



Academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of academic adjustment among first year university students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was two-folds: to investigate whether there are correlation between and among academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of academic adjustment among first year university students. And to investigate the relative contribution of among academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support to academic adjustment among first year university students. The study employed the descriptive survey method to describe academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of academic adjustment among first year university students. The sample of the study comprised of 178(120 females, 58 males, Mean age= 18.2 years, SD = .82) students attending Faculty of Specific Education in Cairo University for the academic year 2017/2018. The study utilized questionnaires and instruments to measure psychosocial variables such as Academic overload, self-efficacy, perceived social support, and academic adjustment. The correlation coefficient results revealed significant negative relationship between academic adjustment and Academic overload($r = -.333$), while the correlation coefficients were positive for self-efficacy($r = .404$) and perceived social support($r = .391$). Multiple regression was performed where relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction were observed. Findings were discussed and implication of findings was included.

Keywords. Academic overload, self-efficacy , perceived social support, academic adjustment, university students

Introduction

It seems that first year is the most critical for college adaptation because of the big numbers of possible adjustment difficulties it can generate, that is , students face several challenges, including developing a new social network, keeping up with academic work in an environment of much greater autonomy, and negotiating the temptations of a college environment (Chong et al., 2009). As Baker and Siryk (1989) put it, academic adjustment refers to motivation for learning, taking actions in order to comply with academic demands, sense of purposefulness and general satisfaction with the academic environment. On the other hand , other researchers (e.g. Russell and Petrie,1992) cited some factors that affect student's academic adjustment : aptitude, ability, study skills, test anxiety, academic motivation, self-efficacy, and attribution . The present study concentrates on the influence a number of psychosocial variables might have towards student adjustment to university, definitely academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support.

Academic overload

Academic overload may be regarded as student' feelings of being overwhelmed by their academic requirements or responsibilities while pursuing a degree at university. Many students experience difficulty in managing the academic workload at university (Bitzer &

Troskie-De Bruin, 2004). Students' perceptions of the demands of the academic tasks and their perceptions of their ability to succeed in completing the tasks influence the amount of effort they put into academic work, and an insufficient amount of effort may lead to academic failure(Il-haam , Johann & Kitty ,2011). Chambel & Curral(2005)found that students' inability to manage academic workload had a negative impact on academic adjustment to university and academic performance. Il-haam et al. (2009)explored the pathways taken by adjustment and other psychosocial variables (help-seeking, academic motivation, self-esteem, perceived stress, and perceived academic overload), in relation to the success of economically and educationally disadvantaged students at university. Participants were 194 first-year students on need-based financial aid at a South African university; they completed questionnaires that measured these psychosocial variables, and their final first-year academic results were obtained via the university's records office. Path analyses showed that adjustment did not function as a pure mediator on academic performance as the dependent variable. Furthermore, the psychosocial factors explained much (59%) of the variance in the students' adjustment and 20% of the variance in their academic performance. Hence, the psychosocial variables better explained the students' adjustment to university than academic performance.

Based on these findings the present study hypothesised that Academic overload is negatively related to academic adjustment.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs about one's capabilities to learn or perform behaviors at designated levels (Bandura, 1997). In a study trying to investigate the achievement motivation and self-efficacy in relation to adjustment among university students Habibah, Nooreen and Rahil (2010) found that achievement motivation and self-efficacy range from moderate ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.43$) to high levels ($M = 5.15$, $SD = 0.78$) indicating that they have the potentials to succeed. The three variables namely adjustment, achievement motivation and self-efficacy were found to be correlated positively with one another. A meta-analysis by Crede and Niehorster (2012) further supported the influence self-efficacy had on adjustment, as they found that self-efficacy had the strongest positive relationship with academic adjustment to university ($= .42$, $n = 988$, $k = 5$),

Based on these findings the present study hypothesised that self-efficacy is positively related to academic adjustment.

perceived social support

Demaray (2005) defined 'social support' as "transpiring from multiple sources (parents, teachers, close friends, classmates, and school) and consisting of multiple types (emotional, informational, appraisal, and instrumental), which may serve to improve a student's adjustment and outcomes (p. 691)".

