A Regression Model of Academic Growth of ODE Learners: What Role Would Psychosocial Variables Play?

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Abstract- This study examined a regression model estimation of academic growth of ODE learners by considering the roles psychosocial variables are playing among Open Distance Education (ODE) learners in Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design with a sample of 300 undergraduate learners randomly selected from three faculties in the university of Ibadan distance learning centre. Three reliable scales were used in collecting data. Three research questions were raised and analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis at 0.05 level of significance. It was discovered that positive relationship exist between the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (academic growth); Academic growth positively correlated with age at entry (r= .763, p< 0.01), parental expectations (r = .553, P<0.01), self-efficacy (r = .510, P<0.01), emotional intelligence (r = .309, P<0.01). The regression model reveals that three out of four predictors (age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) are potent predictors of academic growth. The strongest factor was age at entry (Beta = .750, t= 14.011, P<0.01), followed by self-efficacy (Beta = .467, t= 9.475, P<0.01) and emotional intelligence (Beta = .211, t= 3.877, P<0.01). Parental expectations (Beta = .018, t = .327, P>0.05) is not a potent predictor of ODE learners' academic growth. It was recommended that parents are expected to consider the level of maturity of their undergraduate children before enrolling them in school. More so, the university managements are enjoined to provide the necessary learner support system that will help learners in adjusting to the open distance learning mode.

Indexed Terms- Academic Gains, Emotional Intelligence, Self-efficacy, Age at entry, ODE learners.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education remains the last hope for the development of any developing nation like Nigeria. With the development of the educational sector, citizens will be able to make a reasonable contribution to national development rather than being a qualified parasite having all their needs shouldered by the government and significant others. Education is the yardstick for measuring progress civilization and development of mankind in any organized society. Many underdeveloped and developing nations still see education as their only root of escape from poverty, increased mortality rate, illiteracy disease and insecurity. In an attempt to make education available to all, open distance education became an opportunity for all in providing empowerment, liberation, hope, skills purchasing power every government always want to give to their citizenry to ensure equal distribution of wealth and health.

Open and distance education (ODE) in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan Africa countries is considered an important avenue for the provision of education and to remove barriers for many and increase access to education to as many people as possible (Fenske, & Petersen, 2015). For instance, many people including those living in remote areas, those who could not be allowed to leave their home or workplace to study or those who otherwise could not have such access depend on open and distance education. The importance of open and distance education as an opening for more people to access education is to meet the rising demand for higher education through open and distance education to accommodate all those who need education are highlighted.

According to Torres, Cruz, Vicentini, Lima, and Ramos-Cerqueira, (2016), open learning can remove all unnecessary barriers to learning, while aiming to provide ODE learners with a reasonable chance of success in an education and training system centred on their specific needs and located in multiple areas of learning. Distance education (sometimes referred to as "distributed learning" or "distance learning"), meanwhile, is an educational process in which all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone geographically removed from the learner, with all or most of the communication between learner support and learners being conducted through electronic or print mediums (Raynal, Melioli, & Chabrol, 2019). Consequently, failure to obtain a sustainable educational system and academic growth usually brings untold hardship and frustration to the citizens and posterity becomes a mirage. Despite the quality of distance learning education in Nigeria and Oyo State, there are still observable performances among learners that is far from satisfactory. Akin to this, researchers have argued that the inability to adjust to the open distance mode of learning initiated poor performance among learners which might be as a result of unfamiliarity with learning in isolation and without the interaction of a lecturer or course adviser.

An average learner in Nigeria is exposed to a minimum of twelve years of primary and secondary education having a face-to-face mode of learning. Gaining admission to an open distance learning education could throw them off balance at first before they regain their balance. In general, the environment in which a student undertakes academic activities is integrated into various factors that bear significant influence on it and such factors cannot be held in isolation from the home, school, and community in which ODE learners reside. The environment then provides the resources that aid the academic growth of ODE learners (Ansari, et al., 2020; El-Gilany, Amro, Eladawi, & Khalil, 2019). As such, providing a psycho-social enquiry to solving or managing academic challenges among distance learners could be gainful when psychological variables like emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and sociological factors like age at entry and parental expectation are considered.

