Locus of Control and Burnout as Predictors of Academic Self-Efficacy among University Undergraduates in Northwest Zone, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated, Locus of Control, and Burnout as Predictors of Academic Self-efficacy among University Undergraduates in Northwest Zone, Nigeria". Three research objectives were raised. Two research questions, one null hypothesis guided the study. Correlational research design was employed. The population of the study was 50,046. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 381 participants. Research Advisor 2006 guided the participants' selection. Three validated instruments were used for data collection: Tertiary Students Locus of Control Scale; Copenhagen Academic Burnout Scale; and Academic Self-Efficacy Scale. Face and content validities of the instruments were established with help of the experts. Construct validity was established through discriminant validity process and Cronbach's alpha method was used to ascertain the internal consistency reliabilities. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and simple percentage and multiple linear regression at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that majority of 332 (87.1%) have internal locus of control, and 252 (66.1%) have low level of academic burnout. The hypothesis results showed that locus of control has significant predictive relationship to academic self-efficacy among the undergraduates (ß = **.**616, p = .000). However, academic burnout is not a significant predictor of academic self-efficacy. It was concluded that increase in locus of control improves academic self-efficacy. It was recommended that undergraduates should be encouraged to take responsibility of their own action or inaction in order (internal locus of control) to strengthen their academic self-efficacy.

Keywords: External, and internal Locus of Control, Academic Burnout, Academic Self-efficacy, University Undergraduates.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of academic self-efficacy among undergraduates in north western Nigeria seems to remain a source of concern. University Education is the level that links training to professional participation in the society. Successful exit from university is determined by consistent performance which academic self-efficacy remain a crucial factor. This is because the outside world looks for graduates with strong belief on what they are trained and achieved from university for employment into various jobs. This ultimate goal is often interrupted by some barriers which eventually affect their academic self-efficacy. The researcher observed a growing concern among the communities and in higher learning institutions that undergraduates' academic self-efficacy declining year after year. This might be accounted for by a number of reasons which may include the compounding nature of the expectations placed upon undergraduates by the system and larger community; which in turn affect students' academic self-efficacy.

Studying in Nigerian universities is becoming more emotionally challenging. Untimely closure of campuses due to strike, violence, and factions' rivalry are some the reasons for having poor belief for passing academic tasks. Most disheartening is the uncertainty of the grade award. Many weak students emerged with good grades which give rise to so many questions such as whether actual performance of a student determines the grade or just by chance. Many undergraduates have subjective feeling for failing a course and confidence in passing. This may create a confusion about the locus of control; whether the failure is failure could be controlled or not. May, Bauer, and Finchama, (2015) opined that no much studies were found in the literature that investigated the

relationship between burnout and the classroom environment, and between the students' burnout and academic self-efficacy and achievement even at the global level. The association between burnout and these constructs are scarcely documented among university students. Kalantarkousheh, Araqi, Zamanipour and Fandokht (2013) mentioned that burnout in students is an important research area for the university because of the following reasons; first, academic burnout can be an important key to perception of various student behaviours such as academic function during a study session. Bridging this gap in the context of north-western Nigeria is what triggered the conduct of the study. The researcher was interested in finding the interconnection of locus of control, academic burnout and self-efficacy in the school context is grossly inadequate in the context of Africa and Nigeria to be specific.

Locus of control is a concept in the psychological literature that is partially familiar to most people, even though, once mentioned, can be commonly understood. Locus of control is an individual's belief system regarding the causes of his or her experiences and the factors to which that person attributes success or failure. In educational context, locus of control is the biased or unbiased judgment of success or failure in the academic achievement by the students. It is observed by the researcher that university students commonly react to academic performance outcomes in the style of "I made it" and "they failed me". This signifies a very big confusion on the amount of confidence a student has in his/herself and the discrepancy in the confidence bestowed on the teachers. Attribution theory of Heidar, and colleagues (1958)'s which explained that the causes of success or failure, of the outcome is rather internal, unstable and controllable. Literatures have indicated the instability of locus of control, and prolong stress is associated with academic burnout among undergraduates in the universities. For example, Manichander, (2021) pointed out that locus of control is another psychological variable that contributes to burnout among teachers and students. Hassaskha and Jahadi (2015) opined that many students has no internality in terms of believing the outcomes of their academic pursuit. Shehu (2023) explained that 72.6% of students have external. Duru, Duru and Balkis (2014) explained most of the students have high level of school burnout. Sagone and De-Caroli (2014) found among university students in Italy; that significant relationship exists between locus of control and academic self-efficacy.

