

ACADEMIC RESILIENCE, LEARNING ADAPTATION AND SELF-BELIEF AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined academic resilience, learning adaptation, and self-belief among undergraduate students in selected universities in Edo State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised undergraduate students from four selected universities in Edo State. A sample size of 240 students was selected using simple random sampling technique, with 60 students drawn from each university. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Academic Resilience and Self-Belief Questionnaire (ARSBQ), rated on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts in Educational Psychology, while reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that academic resilience has a high influence on students' learning adaptation, and there is a significant positive relationship between academic resilience and learning adaptation among undergraduate students ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.05$). The study also found that self-belief has a strong positive relationship with academic engagement, and there is a significant relationship between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). The study concluded that academic resilience and self-belief are important psychological factors that enhance students' learning adaptation and academic engagement in higher education. It was recommended that universities should implement resilience-building programmes and strengthen support systems that promote students' self-belief and academic engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic resilience, learning adaptation, and self-belief have become central constructs in contemporary higher education due to the increasing academic, social, and psychological

demands placed on undergraduate students. The transition into university life often exposes students to unfamiliar learning environments, academic pressure, technological changes, and personal challenges that require strong coping mechanisms and adaptive capacities. In this context, academic resilience refers to students' ability to overcome setbacks, maintain motivation, and achieve academic success despite adverse circumstances. Research has shown that resilient students are more likely to develop positive coping strategies, sustain academic engagement, and maintain psychological well-being in higher education settings (Wu, Yu, Wu, Wan, Wang & Lu 2020).

Learning adaptation is equally important in contemporary universities where students are expected to adjust to diverse instructional approaches such as blended learning, online education, and self-directed learning systems. The rapid integration of digital technologies into education has transformed traditional teaching and learning processes, compelling undergraduate students to develop flexible learning strategies and self-regulated learning skills. Studies indicate that students who effectively adapt to new learning environments demonstrate higher academic performance, improved motivation, and stronger self-regulation abilities (Onah, Pang & Sinclair 2020).

Furthermore, adaptation to university life is associated with emotional well-being and successful academic integration, especially among first-year students who face transitional challenges in higher education institutions (Cobo-Rendón, Pérez-Villalobos, Páez & Gracia-Leiva 2020). Self-belief, commonly conceptualized as self-efficacy or growth mindset, also plays a significant role in students' academic achievement and persistence. Self-belief influences how students perceive challenges, regulate their learning behaviors, and sustain effort during academic difficulties. Undergraduate students with strong self-efficacy are more confident in their ability to complete academic tasks, which positively affects motivation, resilience, and academic outcomes. Recent studies have emphasized that growth mindset and self-efficacy contribute significantly to students' ability to adapt to academic demands and maintain achievement in higher education (Macakova & Wood, 2020; Ma, Ma & Lan 2020). In addition, interventions that promote growth mindset and internal locus of control have been found to strengthen undergraduate students' academic persistence and confidence, particularly in demanding disciplines such as STEM education (Macakova, V., & Wood 2020).

In contemporary higher education, the interrelationship among academic resilience, learning adaptation, and self-belief is increasingly recognized as essential for students' academic success and personal development. Universities are on to create supportive learning environments that foster resilience, adaptive learning skills, and positive self-perceptions among undergraduate students. Understanding these constructs is important for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to improve student retention, academic performance, and overall well-being in rapidly evolving educational contexts. Against this backdrop the current study examined academic resilience, learning adaptation, and self-belief among undergraduate students in selected universities in Edo State.

Academic Resilience among Undergraduate Students

Academic resilience has gained increasing scholarly attention in higher education because of the growing academic, emotional, and social challenges experienced by undergraduate students. Academic resilience refers to the ability of students to effectively cope with academic stress, overcome obstacles, and maintain satisfactory academic performance despite adversity (Cassidy, 2016). In contemporary higher education, resilience is considered an important predictor of students' persistence, motivation, and academic success. Recent studies indicate that resilient students are more capable of

adapting to difficult academic situations such as examination pressure, financial constraints, online learning challenges, and transitional stress associated with university life. Wu et al. (2020) found that psychological resilience positively influences students' coping strategies and emotional well-being, enabling them to sustain academic engagement even during stressful situations. Similarly, Thomas, Asselin & Cullen (2021) reported that resilience enhances students' ability to navigate academic difficulties and contributes significantly to retention and achievement in higher education institutions.