Emotional intelligence can be conceptualised as the ability of ODE learners to understand their emotions and by the virtue of that understanding relate with people around them both old and young. In this study, emotional intelligence is introduced as a moderating variable. It was brought into the study to investigate it moderating effect between chosen interventions and ODE learners' academic growth. Emotional intelligence is an attribute that makes an ODE learner capable of relating with peers and learner support successfully. In such a relationship learners will find learning easy without bias or sentiment. This can go a long way in helping their concentration and seriousness. ODE learners with high emotional intelligence often have the confidence to meet their learner support after classes to ask further questions on the topics taught. The most critical element for a student 's success in a DL programme is an understanding of how to learn. Confidence, self-control, self-awareness, capacity to communicate, and ability to co-operate are some of the traits of emotionally intelligent people. An intelligent pubescent who is self-aware and intrinsically motivated will have very high academic growth. Adolescents with high emotional intelligence will also have a good relationship with learner support and parents which also help them to perform well in their examinations. Therefore, addressing children's social and emotional needs is an effective way to improve academic achievement and future success (Hama, & Ahmed, 2018). If emotional intelligence is considered nowadays vital for success, then it is imperative for schools to integrate it into their curricula, hence raising the level of student success (Opakunle, et al., 2017).

Tanir, et al., (2020) argued that if learners don't have a sufficient quantity of emotional intelligent skills, even if they are smart, they might not be able to succeed academically on the distance learning programme (DLP). And even if they succeed academically, they might not be able to put their intellect to productive use in the context of the workplace. Studies done in the previous years concluded that the higher the intelligence the better the academic growth. Later observations made in studies revealed that many adolescent boys and girls despite having good IQ levels were not able to show equivalent performance. Their declining performance appeared as a result of their emotional disturbances, problems in managing

relationships, and insufficient coping mechanism to deal effectively with the environment.

When investigating variation in ODE learners' academic growth, self-efficacy could also be put into consideration since it expresses ODE learners belief in their capability to perform a task. Self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain a strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure (Huz, et al., 2016). Self-efficacy, also called perceived ability, refers to the confidence people have in their abilities for success in a given task. If they possess the ability to successfully perform, then that task will be attempted (Assareh, Rakhshani, Kashfi, & Ayazi, 2016; Krebs, & Heyman, 2015).

Self-efficacy is explained in the theoretical framework of social cognitive theory by Bandura (2006 and 1997) which stated that human achievement depends on interactions between one's behaviours, personal factors and environmental conditions (as cited in Parmar, & Verma, 2018). According to the Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is one of the most important variables that influence academic growth and achievement. Collins (2002) demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy beliefs and skill application on academic growth. The study showed that people may perform poorly on tasks not necessarily because they cannot succeed, but because they lack belief in their capabilities (as cited in Sheshachala, & Narayanaswamy, 2019).

Bhikram, Abi-Jaoude, and Sandor, (2017) introduced three types of self-efficacy: self-regulatory self-efficacy (ability to resist peer pressure, avoid high-risk activities); social self-efficacy (ability to form and maintain relationships, be assertive, engage in leisure time activities); and academic self-efficacy (ability to do course work, regulate learning activities, meet expectations). Many studies have been carried out on this concept of self-efficacy in academic settings. Researchers have reported that self-efficacy is a good predictor of interest in learning (Schruers, et al., 2019; Bird, Shah, & Shotbolt, 2018). ODE learners with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to complete their education and are better equipped for a range of occupational options in today's competitive society (Asghar, et al., 2020). Conversely, it has been found that ODE learners who have a low sense of self-regulatory and academic self-efficacy are more likely to engage in problem behaviours such as delinquency, dropping out of school, and school failure (Huang, et al., 2018; Abba-Aji, et al., 2020).

