

Emotional Regulation and Academic Performance among Students of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, Minna Campus

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Abstract

Emotional regulation and academic performance are two important domains in achieving students' life's goals and objectives. It is crucial for students to have the right attitude and be fortified with effective emotional regulation strategies to handle the difficulties of daily life. Thus, the study investigated the relationship between emotional regulation and academic performance of students. Two research objectives and two null hypotheses guided the study; a correlational survey was used. The Population of the study comprised of (346)200 level students of Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, Minna Campus; with a sample size of 267 respondents was used in the study. The instrument was validated by two experts and overall reliability index value of .092 was obtained. The instrument of the study was tagged "Students Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (SERQ)" adapted from Gross (2011) while Academic performance were derived from students' demographic background and CGPA for 2021/2022 academic session. The results showed that there is no significant relationship between emotional regulation and students CGPA, and a significant difference exist between low and high emotional regulation strategies used by the students of Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, Minna Campus. Based on the results of the study, it was therefore recommended among others that there is need for higher institutions or educational institution administrators to develop workshops that include positive emotion regulation skills among students in order to start creating exposure and lastly, there is need to create awareness among students about the importance in regulating emotions especially when it involves their studies and overall academic life.

Keywords: Academic performance, emotional regulation, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression.

Introduction

Students in higher level education are seen as leaders of the future and are expected to accomplish various roles with competency and efficiency. Moreover, academic success is one of the major goals of students. Attaining this goal involves many factors such as enthusiasm, self-control, moral value and also a good relationship between students and educators. In relation to that, universities and colleges remain to be seen as rooms of opportunity that are concentrated on educating students in almost every aspect of life, including providing the fundamentals for underperforming students. The goal of universities is much wider than just granting students with degrees or providing general education. These institutions also assist students with pertinent learning skills and enhancing them with life abilities that can be used in the future. Nevertheless, teaching and educating students is not a simple

duty. The personality, age, gender, family background, culture and socioeconomic class of each student contribute to their exclusive strengths and flaws.

In education, emotions have been considered as supplementary to the learning process. Emotions come in many forms such as sad, joyful, and irritated and many more. However, each individual may define an emotional differently. Few understand that emotions can be defined as feelings whereas some might make a distinction between feeling and emotion. However, according to the earlier psychologists such as William James, he defined emotional as a collection of feelings that is different from sensation, and that they are feelings produced by changes in physiological circumstances (Sousa, 2003).

Moreover, human beings are known as complex creatures that live by rules and social norms that evolve and develop over time. With all the rules and norms engaged in each individual, with each passing day, the person increasingly generates a variety of emotions throughout their life. Thus, it is important for the individual to know the strategies to regulate their emotions and to continue life in harmony. By letting emotions go unregulated, the individual might increase the risks of violating their goals in life. Emotional regulation strategies are essential resources in improving students' learning, achievement and quality in education. As defined by Gross (2002), emotional regulation is a process that gives impact on the individuals' emotional as soon as they have them, and the way they experience and express the emotion. Furthermore, the process can be spontaneous or controlled, conscious or unconscious, and might have produced their own effects during the process of regulating emotions.

In this day and age, there are variety of resources such as articles, books and research that has been done to assist people in regulating their emotions (Gross, 2006; Sousa, 2003). In addition, the emotional regulation process has the ability of affecting the quality of responses and can directly shape the emotional experiences (Richards & Gross, 2000). Unfortunately one of the biggest challenges that most people face is to have an effective, functional emotional regulation strategy (Gross, 2002).

Currently, there are two main emotional regulation strategies that have been studied closely, which are cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (Gross & John, 2003). Cognitive reappraisal is defined as an effort to reinterpret an emotion-eliciting condition in a way that modifies its meaning and changes its emotional impact (Gross & John, 2003). On the other hand, expressive suppression is defined as an attempt to hide, inhibit or lessen constant emotion-expressive behaviour (Gross & John, 2003). There are several theories that have been used in the aspect of emotional regulation strategies in order to explain the usefulness in human's life in every stage. One of the commonly used ones is the Process Model of

Emotional regulation theory that was first introduced by Gross in 2003. This theory illustrates that emotions can be regulated at five points in a process: (1) Situation Selection which involves in making a decision (2) Situation Modification; an effort to modify a situation (3) Attention Deployment involves directing one's attention towards or away from an emotional situation (4) Cognitive Change which involves changing how one appraise a situation and (5) Responses Modulation which involves an attempt to directly influence behaviour, physiology and cognitive response system.