Freudenberger, a pioneer of the construct in (1974) as cited in Nagoski. and Nagoski (2019) explained that "burnout" was defined by three components: emotional exhaustion that is the fatigue that comes from caring too much, for too long; depersonalization signifying the depletion of empathy, caring, and compassion; and decreased sense of accomplishment which is an unconquerable sense of futility: feeling that nothing you do makes any difference. Kalantarkousheh, et al. (2013) explained that the term burnout is defined as a type of fatigue and exhaustion caused by hard work. Many researchers consider burnout to be a state of emotional fatigue that results from chronic stress syndrome such as pressure, time limitations, and lack of adequate resources to accomplish assigned tasks and duties. Jenaabadi, Nastiezaie, and Safarzaie (2017) explain that an increase in academic burnout among the undergraduates led to a decrease in their academic self-efficacy. Abid, Farhan and Atif (2021) explained that self-efficacy is a significant negative predictor of academic stress and burnout. In another scholarly work, Sugara, Rakhmat and Ilfiandra (2020) concluded that the many students were not successful because academic burnout is believed to affect their performance, belief and quality of life.

A student can be in a high or low study burnout situation, Kömürcü (2018) reiterated that academic burnout is an emotional, mental and physical syndromes caused by constant and intense pressure to meet school-related demands. In the process of art education in addition to the academic achievement stress and examination stress, the necessity of continuous questioning of the personal competences of the students and the continuous improvement effort in a non-upper bound educational process increase the risk of exhaustion for the students. Kömürcü (2018) further highlighted that students with course load of 30 hours and over are more "exhausted" than those with 15-19 weekly. The situation with undergraduates in Northwest zone seem to be more compounded with too many barrowing courses, general studies, in addition to cognate courses.

Academic self-efficacy is the students' belief that they are capable of successfully achieving academic assignments or achieving learning goals at predetermined levels. Sachitra and Bandara (2017) also explained that academic self-efficacy refers to a student's confidence in his abilities to successfully perform academic activities at a desired level. The students with high self-efficacy level can be seen from their ability to manage, carry out, and solve the problems related to the learning tasks, certainly with the belief that the tasks can be

completed successfully (Bandura, 2013). Kolo, Jaafar and Ahmad (2017) discoursed that academic self-efficacy is the belief that a student can efficiently perform some academic tasks.

Undergraduates with high self-efficacy beliefs, had higher physical and mental health, in doing things, motivation, effort and work hard, and the result of their performance is better. They have innate ability to try tasks, if fail and then try again until desired academic tasks are attained. Many undergraduates prefer instant gratification of first time success and lack the skills to respond to failure positively and proactively because they have low level of academic self-efficacy. This category of undergraduates may found themselves in a burned out situation because of lack of accomplishment. As a rider, Rohmani, and Andriani (2021) found that (72.5%) had a moderate or low level of self-efficacy, and only (14.5%) had a high level of self-efficacy and that (81.2%) of the students with low academic self-efficacy experienced moderate to severe academic burnout, while only (18.8%) had mild level. Those who had low academic self-efficacy were more likely to experience severe academic burnout and vice versa. The purpose of the study was to examine the interconnection of locus of control and burnout to academic self-efficacy among the undergraduates in the universities of north western, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided with three research objectives

1. determine the proportion of external and internal dimension of locus of control among university undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria.
2. determine the proportion of high and low level of academic burnout among university undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria.
3. examine the combined predictive effect of locus of control and burnout on university undergraduates' academic self-efficacy in northwest zone, Nigeria

Research Questions

The study was guided with two research questions in line with objectives one and two;

1. What are the proportion of external and internal dimension of locus of control among university undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria?
2. What are the proportion of high and low level of academic burnout among university undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

