Resilience, Gender and Age as Predictors of Satisfaction with Academic Major among University Undergraduates

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Abstract
This study investigated the role of Resilience, gender and age as predictors of satisfaction with academic major among University undergraduates. It was hypothesized that resilience, gender and age will not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among University undergraduates. Participants for this study were 200 students of Godfrey Okoye University Enugu, Enugu state, comprising 99 males and 101 females, drawn from different faculties with age range of 15-30, mean of 20.83 years (SD 2.89). The instruments used to collect data for the study were Resilience Scale (RS-14) and Academic Major Satisfaction Scale (AMSS). Resilience was measured with Resilience Scale (RS-14) while student's satisfaction with academic major was measured with Academic Major Satisfaction Scale (AMSS). Cross-sectional design was used for the study and multiple regression was used for data analysis. Result showed that that resilience positively and significantly predicted the students’ satisfaction with academic major (Beta = .29, t = 4.23, p < .001). It indicated that students who were reported higher resilience were found to also have higher satisfaction with their academic majors. Age did not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among the students (Beta = -.02, t = -.03). Gender was not found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction with academic major (Beta = .06, t = .93). Findings were discussed and suggestions for further study were made.

Introduction
Student’s satisfaction with academics in postsecondary setting has always been a subject of discussions, both in African setting and in the Western world. Moro & Panades (2010) noted that if students are viewed as consumers of higher education, their satisfaction is crucial. Data gathered in student’s satisfaction helps universities set their academic goals. In setting these goals, it is important to evaluate student’s outcome which is the best way to measure the quality and overall effectiveness of higher educational institutions. A better outcome can only be achieved through satisfaction. Jamelske (2009) revealed that satisfied students are more likely to be committed and continue their studies than unsatisfied students, who are likely to be less willing to regularly attend classes, and are more likely to quit their studies. In academic settings, satisfaction has been defined as the extent to which students are satisfied with a number of college-related issues such as advising, quality of instruction, course availability, and class size (Tessema, Ready & YU, 2012). Kaldenberg, Browne & Brown (1998) found that in the college, student satisfaction was driven by evaluating the quality of coursework and other curriculum activities and other factors related to the university. Lecturers should treat
students with sensitivity and sympathy, and assistance should be provided when necessary. Even simple listening is appreciated (Kayasta 2011). Grossman (1999) stated that student could be treated like a customer or a client within the college and in that case, the college serves the students on a better priority to fulfill their expectations and needs. Elliot and Healy (2001) said that student satisfaction is a short-term attitude, derived from the evaluation of the received education service.

Examining students’ satisfaction helps to know or to ascertain how far universities go in achieving their academic goals. Each institution is required to produce graduates who are qualified in different fields of life. Thus students must be trained and prepared to face the challenges that they will meet on living the institution. For each institution to achieve this, students must be trained to understand the importance of education or educational values and be satisfied with their overall experience (Tessema, Ready & YU, 2012). Özgüngör (2010) opined that Satisfaction is a relevant measure because many studies have demonstrated that other factors being equal, satisfied individuals are likely to be willing to exert more effort than unsatisfied individuals. Student satisfaction also ultimately impacts the quality of students graduated and placed in the workforce and community. Graduates’ quality can become questionable if their academic performance is low (Martirosyan, Saxo & Wanjohi, 2014).

Due to the seriousness of this paradigm, a good number of researchers have tried to identify some factors that affect students’ satisfaction (e.g. Corts, Lounsbury, Saudarges & Tatum, 2000; Aman, 2009; Elliott, 2003; Peterson, Wagner & Lamb, 2001; Banks & Faul, 2007; Heiman, 2008; Beqiri, Chase & Bishka, 2010; Kane, 2005; Ross, Batzer & Bennington, 2002). From the previous studies, a lot of factors have been noted to influence satisfaction with academics among students in different levels of learning. Some researchers have proved that a host of student’s personal attributes contribute to their satisfaction with academics. Although a number of studies have been conducted to examine University student satisfaction, yet very few studies have examined the role of resilience, age and gender on university students’ satisfaction with academic major. In this study therefore, role of resilience, age and gender in students’ satisfaction with academic major will be examined.

Resilience is a theoretical concept that has evolved as a way to describe and analyze success of people and groups with a broad spectrum of challenges that indicate they should fail (Heatan, 2013). Resilience refers to the idea of an individual’s ability to cope with stress and adversity. This coping may result in the individual “bouncing back” to a previous state of normal functioning, or experience the exposure of adversity to produce a “steeling effect” and function better than expected (Akbar, Akram, Ahmed, Hussain, Lal & Ijaz, 2014). Resilience as defined by Garza, Reyes and Trueba (2004), is the ability to confront and to resolve problems and the capacity to utilize personal or social resources to enhance limited possibilities.