Previous research with undergraduate students has also shown that social support is related to and predictive of adjustment (Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007; Hertel, 2002; Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Lidy & Kahn, 2006). Results actually suggest that perceived social support may be a better predictor for students' adjustment .

Hazalizah and Marhamah(2015) examined the role of social support and adjustment in predicting academic stress among first year students in Syiah Kuala University (UNSYIAH). A total of 364 respondents, aged between 16 and 21, completed the Indonesian version of Multi Dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), Students Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), and Student Life Stress Inventory

(SLSI). Respondents reported moderate levels of social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment and academic stress and low level of social and the other two subscales of adjustment. Multiple Regressions revealed that two aspects of social support and one aspect of adjustment significantly predicted academic stress.

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Research Questions

The following two research questions were posed and investigated in the study:

- Are there correlation between and among academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of academic adjustment among first year university students ?
- What is the relative contribution of academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support to academic adjustment among first year university students?

Materials and Methods

The study employed the descriptive survey method to describe academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of academic adjustment among first year university students.

Sample: The sample of the study comprised of 178(120 females. 58 males ,Mean age= 18.2 years , SD = .82) students attending Faculty of Specific Education in Cairo University for the academic year 2017/2018 .

Measures :The study utilized questionnaires and instruments to measure psychosocial variables such as Academic overload, self-efficacy , perceived social support, and academic adjustment.

1- *Academic Overload Questionnaire (AOQ)* (Mitra and Sengupta ,2005). It was developed to measure the academic burden which is beyond the individual's means to satisfy. Thus feeling of burden surfaces due to various other curricular and co-curricular activities, school homework coupled with regular class tests. The questionnaire has 33 items and tests academic overload of adolescents within the age 14-18 years of both the sexes. It has five dimensions measuring the overload due to personal, familial, teacher, peer group and societal aspects. The test-re-test reliability of the questionnaire was found out to be 0.85, The validity of the questionnaire found out by finding the inter-item consistency which proved to significant at the 0.01 level for all items.

2- *Self-Efficacy for Learning Form (SELF)* (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007). It was developed to assess students' Self-Efficacy for Learning. The first scale consisted of 57 items. Then, the items in the study were abridged to 18 items. The students responded to each item using a scale ranged from 0 to 100 points (0=definitely cannot do it, 30=probably cannot do it, 50=maybe, 70=probably can do it, 100= definitely can do it). The test-re-test reliability of the questionnaire was found out to be 0.83, The validity of the questionnaire found out by finding the inter-item consistency which proved to significant at the 0.01 level for all items.

3- *Perceived Social Support Scale* .The Perceived Social Support from Friends and Family Scale (PSS-Fr and PSS-Fa; Procidano & Heller, 1983) is a 40-item scale (20 items about

friends, and 20 items about family) that assesses how individuals perceive support, information and feedback from their friends and family (Procidano and Heller, 1983, p. 2). Each item asks the individual to circle a "yes", "I don't know" or "No" response. The PSS (Fr) and PSS (Fa) have a good internal consistency with $\alpha=.90$.

4- *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)* (Baker and Sirk (1989). A psycho-metrically tested instrument used in many universities and colleges to measure how well students adjust to college experience . The questionnaire has academic adjustment and social adjustment subscales . Each scale comprised 25 items, each rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting academic/social adjustment . Both scales required respondents to rate their level of agreement or disagreement, indicating "very true", or "somehow true", or "not true", or "not true at all" .The academic adjustment sub scale was adopted in this study. For reliability the alpha coefficients are .90

Procedure .The participants were informed by the researcher regarding the purpose of the study. The instruments were distributed and participants were asked to fill in them.