One null hypothesis that was in line with objective three guided the study. The hypothesis is as follow:

HO. There is no significant combined predictive effect of locus of control and burnout on university undergraduates' academic self-efficacy in northwest zone, Nigeria

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational research design. The population of the study covered 50,046 undergraduates from the fourteen (14) public universities of the zone that are in level 300 as 2024/2025 academic session. The population is heterogeneous in the sense that it comprises both male and female students with an average age of 24 years. The decision to choose this category of students was due to the fact that undergraduates at that level gone through series of academic stress and rigours; it is a time more prone to difficulties because point of graduation is approaching (Shankland, Kotsou, Vallet, Bouteyre, Dantzer & Leys, 2018). The study adopted a multistage sampling process involving three stages. Firstly, Northwest zone, Nigeria was clustered into three; Kaduna, Kano and Sokoto. In the second stage, two universities were selected from each cluster at random which indicated that six universities were covered in the study. In the last stage, samples of three hundred and eighty one (381) undergraduates; 244 males and 137 females were randomly selected from the six universities. The selection of the sample size was recommended by the Research Advisors (2006) guidelines for determining representative of the population. Table 1 showed the proportionate distribution of the sampled participants

Table 1. Proportional Distribution of the Participants

S/N	University	Male	Female	Total
1	Bayero University Kano	84	49	133
2	Federal University Dutse	40	18	58
3	Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina	38	15	53
4	Kaduna State University, Kaduna	47	42	89
5	Federal University, Gusau	20	09	29
6	Sokoto State University, Sokoto	15	04	19
	Total	**244**	**137**	**381**

Source: Field Data

Note from table 1 that more male undergraduates participated in the study than their male counterpart with. Bayero University Kano had highest number of participants while, Sokoto state university had the lowest number of participants.

The instruments used for data collection were Copenhagen Academic Burnout Scale (CABS) adapted from Campos, Carlotto and Maroco (2013). Tertiary Students Locus of Control Scale (TSLOC), adopted from Santokhie and Lipps (2020) and Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES) adapted from Sagone and De-Caroli (2014). The instruments were pilot tested on 200 undergraduates of Federal University Dutsin-ma, in Katsina state. Reliability coefficients of .875, 0.895 and 0.892 were established for the three instruments respectively. Discriminant validity process was used to establish the construct value of the instruments. CABS correlated very low (r = -.084) with ASES. Also TSLOC and ASES correlated at r = .224. As for the scoring of the instruments, internal locus of control scoring range was between 75 – 120 marks, and for external 30 – 74. High level academic burnout takes score range of 63 – 100 marks, and the low level ranges was 25 – 62. The data was collected by spending two weeks in each of the six selected universities. Descriptive statistics of simple percentage and frequency counts were used to answer the research questions and inferential statistic of multiple linear regression was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

As earlier mentioned, the study was guided by two research objectives. The analysis of the data and the answer to the research question are as follow:

Answering the Research Questions

RQ1. What are the proportions of external and internal locus of control among the undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria? To answer this research question, the researcher used frequency count and percentage, and the result was summarised in Table 2

Table 2. Proportion of Respondents by external and internal Locus of Control

	Levels of Locus of Control	**Frequency**	**Proportion**
1	Internal	332	0.87
2	External	49	0.13

Note from Table 2 that the majority of the respondents (332) indicated experiencing internal locus of control and that only 49 of them indicated external locus of control. Hence the answer to research question one which asked

about the proportion of the undergraduates with internal and external levels of locus of control was that 87.14% of the participants have internal while 12.86% have external.

RQ2. What are the proportions are of high and low levels Academic Burnout among the undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria? To answer this research question, the researcher used frequency count and percentage, and the result is as summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Proportion of Respondents by the Levels of Academic Burnout

	Levels of Academic Burnout	**Frequency**	**Proportion**
1	High level	129	0.34
2	Low level	252	0.66

Note from Table 3 that the only 129 respondents indicated experiencing high level of Academic Burnout but 252 undergraduates indicated low level. Hence the answer to the research question two which asked about the proportion of academic burnout was that; majority of the undergraduates 66.14% have low level; nevertheless 33.86% indicted high level.