Parental expectation can be conceptualised as the belief parents hold about the future performance, academic attainment and prospect of their children. Parental expectations are based on an assessment of the child's academic capabilities as well as the available resources for supporting a given level of achievement. Most researchers operationalize parental expectations by asking parents "how far" they think their child will go in school or by asking them to forecast what grades a child will receive that year. Occasionally, researchers have also asked about student perceptions of parental expectations as a proxy for parental expectations themselves (Lai J, Ma S, Wang, et al., 2020). ODE learners are often conscious of their parents' expectations especially those whose parents echo it often. According to Lai, et al., (2020) parents' expectations communicated to ODE learners are associated with enhanced achievement. ODE learners whose parents have high expectations their notes are often complete and neat because they will be checked at home, their learner support can be called for updates of the school programme. In most situations, children with an expectant parent have no choice to be committed to their academics.

However, it can be unrealistic for parents to have high expectations on their wards without being committed to it to see that it becomes reality. Parents' expectations should be obvious in their involvement.

It has been reported that when parents are actively involved in the academic activities of their children through class visits or helping with class activities, the children's behaviour and basic skills improve (Taqi, et al., 2021). Van Westen, Rietveld, and Denys, (2019) assessed various types of parental involvement, viz., volunteering, home involvement, attending parental classes, school political involvement, talking to staff and talking to learner support. Parental goals and educational aspirations affect student academic achievement positively probably because they have a positive influence on children's self-motivation and self-evaluation standards.

In American literature, Bowen, et al., (2018) reported that parental expectations were found to have a direct significant effect on academic achievement for European Americans but not for African American ODE learners. Concerning Latino families, none of the studies reviewed reported a significant relationship between parental expectations and student performance. Kumar, et al., (2016) argued that there was no evidence of a significant relationship between parental expectations and student grades for Latino ODE learners nor did two more recent longitudinal studies focusing on Latino immigrant families.

Age at entry can be referred to as the chronological age of ODE learners at enrolment into schooling. Age at entry explains the level of ODE learners' maturity and readiness to learn among peers within the four walls of a classroom. Age at the entrance should be a stable issue normed under the educational policy of every nation. Considering various literature, there appears to be no stipulated age at which a child is required to enrol in schooling. Many parents use their discretion in determining this in Nigeria. Although developed nations like the United States have a stable procedure and policy on the age any child should be enrolled (Jaisoorya, et al., 2017). Before the independence of the federal republic of Nigeria, there appear to be a universal yardstick on ODE learners' enrolment. As gathered from public opinion, a child will be enrolled based on harm-length over the head to the ear. This procedure was used for decades before its eradication.

Trapp (1995) and Parks (1996) reported a positive link between delayed age of school entry and improved academic growth. When compared to younger, yet still age-appropriate peers, a meta-analysis by La-Paro and Pianta (2000) and a research study by Stipek and Byler (2001) concluded that older children in school classrooms performed better academically than their younger peers. However, it must be noted that some researchers who agreed on the short term academic and behavioural benefits of delayed school entry could not agree on the long-term benefits (as cited in Torres AR, Fontenelle, Shavitt, Hoexter, Pittenger, & Miguel, 2017).

The maturity gained by ODE learners helps in easing assimilation and recall which eventually becomes evident in their academic scores. Age at entry in literature at times conflicting. Jenkins (2003) referred to chronological age as a student's actual age from birth" while maturational age was referred to as readiness to achieve at a set task. Jenkins (2003) linked the idea of maturational age to maturational readiness, and stated, children should be expected to achieve a specified standard before school entry. These researchers (Jenkins, 2003; as cited Alsubaie, et al., 2020) agreed that maturational age could differ from chronological age and that a child's maturity was often a better predictor of a student's school readiness. In the same vein, Assareh, Rakhshani, Kashfi, and Ayazi, (2016) argued that young and older ODE learners had similar achievements. Additionally, they found that the younger ODE learners outperformed the older ODE learners on tests in both the 10th and 12th grades. Research studies that examined the link between a student's age and academic growth most often refer to the student's chronological age, not maturational age. Previous studies concerning academic growth is numerous. Several efforts have been made in establishing the predictors of ODE learners' academic growth. Despite the effort made so far, there exist a need for re-examination because there exists an inconsistency in literature concerning the predictive influence of parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy which is the gap this study intends to establish.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to investigate psychosocial variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) as determinants of academic growth among university of