Data Analysis .After checking the retrieved questionnaires to determine their suitability for analysis, and discarding those with missing information, the data were collated and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Computations for descriptive statistics, correlations, and regression were done.

Results

Correlation analysis

Prior to carrying out the regression analysis it was first necessary to conduct bivariate correlation analysis to ascertain the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

The correlation coefficient results revealed significant negative relationship between academic adjustment and Academic overload($r = -.333$) , while the correlation coefficients were positive for self-efficacy($r = .404$) and perceived social support($r = .391$).

Table 1. Pearson correlation coefficients between academic adjustment and the prediction variables

Variable	Academic overload	self-efficacy	perceived social support
academic adjustment	-.333*	.404**	.391**

Regression analysis

Multiple regression was performed to investigate the ability of Academic overload self-efficacy perceived social support to predict academic adjustment . As shown in Table 2, the results indicated that the following beta weights which represented the relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction were observed. Academic overload ($beta = .02$, $t = -4.08$), self-efficacy ($beta = .24$, $t = 2.85$), perceived social support ($beta = .23$, $t = 2.61$).

Table 2. Results of multiple regression for prediction of academic adjustment

Variables	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	B	Std. error	Beta	t

(Constant)	-3.41	3.12	-.11	.23
Academic overload	-.33	-.10	.02	-4.08
self-efficacy	1.56	.60	.24	2.85
perceived social support	1.42	.86	.23	2.61

Discussion

The purpose of this study was two- folds: to investigate whether there are correlation between and among academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support as predictors of academic adjustment among first year university students .And to investigate the relative contribution of academic overload, self-efficacy and perceived social support to academic adjustment among first year university students. Table 1. revealed significant negative relationship between academic adjustment and academic overload($r = -.333$),while the correlation coefficients were positive for self-efficacy($r = .404$) and perceived social support($r = .391$). As shown in Table 2, the results indicated that the following beta weights which represented the relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction were observed. Academic overload ($\beta = .02$, $t = -4.08$), self-efficacy ($\beta = .24$, $t = 2.85$), perceived social support ($\beta = .23$, $t = 2.61$).

The results of the present study indicated that academic overload leads to lower academic adjustment among first year university students. This means that students who feel overwhelmed by their daily academic requirements and responsibilities will have lower academic adjustment. This result is in accordance with previous research by Bitzer and Troskie-De Bruin (2004), Chambel and Curral (2005) and Petersen et al. (2009). First-year college students, may well underestimate the amount of time they require for independent learning, reading, course preparation and working on assignments; and/or also overestimate their academic abilities and skills. Accordingly, they may be feeling overloaded by the constant academic tasks and responsibilities.

The results of the present study show that higher levels of self-efficacy lead to better academic adjustment of first-year college students. This means that students who feel confident about their skills, who are confident about their academic and learning capabilities and who have a positive attitude or perception towards their abilities will perform better academically and adapt to the academic demands of the university . This result is in accordance with previous research which has also indicated a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic adjustment (Safaa M. A. Yadak, 2017). The more time students allocate towards studying, the higher their level of self-efficacy and the better their academic adjustment.

The present study also found relationship between perceived social support from friends or family members and students' academic adjustment. This finding was in line with research conducted by many researchers in the field (e.g. Hertel, 2002; Hinderlie & Kenny, 2002; Lidy & Kahn, 2006).

Implication of Findings

A number of implications have emerged from the results of the present study. First, students who feel overwhelmed by their daily academic requirements and responsibilities will have lower academic adjustment, hence, they are in need to be free from feeling overwhelmed by their daily academic requirements and responsibilities in order to feel academically adapted to university demands . When this happens , there should be social

support from friends or family members. This may have a buffering effect on the academic overload. Similarly, improving students' self-efficacy via vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, active domain and anxiety management, may have a positive effect on their academic adjustment.

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