Throughout a lifetime, humans confront a variety of life challenges. Challenges may include a combination of emotional, physical, or social stressors. Such stressors, also known as risk factors, are thought to endanger a child’s ability to develop in a healthy, well-adjusted way, preventing them from productively contributing to society (Banatao, 2011). As students, these
challenges cannot be avoided, nor prevented; but students can try to change how they respond to these events and use constructive coping mechanisms in which they can function optimally in a distressed situation. Bates and Miles-Johnson (2010) explained this. They said that resilience is a component that is not only important for transition into University, but also through university life and then the transition from university into the world of work. Resilient individuals have the capacity to bounce back from stressful experiences quickly and effectively. They use positive emotions to rebound from, and find positive meaning in stress encounters (Tugade & Frederickson, 2004).

Resilience is a constructive mechanism to aid students in situations in which pressure is increased or a greater feeling of stress and anxiety is experienced (Hassaim, Strydom & Strydom, 2013). In an academic environment, students face stress, pressure and adaptation from the school environment to the university structure. In modern times today, further social demands are exerted on the student such as peer pressure, academic performance, identity, drugs and alcohol. Even though today’s undergraduates are talented and mature, literature proves that they present more social problems than ever before. However, each individual’s coping strategy is handled differently and some are able to bounce back to stable life circumstances, whereas others are not inclined to be resilient. Resilience appears to be at the background of every action a student takes. It acts as a moderator, motivation, compass, and activates the mind. Resilient students are able to apply relevant techniques and skills to problems, and are intrinsically motivated to conquer difficulties without suffering lasting harm (Moleli, 2005).

Based on this, one can ascertain and agree with the findings that resilience offers a new perspective from which to view academic achievement; rather than focusing on the shortcomings of students who are at risk of failure, the resilience construct attempts to identify the factors that account for success. Educational resilience focuses on the way the personal, social, and environmental resources blunt the potentially negative effects of stress factors on students (Heatan, 2013).

Using a database that included 2,169 Mexican-American high school students in three California high schools, Gonzalez and Padilla (1997) conducted a study of the factors that contribute to academic resilience. They focused on the role of peers, family, teachers, cultural identity, and the school environment as sources of support. They attempted to discover whether three variables, a supportive academic environment, a sense of belonging, and cultural loyalty, could predict student grades. The researchers used grade point average (GPA) to identify resilient students. They found that a supportive academic environment and a sense of belonging at school were significant predictors of resilience. Family and peer support and the value placed on school were also factors in predicting academic resilience.

Although a number of studies have been conducted to examine the effect of university student’s satisfaction, there are only few studies that have examined the effect of gender on University students’ satisfaction with academic major. In the past, the notion of gender gaps in higher education has been viewed from the perspective of inequities faced by females as they progress through the educational pipeline (Tessema, Ready & Malone 2012). Even today, the topic of gender differences continues to receive significant attention at both the institutional and
national levels (Sax & Harper, 2005; Reynolds & Burge, 2007). In the past mostly men were known to be pursuing higher education more than women and there were more number of men in the work force. Recently women increment in pursuing higher education justifies the increase in the number of women in the work force. Although the number and performance of female college students has substantially increased, a gender gap still exists, causing some researchers to examine this gap during the college years (Tessema, Ready & Malone, 2012).

According to Chee, Pino, and Smith (2005), education is like a dual-edged sword. It has been a source of advancement, empowerment, and liberation for women, but it has also reinforced gender inequalities. Persell, James, Kang, and Snyder (1999) conclude that there is little doubt that education serves as a key for understanding gender issues in part because it largely mirrors social relationships in society. When it comes to gender issues in education, most of the attention has been focused on the elementary and secondary levels (Sax & Harper, 2005). This does not mean that there has been no research in gender issues in higher educational institutions. Some research studies have shown a gender gap on a variety of outcomes such as satisfaction, GPA, choice of major, emotional distress, and cognitive differences which originated prior to college entry and are reinforced during the college years (Strayhorn & Saddler, 2009; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 2001).

A study by Carey, Cambiano and De Vore (2002) compared campus satisfaction levels between students and faculty as measured by the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) and the Institutional Priorities Survey (IPS). The student sample consisted of 692 (397 females and 295 males) from a Midwestern State University. The faculty sample consisted of 174 full-time professors and instructors (66 females, 100 males, and 8 did not indicate gender). Both student and faculty respondents rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale with respect to their expectation and satisfaction with student services. Results of the t-test (t=.49; .62) indicated that there was no significant difference in satisfaction between sexes, age groups and ethnicities. Yusoff (2011) identified and evaluated the drivers that influence student satisfaction in the Malaysian private educational environment. The study adopted a positivist approach whereby 1,200 questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate business students at four private educational institutions in Malaysia. A total of 823 responses were found to be usable for analysis giving a response rate of 69%. The result revealed that significant differences exist between the demographic factors and five factors (student support facilities, class sizes, classroom environment, business procedures and relationship with the teaching staff).