Testing the Hypothesis

It was earlier indicated that the study formulated one null hypothesis. The analysis result and the discussion is as follow:
HO1. There is no significant interactive effect between locus of control and academic burnout on academic self-efficacy among undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria.

Table 4. Model Summary for Combined Predictive Effect of Locus of Control and Academic Burnout on Academic Self-efficacy of undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria

Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**	**Durbin-Watson**
1	.619[a]	.383	.379	9.127	1.671

a. **Predictors:** (Constant), Academic Burnout, Locus of Control
b. **Dependent Variable:** Academic Self-efficacy

Note that from the model summary table (Table 4), R = .619[a] and R^2 = .383. This coefficient of determination indicates that locus of control has significant effect on the dependent variable Academic Self-efficacy, with standard error estimate of 9.127. This percentage was used in determining the goodness of fit for the model. The adjusted R^2 yielded 37.9% variation which is significant in this analysis.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance for the Whole Model (ANOVA) [a]

Model		**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	19510.613	2	9755.307	117.118	.000[b]
	Residual	31485.298	378	83.294		
	Total	50995.911	380			

a. **Dependent Variable:** Academic Self-efficacy
b. **Predictors:** (Constant), Academic Burnout, Locus of Control

From the Analysis of variance table (Table 5), the overall regression model significant $F(_{2, 378}) = 117.118$, p = .000. Now since the p-value (.000) was less than the alpha value (.05), the null hypothesis was rejected. This simply means that, the independent variables predict the dependent variable significantly. Locus of control and Academic Burnout have significant combine predictive effect on academic self-efficacy among undergraduates of northwest zone Nigeria; With locus of control as only significant predictor. The result was also buttressed by the coefficients table 5

Table 6: Table of Standardized and Unstandardized Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	
1	(Constant)	29.488	4.600		.000
	Locus of Control	.541	.037	.616	.000
	Academic Burnout	-.004	.039	-.009	.823

Note that the table of coefficients seeks to explain the amount of unique variance contributed by the predictors (Locus of Control, and Academic Burnout) into the model. Based on the table, the p-value of the first predictor (Locus of control) was significant (.000). So, the amount of unique variance explained by this predictor in predicting the academic self-efficacy of the undergraduates of northwest zone, Nigeria was statistically significant. However, the p-value of the second predictor (academic burnout) was not statistically significant (.823). Therefore, the regression equation becomes:

$$\mathbf{y_1 = 29.488 + 0.616x_1 - 0.009x_2}$$

For unstandardized coefficient of $B_1 = 0.541$, it means for a unit increase in locus of control, the model predicts that academic self-efficacy increases by 54.1%, when the other predictor was held constant. This is a significant amount with respect to academic self-efficacy. Similarly, for unstandardized coefficient of $B_2 = -0.009$, it means for a unit increase in academic burnout, the model predicts that academic self-efficacy decreases by 0.09%, when the other predictor was held constant. This is not a significant amount with respect to academic self-efficacy.

On the other hand, for standardized coefficient of $ß_1 = .616$, it means for one standard deviation increase in locus of control, the model predicts that academic self-efficacy increases by 61.6%. Again, for standardized coefficient of $ß_2 = -.009$, it means for one standard deviation increase in Academic Burnout, the model predicts that academic self-efficacy decreases by just 0.09%; this is a very weak and not a significant prediction on the dependent variable. Therefore, all the result was summarised on table 7.

Table 7: Summarised Regression Analysis of the Combined Predictive Effect of Locus of Control and Burnout on Academic Self-efficacy among Undergraduates in northwest, Nigeria.

Dependent Variable (y)		Independent Variable (x)	Standard Coefficient (β)
Academic Self-efficacy		Constant	29.488
		locus of control,	0.616
		Academic Burnout	-0.009
R^2	.383		
Adjusted R^2	.378		

Note: Significant Level: $* \, p < 0.05$

From Table 7, the predicted regression model can be written as follows:

$$\textbf{Academic Self} - \textbf{efficacy} = 29.488 + 0.616\text{LOC} - 0.009\text{AB}0$$

Summary of the Findings

The following were the findings of the study.