Ibadan distance learning ODE learners. Specifically, it intends to;

1. Investigate the relationship that exists between the independent variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (academic growth).
2. Determine the joint contribution of the independent variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) to the prediction of ODE learners' academic growth among university of Ibadan distance learning ODE learners.
3. Determine the relative contribution of the independent variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) to the prediction of ODE learners' academic growth among university of Ibadan distance learning ODE learners.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following were tested at a 0.05 level of significance

1. What is the relationship that exists between the independent variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (academic growth)?
2. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) to the prediction of ODE learners' academic growth among university of Ibadan distance learning ODE learners?
3. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (parental expectations, age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) to the prediction of ODE learners' academic growth among university of Ibadan distance learning ODE learners?

IV. METHODOLOGY

This section addressed the methods used for the study. Areas covered include research design, study population sample, instrumentations, administration and data analysis.

• Research Design

The correlational design was adopted for this study. This design is appropriate for this study because it intends to establish the relationship and the prediction weights of the psycho-social factors on academic gains of ODE learners.

• Population

The population for this study consists of all distance learning ODE learners of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan study centre. The University of Ibadan has thirteen faculties; these faculties have above ten thousand ODE learners. However, the University of Ibadan distance learning centre as at the time this study was carried out only three faculties are functional due to the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) injunction on the revalidation of departments.

• Sample and Sampling Techniques

Stratified sampling was adopted for this study. The first stratum involves a random selection of three faculties from the entire population. The second stratum involves the selection of 100 (involving 20 ODE learners from each academic level) ODE learners from each of the faculties. On the whole, a sample of three hundred (300) undergraduate ODE learners will be randomly selected. These were used as a representative of the population.

• Research Instrument

A questionnaire was used for the data collection on the variables investigated. The age at entry, parental expectation, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy scale (APESS) scale was used in this study. The adaptation was made after an extensive review of literature as advised by experts within and outside the faculty. The scale was piloted two weeks before the real administration to establish the suitability of the instrument for this study. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The sections are A, B, C and D.

• Academic growth Score Procedure

Academic growth score was collected from the lecturer taking the general course (which is computer efficiency) for each respondent who participated in the study. An average of their academic score in three consecutive academic sessions was considered (on a

1–100% scale where 40% is a pass and 70% is a first or distinction). A letter of permission was collected to this effect. The results will be predominantly based on the overall exam grades, that is, the arithmetic means of the total marks for each student.

- Section A: This will section consist of the demographic information of the participant such as gender, the age range at entry, and religion.

- Section B: Parental Expectation Scale (PEXP)

The parental expectation scale is a 15-item instrument, adopted from Leung and Shek (2011). The scale is designed to measure parental expectation on ODE learners' academic outcomes and behaviour. Shek et al. (2006) showed that the scale significantly correlated with other measurement tools of behavioural control and parent-child relational qualities, thus providing support for the construct validity of the scale. Reliability analysis showed that PEXP and MEXP were reliable ($\alpha = 0.76$ for PEXP and $\alpha = 0.75$ for MEXP). The scale was adopted to be student reported scale since parents will be very difficult to reach. Therefore, the scale will be informed of the perceived parental expectation scale. ODE learners who score high on this scale indicate a high perceived parental expectation scale, while those who score low indicates a low perceived parental expectation scale.

- Section C: Self-efficacy Scale (SES)

It consists of 14 items self-efficacy Scale adapted from Chris (2008). The scale measures the level of confidence a staff has in his ability to perform the organizational task. The scale has 5 point-Likert response formats, ranging from SA=strongly agree to SD= strongly disagree. A high score on the scale indicates high self-efficacy while low scores indicate low self-efficacy. Typical examples of the items are: "When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work," " I avoid facing difficulties." among others. It has a reliability coefficient of 0.87 using the Cronbach-alpha method. A pilot study was conducted for localization and adaptation of the scale was done through a single administration method of reliability and the internal consistency estimate was computed using Cronbach alpha = 0.73.