However, returning to the issue of academic performance, it is also an essential instrument for a country's advancement. Gania and Muhammad (2013) have defined academic performance as both the curricular and co-curricular performance of the students. However, the issue of poor academic performance among students of public and private higher education institutions has become a serious issue. It is important to know the relationship between emotional regulation and students' academic performance because a study by Sheppes and Marian (2007) has found that dysfunctional emotional regulation can lead to low academic achievement. Furthermore, it will have an impact on the daily basis of an individual due to the notion that emotional regulation is a critical component in life development (Barlow et al., 2004). The cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression are among the strategies people use in regulating their emotion. Leroy et al. (2014) concluded that cognitive reappraisal could be used to effectively preserve performance in a task. In addition, other research have shown that cognitive reappraisal has a positive impact by decreasing negative emotional experience and negative emotional behavioural expression without much physiological activation. It was also found that expressive suppression has negative effect by decreasing positive emotional experience (Gross, 2002; Mauss et al., 2005; Hayes et al., 2010; Brans et al. 2013). Moreover, cognitive reappraisal can enhance behavioural memory performance, while expressive suppression can have the opposite effect (Gross 2006; In Dillon et al., 2007; Sheppes

and Meiran, 2007; Hayes et al., 2010). Furthermore, it was also found that cognitive reappraisal can improve the memory of a person but it depends on the levels of processing involved such as deep cognitive analysis of stimuli (Dillon et al. 2007).

Studies on expressive suppression have also been done in relation to studies of social memory, such as the memorization of names or facts (Richards & Gross, 2000). Results show that expressive suppression has led to memory impairment when social information was presented while the individual was regulating their emotions. This suggests that using expressive suppression as a regulating strategy is cognitively tough. Butler et al. (2003) suggest that suppression has the potential to undermine social functioning to a much greater extent than reappraisal. Students who use expressive suppression often encounter problem in socializing with other classmates or even lecturers, negatively impacting them from seeking help from others. Furthermore, Butler et al. (2003) also mentioned that the suppression of emotional expressive behaviour by one partner of the interaction declines the quality of the relationship, indicated by less rapport and liking. Thus, both strategies play a vital role in students' academic performance but in different ways.

Academic achievement is a collaborative result whereby students, educators and the institution contribute efforts to achieve a similar goal. Academic achievement includes the degree of students in gaining knowledge and skills that the educators teach. Such achievement usually measured by examination or continuous assessment, yet there is no universal agreement on how it is best rated. Based on the study done by Gumora and Arsenio (2001), they found that although students' emotional regulation strategies and academic performance were related, each of these components made a unique contribution to students' GPA such as social influence. Thus, the current study intended to identify if there was any differences between high performance students and low performance students in emotional regulation strategies. Therefore, by understanding the need of emotional regulation in academic performance, this research will be very helpful

in educating students and teachers regarding the importance of emotional regulation. Thus, this study intends to investigate if emotional regulation has a relationship with students' academic performance.

Statement of the Problem

Many previous studies have only focused on the biological aspects of emotional regulation, such as looking into the parts of the brain involved in the process (Gardener et al., 2013) as well as gender and neuron anatomical aspects (Li et al., 2014). There is lack of research investigating the emotional regulation mechanisms in university students' academic performance, and there is no study in Malaysia that has investigated the relationship between emotional regulation strategies and academic performance (Haryani et al., 2010). Emotional dysfunction was found to be related to poor academic performance, such as the growing number of students under the minimum requirement of academic performance across universities in Nigeria. Because of this, there is an urgent need to inculcate good emotional regulation strategies among university students. Academic performance has been an issue of attention and research for a very long time. Limitless amount of studies have been assumed which either focused specifically on academic performance in relation to other factors. Most of these studies wanted to determined factors that improve academic performance. In past few years, many researchers have been studies about academic performance and it relation with other demographic and psychological features. Therefore, with this background of recent studies, this research was conducted to study the relationship between emotional regulation and academic performance among undergraduate of Guidance and Counseling students of Usmanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto, COE, Minna Campus.

Objectives of the Study

The following specific objectives guided the study:

1. To identify if there is any relationship between emotional regulation and CGPA of students.
2. To find out if there is any difference

between students' high and low in emotional regulation strategies.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested in the study and are presented below:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between emotional regulation and CGPA of students.

Ho2: There is no significant difference between students high and low in emotional regulation strategies.

Methodology

The population consists of 346 students including male and female, regardless of their age and year of study. The sample was limited to 200-Level undergraduate students of UDUS, Niger College of Minna Campus, who were recruited based on simple random sampling and sample size of (267), were selected. For the purpose of the study, the respondents were divided into two groups, low and high achiever groups. However, 267 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the students. Rules and regulation regarding the ethical handling of the data were used. Respondents were given an information explaining the purpose of the study (i.e., to collect data about academic performance (CGPA) and emotional regulation) and providing details of data handling procedures, including their right to refuse to participate or to withdraw at any time. The questionnaire was used in this study and it was aimed at gathering information about students' academic performance (CGPA) and emotional regulation strategies that they used. The instrument was divided into two sections:

Results

Thus, the study presents the results through analysis of Pearson correlation and independent t-test.