Learning Adaptation in Higher Education

Learning adaptation refers to the process through which students adjust cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally to new educational environments and learning demands. Undergraduate students often encounter significant adjustments related to academic expectations, teaching methods, independent learning, and social integration. Effective adaptation is therefore essential for academic achievement and student well-being. Studies have shown that students who successfully adapt to university learning environments tend to display stronger self-regulated learning behaviors, higher academic motivation, and improved academic outcomes. According to Onah et al. (2020), blended and online learning environments require students to develop adaptive learning skills such as time management, independent study habits, and technological competence. Students who fail to adapt adequately may experience academic stress, poor performance, and low engagement. Research also suggests that academic resilience contributes positively to learning adaptation. Resilient students are better equipped to manage academic uncertainty and adjust to changing instructional methods. Cobo-Rendón et al. (2020) observed that students with higher levels of resilience and self-efficacy showed better psychological adjustment and academic adaptation during their transition into higher education.

Self-Belief and Academic Engagement

Self-belief, commonly conceptualized as self-efficacy, refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to successfully perform academic tasks and achieve educational goals. Self-belief plays a critical role in shaping students' motivation, persistence, learning behaviors, and academic engagement. Students with strong self-belief are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, persist through academic challenges, and maintain commitment to their studies. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy emphasizes that individuals who believe in their capabilities tend to exert greater effort and resilience in difficult situations. Recent empirical studies support this assertion in higher education contexts. Macakova and Wood (2022) found that self-efficacy significantly predicts academic achievement and psychological well-being among university students. Similarly, Ma et al. (2020) reported that students with strong growth mindsets and self-belief demonstrate higher levels of academic motivation and adaptability. Academic engagement, which includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in learning activities, is strongly associated with self-belief. Students who possess high levels of confidence in their academic abilities are more likely to attend classes regularly, participate actively, complete assignments, and remain committed to academic goals. Smith et al. (2020) further noted that interventions aimed at improving students' self-belief can enhance academic persistence and engagement, particularly among students in demanding academic disciplines.

Relationship among Academic Resilience, Learning Adaptation, and Self-Belief

The relationship among academic resilience, learning adaptation, and self-belief is increasingly recognized in educational research. Academic resilience enables students to cope effectively with challenges, while self-belief motivates them to remain engaged and confident in their academic pursuits. Together, these factors facilitate successful learning adaptation in contemporary higher education environments. Research indicates that students with higher resilience and self-belief tend to demonstrate stronger academic engagement and adaptability. Resilient students are more likely to perceive academic setbacks as temporary and manageable, thereby maintaining positive learning attitudes. Likewise, self-belief encourages students to adopt proactive learning strategies and persist through academic difficulties. Consequently, these psychological constructs contribute significantly to academic success, student retention, and overall well-being in higher education.

Empirical Review

Wu et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional study to examine psychological resilience and coping styles among undergraduate students in China. The study was carried out in several universities in China with a population of undergraduate students. A sample size of 1,843 students was selected using convenience sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring resilience and coping strategies. The researchers employed descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis for data analysis. The findings revealed that students with higher psychological resilience demonstrated more positive coping strategies and better emotional adjustment during academic stress. The study concluded that resilience significantly contributes to students' ability to manage academic challenges effectively. The researchers recommended that universities should implement counseling and resilience-building programs to strengthen students' coping capacities. Cobo-Rendón et al. (2020) conducted a longitudinal research study among first-year undergraduate students in Chile to investigate the relationship between self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and academic performance. The study population consisted of first-year university students, and a sample size of 243 students was selected through purposive sampling. The researchers used questionnaires to collect data over different periods of the academic year. Statistical tools such as structural equation modeling and regression analysis were employed to analyze the data. The findings showed that students with high self-efficacy adapted more successfully to university life and achieved better academic performance. The study concluded that self-belief is an important predictor of academic adaptation and student success. The authors recommended that universities should create supportive academic environments that enhance students' confidence and psychological well-being. Onah et al. (2020) carried out a comparative quantitative study in the United Kingdom to investigate students' adaptation to blended and online learning systems in higher education. The study population comprised undergraduate students enrolled in blended learning courses. A sample size of 210 students was selected using stratified random sampling techniques. Data were gathered through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings indicated that students with strong self-directed learning abilities adapted more effectively to blended learning environments and achieved higher academic performance. The study concluded that adaptive learning skills are essential in modern higher education systems. The researchers recommended that institutions should provide training programs that improve students' technological competence and independent learning skills.