- Section D: Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS)

Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS) is a 33 item Urdu self-report measure, developed based on the social and emotional intelligence model of Bar-On (1997, 2000) and measures (interpersonal skill, self-regard, assertiveness, emotional self-awareness, empathy, impulse control, flexibility, problem-solving, stress tolerance, and optimism). Respondents use four-point Likert type response options, on which 1 represents (never true of me), 2 (sometimes true of me), 3 (often true of me) and 4 (always true of me). A high score indicates high emotional intelligence and a low score indicates low emotional intelligence. Psychometric properties were fulfilled during the developmental and validation process. Ten-factor structures appeared in factor analysis After establishing the factorial validity of the scale, its construct validity was determined with Urdu translated 117 item version of Bar-On (1997) and it showed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .686$, $p < .01$). Convergent validity of the scale was supplemented by taking rating by peers and comparing it with the perceived, self-report emotional intelligence scores of individuals and correlation was ($r = .631$, $p < .01$). Discriminant validity was established by the computing correlation between SEI and BDI (1993) scores and significant results were found ($r = -.491$, $p < .01$). The scale was used to categorise the participants of the study according to their level of emotional intelligence.

- Procedure for Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the participants in the various Ibadan study centres. Having obtained permission from the head of their department through the letter of introduction collected from the Department of Guidance and Counselling. The participants were adequately briefed on the need to cooperate with the researcher. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The data collection spread over two weeks, during which about 300 questionnaires were administered, and returned. These were scored and the data obtained were subjected to data analysis.

- Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed with the aid of Pearson product-moment correlation and multiple linear regression analysis to test the two research

questions and four hypotheses at 0.05 significant levels. Using Statistical packages for social sciences, afterwards the result obtained was interpreted.

V.   RESULTS

This segment presents various findings drawn from the study. The following results presented are based on the research questions raised, which the study has sought to answer.

- Research Question 1:

What is the relationship between the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence) and the dependent variable (academic growth)?

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship between study variables.

Variables	Mean	Std.Dev	1	2	3	4	5
Academic growth	46.97	5.051	1.000				
Age at entry	14.67	1.888	.763**	1.000			
Parental expectations	23.73	3.430	.553**	.664**	1.000		
Self-efficacy	33.80	10.246	.510**	.330*	.210*	1.000	
Emotional intelligence	41.67	14.68	.309**	.300*	.202*	310**	1.00

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 1 revealed the relationship of each independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) with the dependent variable (academic growth); Academic growth positively correlated with age at entry (r= .763, p< 0.01), parental expectations (r = .553, P<0.01), self-efficacy (r = .510, P<0.01), emotional intelligence (r = .309, P<0.01). This implies that the higher the parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy and age at entry the better the academic growth of ODE learners.

- Research Question 2:

What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence) on the dependent variables (Academic growth)?

Table 2: Summary of regression for the joint contributions of independent variables to the prediction of academic growth.

R =.763 R Square =.582 Adjusted R square =.580 Std. Error =3.27564					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	4442.907	4	1110.72675	102.8165	.000b
Residual	3186.760	295	10.803		
Total	7629.667	299			

Table 2 reveals the significant joint contribution of the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence) to the prediction of academic growth. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions R = 0.763 and multiple R-square = 0.582. This suggests that the four factors combined accounted for 93.6% (Adj.R^2= 00936) variance in the prediction of academic growth. The other factors accounting for the remaining variance are beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the academic growth, $F_{(4, 295)}$ = 102.8165, P<0.01.

- Research Question 3:

What is the relative contribution of the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence) on the dependent variables (Academic growth)?