Table 1: Relationship between Emotional Regulation and CGPA of Students'

Emotional Regulation(RM)	Correlation	ER	CGPA
	Pearson Correlation	1	.025
	Sig. (2- tailed)		.647
	N	267	267
CGPA	Pearson Correlation	.025	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.647	
	N	267	267

The results above shows the relationship between emotional regulation and CGPA of

assessment of demographic background and the respondents were asked to provide information about the following: age, gender, year of study and report of their CGPA as a primary indicator of academic performance and were measured on a scale of 1.00 to 4.00 as recommended by (Zanariah et al., 2012).The Students' Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (SERQ)was adapted from Gross (2003) and it consists of 10 items that capture two types of emotional regulation strategies: Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression, on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, the Reappraisal scale and the Suppression scale both comprised at least one item asking about regulating negative emotion (demonstrated for the respondents by giving sadness and anger as examples) and one item about regulating positive emotion (demonstrated by joy and amusement). Moreover, caution was taken by limiting the item content to the planned emotion regulatory strategy only. The respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they typically try to think or behave differently in situation or to change their emotions. The instrument was face and content validated by two experts in field of Educational Psychology and Test and Measurement while the reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha and the instrument was administered on 40 students that were not used in final sample and reliability index values were obtained for cognitive reappraisal .81; expressive suppression .73 and overall reliability value of .92

students with correlation coefficient of .025 and p-value of .647 ($r(267) = .025, p=.647$).

The result indicates that there is no significant relationship between the variables correlated.

Table 2: Showing analysis of Independent t-test for high and low students in emotional regulation strategies used

	X	SD	df	t-value	p-value	Remark
High	6.06	3.29	265	.948	0.001	Accepted
Low	4.06	2.49				

The table above displays independent t-test for high and low students based on emotional regulation strategies. For the independent t-test, the result found that there is no significant difference between high ($X = 6.06$, $SD = 3.39$) and low achiever, with $t(265) = .948$. The result indicated that, the level of CGPA did not indicate the strategies of emotional regulation. Thus, the hypothesis was retained.

Discussion of Results

The results in 1 table indicate that there is no relationship between emotional regulation and CGPA of students. The results of the current study is consistent with various studies done by Gross, (2002); Mauss et al., (2005); Hayes et al., (2010) and Brans et al., (2013), which also found out that emotional regulation has no certain impact on academic achievement. Thus, maintaining a favourable CGPA does not involve only emotional experiences alone especially when students deal with stressors such as examinations and assignments. Therefore, emotional regulation is not related with students' academic performance as they might acknowledge the emotional experiences in academic assessment.

The results in table 2 revealed that there is no significant difference between high and low students in emotional regulation strategies employed. The results is contrary with the idea of Eisenberg et al. (2005) that found out that high achiever students always combined the cognitive and suppressive expressive emotional regulations that often contribute to motivation, which is linked to students' academic performance. On the other hand, Gross, (2002); Dillon et al., (2007); Sheppes and Meiran, (2007); Hayes et al., (2010) found no significant difference between high and low students in emotional regulation strategies used. However, the researcher did not expect this result, this is because low achievers often has negative emotional

regulation and will find it difficult to solve problems which in turn can demotivated them to learn, and thereby affecting his/her performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has probed the correlation between emotional regulation and students' academic achievement, and also the differences between high achievers and low achievers in terms of their emotional regulation strategies. Based on the developed research hypotheses, it is possible to state that emotional regulation is correlated with students' academic performance at university and yet there are no differences between high achievers and low achievers in how they regulate their emotions. Therefore, the findings indicate that the students need to learn and be concerned about emotion regulation strategies as the results show correlation between academic performance and emotional regulation. It is also needed for their long-term life development. Based on the results, academicians should realize that emotional regulation can assist in predicting students' behavior in university, as students who are educated to be emotionally regulated might improve their academic performance in the future.

Recommendations

1. There is need for higher institutions or educational institution administrators to develop workshops that include

- positive emotion regulation skills among students in order to start creating exposure.
2. Thought relationship was established among the variables, hence there is need to create awareness among students about the importance in regulating emotions especially when it involves their studies and overall academic life.
 3. Also, there is need for institution to organize seminar or workshop on the emotional regulation strategies and its usefulness to the students and the society at large because it may help to improve people's quality of life by knowing how to regulate their emotions effectively when dealing with everyday stresses, grievances and negative experiences.

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