1. The proportion of undergraduates with internal locus of control was 0.87 (87%) compared to their counterpart 0.13 (13%) with external in public universities of northwest zone, Nigeria.

2. The proportion of undergraduates with low level of Academic Burnout was 0.66 (66%) compared to their counterpart with high level 0.34 (34%) in public universities of northwest zone, Nigeria.

3. Significant combined predictive effect of locus of control, and academic burnout was found on academic self-efficacy among undergraduates in universities of northwest zone, Nigeria, with locus of control as the only significant positive predictor (ß = **.**616, p = .000). Conversely, academic burnout showed a very weak negative non-significant predictive relationship (ß = -.009, p = .823).

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The major objectives of the study were to find the interconnection of locus of control and Academic Burnout on academic self-efficacy and academic achievement of the undergraduates. The objectives also covers examining the combined predictive effect of the two psychological constructs on the undergraduates' academic self-efficacy in public universities of northwest zone, Nigeria. It was assumed that locus of control Academic Burnout and their joint influence might affect their academic self-efficacy of undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria.
As for the research question one, the study showed that majority of undergraduates (87.14%) have internal locus of control. This is not in line with the explanation Hassaskha and Jahadi (2015) explanation of internality of locus of control. Also is not in line with Shehu (2023) who found that 72.6% of students have external locus of control. It is possible that the participants have more internal locus of control because the end result (graduation) is their major concern. In relation to research question two**,** the study showed that (66.14%) of the undergraduates have low level of academic burnout. The finding was not in agreement with what Duru Duru and Balkis (2014) explained concerning high level of school burnout among students. Majority of the participants (undergraduates) indicated low feeling of academic burnout possibly because they are intrinsically motivated to graduate at the end.

Concerning the combined predictive effect of locus of control and academic burnout on self-efficacy of the undergraduates contained in the stated null hypothesis**,** the result of the study found significant interactive effect of locus of control on academic self-efficacy of the participants. The result showed that a unit increase in all in the locus of control lead to increase of 61.6% of academic self-efficacy; however, academic burnout showed a negative but non-significant predictive index of just 0.5%. The result was because the other variable (academic burnout) showed weak negative (negligible negative) predictive index on academic self-efficacy. The finding is in agreement with the provision of Attribution theory of Heidar, and colleagues (1958)'s which explained that the causes of success or failure, of the outcome is rather internal, unstable and controllable. The theory buttressed that the end result is always the products of individual's effort. The study found locus of control as strong predictor of academic self-efficacy possibly because it was established that majority of the participant had internal dimension which is usually linked with positive outcomes. This means vast number of the participants believed to invest well for better results.

The result also indicated non-significant predictive effect of burnout on self-efficacy which is not related to the study of Jenaabadi, Nastiezaie, and Safarzaie (2017) who found that increase in academic burnout significantly reduces academic self-efficacy among undergraduates. The finding is also not in consonance with that of Abid, Farhan and Atif (2021) reported that self-efficacy was a significant negative predictor of academic burnout. The study established not significant predictive effect of burnout on self-efficacy possibly because majority of the participants had low feeling of burnout. This means majority of the undergraduates had no fatigue, not exhausted and no negative feeling for lack of achieving academically. These are term that describe academic burnout.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researcher arrived at the conclusion that majority of the undergraduates have internal locus of control, and low level of academic burnout. As for the combine predictive effect of the two variables, locus of control was the only significant predictor of academic self-efficacy, while academic burnout indicated a weak negative but non-significant predictive relationship on academic self-efficacy among the undergraduates in northwest zone, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher put in place the following recommendations;

1. Undergraduates should be encouraged to uphold the believe that academic success lies with their input (internal locus of control). Hence, for an improved academic self-efficacy they should be made take responsibilities of their actions and inactions.
2. Undergraduates should be encouraged to improve their coping mechanism against feeling burned out as it may have harmful effect on them overtime nonetheless it was found to be a very weak negative and non-significant predictor.

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