Macakova et al., (2022) conducted a quantitative correlational study among university students in the United Kingdom to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. The study population included undergraduate students from different academic disciplines. A sample size of 335 students was selected through convenience sampling. Questionnaires were used for data collection, while Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were employed for statistical analysis. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement. Students with stronger self-belief demonstrated greater academic motivation and engagement. The study concluded that self-belief is a major factor influencing academic success among university students. The researchers recommended that educators should encourage motivational and mentoring programs that strengthen students' academic confidence. Thomas et al. (2021) conducted a meta-ethnographic analysis involving students from higher education institutions in different countries. The study synthesized findings from multiple qualitative studies on resilience and student experiences in higher education. The researchers purposively selected studies that met inclusion criteria related to resilience and student adaptation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The findings showed that resilient students were more likely to remain academically engaged, cope effectively with stress, and adapt positively to changing educational conditions. The study concluded that resilience is essential for academic persistence and student well-being. The authors recommended that universities should establish institutional support systems, counseling services, and mentorship programs that promote resilience development among students. Aguilar (2021) conducted a quantitative study in the United States to investigate undergraduate students' resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study population consisted of undergraduate students affected by the transition to remote learning. A sample size of 303 students was selected using convenience sampling methods. Data were collected using online questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics and regression analysis. The findings indicated that resilient students adapted better to online learning and maintained stronger academic engagement during the pandemic. The study concluded that resilience and adaptability are critical for academic continuity during crises. The researcher recommended that higher education institutions should strengthen online student support services and resilience intervention programs.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does academic resilience influence learning adaptation among undergraduate students in higher education?
2. What relationship exists between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students?

Research Hypotheses

1. H01: There is no significant relationship between academic resilience and learning adaptation among undergraduate students.
2. H02: There is no significant relationship between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students.

METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised undergraduate students from four selected universities in Edo State, namely University of Benin, Ambrose Alli University, Benson Idahosa University, and Wellspring University. A total sample size of 240 undergraduate students was selected using the simple random sampling technique. Sixty (60) students were selected from each of the four universities to ensure equal representation. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Academic Resilience and Self-Belief Questionnaire (ARSBQ). The questionnaire consisted of structured items measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation to ensure its validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined using the Cronbach Alpha reliability method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.82, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study.

The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One

To what extent does academic resilience influence students' learning adaptation in higher education?

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Academic Resilience and Learning Adaptation

Items	Mean	Decision
Students remain motivated despite academic stress	3.42	Accepted
Students adjust effectively to learning demands	3.31	Accepted
Resilient students manage academic pressure better	3.48	Accepted
Students with resilience show emotional stability	3.37	Accepted
Grand Mean	3.40	High Extent

The result in Table 1 shows a grand mean score of 3.40, indicating that academic resilience influences students' learning adaptation to a high extent.

Research Question Two

What relationship exists between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students?

Table 2: Mean Analysis of Self-Belief and Academic Engagement

Items	Mean	Decision
Students with confidence participate actively	3.51	Accepted
Self-belief improves classroom engagement	3.45	Accepted
Confident students complete academic tasks easily	3.39	Accepted
Self-belief enhances persistence during challenges	3.47	Accepted
Grand Mean	3.46	High Relationship

The result indicates that self-belief has a strong positive relationship with academic engagement among undergraduate students.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between academic resilience and students' learning adaptation.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Academic Resilience and Learning Adaptation

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Academic Resilience & Learning Adaptation	240	0.71	0.001	Rejected

The result reveals that the p-value of 0.001 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between academic resilience and students' learning adaptation.

Hypothesis Two

H02: There is no significant relationship between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of Self-Belief and Academic Engagement

Variables	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Self-Belief & Academic Engagement	240	0.68	0.002	Rejected

The result shows that the p-value of 0.002 is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students.