Table 3: Relative effect of the independent variables on the prediction of academic growth.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	16.916	1.529		11.064	.000
	Age at entry	2.007	.143	.750	14.011	.000
	Parental expectations	.026	.079	.018	.327	.744
	Self-efficacy	.626	.066	.467	9.475	.000
	Emotional Intelligence	.197	.051	.211	3.877	.000

Table 3 shows that three out of four predictors (age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) are potent predictors of academic growth. The strongest factor was age at entry (Beta = .750, t= 14.011, P<0.01), followed by self-efficacy (Beta = .467, t= 9.475, P<0.01) and emotional intelligence (Beta = .211, t= 3.877, P<0.01). Parental expectations (Beta = .018, t = .327, P>0.05) is not a potent predictor of ODE learners' academic growth. This implies that age at entry, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence accounted for increase in leaners academic growth by 75%, 46.7%, and 21.1% respectively.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first research question examined the relationship between the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) and the dependent variable (academic growth). The result reveals that Academic growth positively correlated with age at entry, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and parental expectations. This implies that the higher the parental expectations, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and age at entry the better the academic growth of ODE learners. The result of this study corroborated Hama, and Ahmed (2018) who undertook a longitudinal study for two years called "Your child". The findings of the study revealed that parental expectation and involvement correlates with a child's success in schools. ODE learners who are more likely to succeed have parents who expect them to obtain an advanced degree. They are more likely to agree that everyone should have a college education and define success in terms of self-support and educational level.

On the other hand, the result of this study corroborated Krebs, and Heyman, (2015) who questioned the wisdom of enrolling ODE learners at an earlier age and summarized, "despite the extra year of schooling, the early entrant is only three months superior in achievement to the regular entrant at a particular age. Similarly, the result of this study agreed with Chacon, et al., (2018) and Bird, et al., (2018) who studied student age and academic growth, no matter what the entrance age limit may be, the undergraduate children who enter (earliest) have more problems and achieve less than those of equal IQ who enter (later).

In this study, it was also shown that there is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic growth. The result further reveals that self-efficacy positively influenced the academic growth of ODE learners. This implies that a high self-efficacy increases the tendency for ODE learners to display high academic growth. This result supports Bandura and his colleagues (2001), who reported that adolescents with a strong sense of efficacy for learning are also more resilient to setbacks and better able to resist the adverse influences of low-achieving peers than are those with a weak sense of efficacy. They further reported that maintenance of high self-efficacy can also have a positive influence on youth career trajectories and continuing academic growth throughout college. Similar studies also justified the result of this study; Bhikram, Abi-Jaoude, & Sandor, (2017) and Parmar, & Verma, (2018) who examined the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement of ODE learners at different levels of education, except for a few studies, it was consistently documented that ODE learners with higher levels of

academic self-efficacy have significantly higher academic growth compared to their counterparts who are low in academic self-efficacy. That is, when ODE learners have strong beliefs in their academic capabilities to perform well, they will have higher academic achievement than their counterpart ODE learners with low beliefs in their capabilities to perform well academically.

The second research question examined the joint contribution of the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) on the dependent variables (Academic growth). The result reveals that there was a significant joint contribution of the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) to the prediction of academic growth. This suggests that the two factors combined accounted for 93.6% (Adj.R^2= .936) variance in the prediction of academic growth. The result of this is corroborated by Mayuri (2003) who designed a study to find out the school factors that affect the academic achievement of the school undergraduate children studying in classes IX and X. The sample consisted of 120 undergraduate children (60 each from class IX and class X) and 40 teachers from a residential school in Hyderabad city. One of the key findings of this study was that family factors like parental aspirations and socio-economic factors affected the academic achievement of the school undergraduate children. Similarly, Sheshachala and Narayanaswamy, (2019) reported that expectations by significant others in the environment, viz., teachers, parents and peers, enhanced academic achievement and career motivation of learners.

While on the account of age at entry, the result of this study supported Fineberg, et al., (2018) also made the distinction between ODE learners'' chronological age and their maturational age, stating that chronological age is related to school readiness, while maturational age is related to learning readiness. Similarly, Bowen, et al., (2018) reported that emotionally mature undergraduate children may do better in school compared to younger, less mature undergraduate children, but stated there are "no valid instruments to identify these undergraduate children. Sheshachala and Narayanaswamy, (2019) agreed, referring to chronological age as a student's actual age from birth while maturational age was referred to as readiness to achieve at a set task.

