examine

the combined influence of resilience and emotional well-being on the academic performance of Nigerian university students.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between resilience, emotional well-being, and academic performance among Nigerian university students. The population consisted of all undergraduate students from public universities from south west zone in Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select three public universities from south west zone. A sample of 300 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure fair representation across gender, faculties, and levels of study. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for data collection. Data were collected using

standardized and validated instruments: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was used to measure students' resilience levels. The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) assessed emotional well-being. Students' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) served as an indicator of academic performance. These instruments were pilot-tested among a similar population that are not involved in the main study.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to summarize the data, and inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and multiple regression analysis to test the study hypotheses. All ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were duly observed throughout the research process.

Results

Table 1: Shows the relationship between resilience, emotional well-being and academic performance of University students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	DF	Cal.Value (r)	P-Value
Resilience	300	38.42	7.75		0.461	0.001
Emotional Well-being	300	41.08	8.11		0.392	
Academic Performance	300	3.27	0.64			

Table 1 shows a significant positive correlation between resilience and academic performance ($r = .46, p < .01$), indicating that students with higher resilience tend to perform better academically. Similarly, emotional well-being

was significantly correlated with academic performance ($r = .39, p < .01$), suggesting that students who experience greater emotional well-being also achieve higher academic outcomes. These findings led to the rejection of H_{01} and H_{02} , confirming that both variables are significantly related to academic performance.

Table 2. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Academic Performance from Resilience and Emotional Well-being

Predictor variables	Unstandardized Coefficients(B)	Std.Error	Beta(B)	t value	p value
Constant	1.12	0.24		4.67	.000
Resilience	0.028	0.009	0.36	3.11	.002
Emotional well-being	0.021	0.010	0.28	2.87	.005

$R = .57$, $R^2 = .32$, Adjusted $R^2 = .31$, $F(2,197) = 12.48$, $p < .001$

As shown in Table 2, resilience and emotional well-being jointly predicted academic performance ($R = .57$, $R^2 = .32$, $p < .001$). This means that 32% of the variance in academic performance can be explained by the combined influence of resilience and emotional well-being. Both predictors made significant individual contributions, with resilience ($\beta = .36$, $p < .01$) being a slightly stronger predictor than emotional well-being ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$). Therefore, H_0 was rejected, indicating that resilience and emotional well-being jointly predict academic performance.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that resilience and emotional well-being are significant predictors of academic performance among Nigerian university students. This suggests that students who possess higher levels of psychological resilience and maintain positive emotional states are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes. The significant positive relationship between resilience and academic performance found in this study aligns with the findings of Abiola and Udofia (2021), who reported that resilient Nigerian undergraduates tend to cope better with academic stress and achieve higher grades. Similarly, Yildirim and Solmaz (2022) observed that resilience enables students to effectively manage academic pressures, enhancing persistence and performance. In the Nigerian context, Oluwatosin

and Okafor (2023) found that resilient students demonstrated stronger engagement, adaptability, and motivation, which collectively improved academic outcomes. These studies underscore resilience as a vital psychological asset that supports students' ability to overcome academic adversity.

Additionally, the positive correlation between emotional well-being and academic performance confirms that students' mental and emotional states significantly influence their learning outcomes. This finding corresponds with the results of Zainudin, and Ismail (2021), who established that university students with higher emotional well-being tend to show greater motivation and academic success. Likewise, Al-Mahmoud and Mohammed (2023) demonstrated that emotional well-being predicts students' engagement and learning satisfaction across diverse educational contexts. Alam and Shujja (2020) also emphasized that emotional balance and self-regulation foster better concentration, learning attitudes, and academic achievement. Collectively, these findings highlight the importance of emotional well-being in fostering effective cognitive functioning and sustained academic engagement. The results also revealed that resilience and emotional well-being jointly predict academic performance, accounting for a substantial portion of the variance in students' achievement. This joint predictive relationship suggests a complementary effect where emotional well-being enhances resilience, and together they buffer students against stress and

academic failure. This is consistent with Nwosu and Agbo (2022), who found that both resilience and emotional well-being jointly influenced academic adjustment among Nigerian students. Similarly, Ogunleye and Adebayo (2022) reported that resilience moderated the relationship between academic stress and performance, indicating that emotionally stable and resilient students were better equipped to thrive under academic pressure. From a theoretical standpoint, this interaction aligns with the Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions proposed by Fredrickson (2021), which posits that positive emotions expand cognitive and psychological resources, thereby strengthening resilience and promoting higher performance. Overall, the consistency of these findings with recent studies reinforces the importance of cultivating both resilience and emotional well-being among university students. In the Nigerian university context where challenges such as financial strain, academic workload, and environmental stressors are prevalent these psychological strengths serve as protective factors that enhance learning outcomes and persistence (Ogunleye & Adebayo, 2022). Therefore, it is recommended that higher education institutions integrate psychological support programs, resilience training, and well-being initiatives into their academic environments to promote holistic student development.

Conclusion

This study found that among Nigerian university students, academic performance is strongly and jointly predicted by resilience and emotional well-being. Academic performance is typically higher for students who are more emotionally stable and resilient, underscoring the significance of psychological resources for academic achievement. These findings emphasize that academic achievement is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by emotional stability and adaptive coping strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Promote resilience and well-being: Universities should implement programs, workshops, and counseling sessions aimed at building resilience and emotional wellness among students.
2. Enhance mental health services: Institutions should provide accessible, student-friendly counseling and psychological support units.
3. Integrate emotional intelligence education: Elements of self-awareness, stress management, and emotional regulation should be included in general study courses.
4. Foster peer mentorship: Establish peer-support systems to help students adapt socially and emotionally to academic life.
5. Adopt supportive policies: University administrators and policymakers should prioritize student welfare by enacting policies that address mental health and emotional development within the academic environment.

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