The findings of this study revealed that academic resilience influences students' learning adaptation to a high extent among undergraduate students in selected universities in Edo State. The grand mean score of 3.40 obtained from the analysis indicated that students who possess resilience are better able to cope with academic stress, adjust to learning demands, and maintain emotional stability in higher education. This finding is consistent with the empirical study conducted by Wu et al. (2020), who found that psychologically resilient students demonstrated positive coping strategies and better emotional adjustment during academic challenges. The present finding also agrees with the study of Thomas et al. (2021), which reported that resilient students are more capable of adapting to changing educational environments and maintaining academic engagement despite academic pressure.

The finding further supports the work of Aguilar (2021), who observed that resilient undergraduate students adapted more effectively to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests that resilience enables students to remain academically focused and emotionally stable even in difficult learning situations. The implication of this finding is that academic resilience is an essential psychological factor that enhances students' ability to adapt successfully to the dynamic nature of contemporary higher education.

The result of hypothesis one showed a significant relationship between academic resilience and students' learning adaptation, as indicated by the p-value of 0.001, which

was less than the 0.05 level of significance. This finding corroborates the empirical review by Cobo-Rendón et al. (2020), who found that students with higher resilience and self-efficacy demonstrated better academic adaptation and psychological well-being. The finding also aligns with Resilience Theory, which explains that individuals who possess strong coping mechanisms are more capable of overcoming adversity and adapting positively to challenging situations.

Furthermore, the study revealed that self-belief has a strong positive relationship with academic engagement among undergraduate students, with a grand mean score of 3.46. This indicates that students who possess confidence in their academic abilities are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities, complete academic tasks, and persist during academic challenges. This finding is in agreement with the study conducted by Macakova et al., (2022), who reported a significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement among university students. Their study emphasized that students with strong self-belief tend to demonstrate greater academic motivation and engagement.

The finding also supports the study of Smith et al. (2020), which revealed that students with growth mindsets and strong internal locus of control exhibited higher levels of academic persistence and classroom engagement. Similarly, Ma et al. (2020) found that self-belief positively influences students' academic motivation and adaptability in higher education environments. These studies collectively suggest that self-belief enhances students' confidence, persistence, and active participation in learning activities.

The result of hypothesis two further revealed a significant relationship between self-belief and academic engagement among undergraduate students, as the p-value of 0.002 was less than the 0.05 level of significance. This finding is consistent with Self-Efficacy Theory proposed by Albert Bandura, which explains that individuals who believe in their capabilities are more likely to exert effort, persist during challenges, and achieve positive outcomes. The implication of this finding is that self-belief plays a crucial role in promoting students' academic participation, motivation, and persistence in higher education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that academic resilience has a significant positive relationship with students' learning adaptation among undergraduate students in selected universities in Edo State. This implies that students who are more resilient are better able to cope with academic stress, adjust to learning demands, and maintain emotional stability in higher education environments.

It was also concluded that self-belief has a significant positive relationship with academic engagement among undergraduate students. This means that students who have confidence in their academic abilities are more likely to participate actively in learning activities, persist in the face of academic challenges, and demonstrate higher levels of academic engagement. Overall, the study established that both academic resilience and self-belief are important psychological factors that enhance students' academic adjustment, engagement, and success in contemporary higher education.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities should implement structured programmes such as counselling services, mentorship schemes, and resilience-building workshops to help undergraduate students

develop the ability to cope with academic stress and adapt effectively to learning demands. This will enhance students' learning adaptation in higher education.

2. Lecturers and university administrators should create supportive and motivating learning environments that build students' confidence in their academic abilities. This can be achieved through positive feedback, encouragement, and academic support programmes, which will in turn improve students' self-belief and increase their academic engagement.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no generative AI tools were used in the writing, editing, or peer-review process of this manuscript.

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Author 1 contributed to conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, data curation, writing original draft, writing review and editing, and supervision. Author 2 contributed to methodology, investigation, resources, data curation, writing original draft, writing review and editing, visualization, and supervision. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Abbreviations:

C : Conceptualization
M : Methodology
So : Software
Va : Validation
Fo : Formal Analysis

I : Investigation
R : Resources
D : Data Curation
O : Writing – Original Draft
E : Writing – Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization
Su : Supervision
P : Project Administration
Fu : Funding Acquisition

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all undergraduate students who participated in this study prior to data collection.

Ethical Approval

This research is a low-risk survey study. The authors provide a self-declaration of ethical compliance in accordance with the standard research guidelines of the participating universities.

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