From the result of this study, self-efficacy is part of the joint factor that predicted undergraduates' academic growth. This result is consistent with previous studies that examined the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement of ODE learners at different levels of education, except for a few studies (Ansari, Mishra, Tripathi, Kar, & Dalal, 2020; Torres, Cruz, Vicentini, Lima, & Ramos-Cerqueira, 2016), In these studies, it was reported that ODE learners with higher levels of academic self-efficacy have significantly higher academic growth compared to their counterparts who are low in academic self-efficacy. That is, when ODE learners have strong beliefs in their academic capabilities to perform well, they will have higher academic achievement than their counterpart ODE learners with low beliefs in their capabilities to perform well academically. Considering all the three variables that jointly contributed to academic success.

The third research question examined the relative contribution of the independent variables (age at entry, parental expectations, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) on the dependent variables (Academic growth). The result reveals that three out of four predictors (age at entry, emotional intelligence and self-efficacy) are potent predictors of academic growth. The most potent factor was the age at entry. Parental expectations are not a potent predictor of ODE learners' academic growth. This implies that the older the student the better they are likely to perform in their academics. The result of this study supported Huz, et al., (2016) and Raynal, et al., (2019) who found a positive link between delayed age of school entry and improved academic growth. Similarly, Stipek and Byler (2001) concluded that older undergraduate children in school classrooms performed better academically than their younger peers. However, it must be noted that some researchers who agreed on the "short term academic and behavioural benefits" of delayed school entry could not agree on the long-term benefits (as cited in Bowen, et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the result of this study on parental expectation negated previous studies such as Hama, and Ahmed, (2018) who carried out a study to examine

the role of parental involvement and expectations on a child's academic growth. They assessed various types of parental involvement, viz., volunteering, home involvement, attending parental classes, school political involvement, talking to staff and talking to teachers. The overall results indicated that those who went to the parent seminars (classes) or were more involved in the academic activities of undergraduate children (such as checking undergraduate children's planners, talking to a child at home about school-related topics, or engaged in educational activities outside of school), had undergraduate children who performed better in various subjects or had better grades. The result of this study negated various previous studies because this study did not juxtapose parental expectation and parental expectation with involvement. On this premise parents with high expectations but are not involved in their undergraduate children's academic pursuit might not get the expected dividend.

Self-efficacy was also found to be a significant predictor of DLC undergraduates' academic growth. This result agreed with previous studies that reported that ODE learners with higher academic self-efficacy have been shown to work harder (Huang, et al., 2018), demonstrate more persistence with challenging tasks (Asghar, et al., 2020), and develop better goal-setting and time-monitoring strategies than other ODE learners (Alsubaie, et al., 2020). This is an indication that self-confidence which is referred to as self-efficacy is significant in determining the level of academic success a student can gain. Because academic self-efficacy is a self-belief system it determines ODE learners' effort, focus and commitment which is the hallmark of success.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated psycho-social factors (emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, parental expectations and age at entry as determinants of academic growth among distance learning ODE learners of the University of Ibadan centre. It was discovered that emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, parental expectations and age at entry are significant correlates of ODE learners' academic growth. The four independent variables jointly predicted ODE learners' academic growth accounting for 93.6%

variance. The most potent predictor of ODE learners' academic growth was the age at entry, followed by self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. By implication, the higher the maturity, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence of ODE learners the better their academic growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the following are suggested
- Parents are expected to consider the level of maturity of their undergraduate children before enrolling them in school.
- University management and administrators should put undergraduate children age into consideration before admitting them into the distance learning programme.
- Educational policymakers are enjoined to recommend preschool preparation of ODE learners for formal schooling to help them develop adequately for formal education.
- The university management is enjoined to provide the necessary learner support system that will help learners to quickly adjust to the open distance learning mode.
- To enhance learners' emotional intelligence and self-efficacy university management should ensure that distance learning programmes have counselling psychologists that can be reached online to help ODE learners in building their psychology enough to be able to scale through the programme successfully.

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