Tessema, Ready and Malone (2012) examined the effect of gender on different college outcomes such as students’ satisfaction, ACT scores, and GPA at a mid-sized Midwestern public University. Selected demographic and attitudinal data were collected between 2001 and 2009 from a sample of 5,223 senior students representing five colleges at the University (Business, Education, Liberal Arts, Nursing/Health Sciences and Science/Engineering). Findings showed that gender has a significant effect on student’s satisfaction, ACT scores, and GPA. Olunwunmi and Ajai (2014) studied effect of characteristics of Nigerian students on perceived satisfaction of academic facilities in private universities in Ogun state Using Mann- Whitney U Test and
Kruskal Wallis test to compare the age of students. The analysis revealed that there is no significant difference in the satisfaction of the age groups.

Tessema, Ready and Yu (2012) studied factors affecting college students’ satisfaction with major curriculum, evidence from nine years of data in Midwestern U.S University. Electronic survey was used in data collection with 6,602 participants. A four-point Likert scale was used to assess students’ satisfaction with 11 factors affecting students’ satisfaction with major curriculum. In addition, the survey items included items related to participants’ demographics such as gender. The finding was that each of the factors had a moderate to high positive correlation with other factors and overall satisfaction with major curriculum. In others words the 11 factors are found to be significantly correlated with satisfaction with major curriculum. Gender has a significant effect on satisfaction with major curriculum.

This study intends to contribute to the existing literature and to our understanding of role of resilience, gender and age in students’ satisfaction with academic major.

In this study, 3 hypotheses will be tested, as follows:
1. Resilience will not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among undergraduates
2. Age will not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among undergraduates
3. Gender will not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among undergraduates

Method

Participants
Two hundred students of Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, participated in this research. They comprised of 99 males and 101 females. Their ages ranged from 15-30, with a mean age of 20.83 years (SD = 2.89). There were 198 single persons while 2 were married. The ethnic groups of the participants were as follows: Igbo (161), Hausa (1), Yoruba (2) and others (37). The participants comprised of 94 first year students, 78 second year students, 12 third year students and 16 fourth year students.

Instruments
The 14-item Resilience Scale (RS-14) and Academic Major Satisfaction Scale (AMSS) were used for data collection.

RS-14 was developed by Wagnild and Young (1993) to measure the capacity to withstand life stressors, thrive and make meaning from life’s challenges. It is scored using a 7-point response format ranging from 1(strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Some items in RS-14 include: I usually take things in stride; my life has meaning; etc. Cronbach’s reliability coefficients ranging from .91 to .93 across several studies was reported by Wagnild and Young (1993). The concurrent administration of RS-14 and some other measures by the developers
revealed significant discriminant validity coefficients with life satisfaction (r=.37) morale (r =.31) depression (r =-.41), self reported health status (r=-.30) and a highly adequate convergent validity with the 25-item Resilience Scale (r=.97). In a study aimed at validating RS-14 in Nigeria, Abiola and Udofia (2011) reported a Cronbach’s coefficient of .81, a convergent validity of .97 with RS-25 as well as discriminant validity coefficients of-.28 (Depression subscale of Hospital Anxiety Depression Scale, HADS) and -.26 (Anxiety subscale of HADS). We obtained a Cronbach’s α of .83 and a Spearman-Brown split-half reliability coefficient of .80. Ifeagwazi, Chukwuorji and Zacchaeus (2014) carried out a principal component factor analysis using extraction method and obtained a homogenous, one-factor structure. Hence the RS-14 can be used as a unidimensional scale. Higher scores on the RS-14 indicate more resilient characteristics.

Nauta (2007) constructed the Academic Major Satisfaction Scale (AMSS) as a six-item measure specific to academic major. AMSS uses a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). It is an important technical advance because it corresponds to established career-related variables such as career-decision self-efficacy and career choice anxiety, and general academic variables such as GPA (Nauta, 2007). Nauta (2007) reported internal consistency of α = .94 and α = .90. In the current study, α = .91, showing acceptable reliability.

**Procedure**

Questionnaire forms, prepared by the researchers, were administered to the students by the second author. The students were approached in their classrooms and after establishing adequate rapport and explaining the purpose of the visit, the forms were given to those who were willing to participate in the study. There was no reward for participation in the study. Two hundred and twenty (250) questionnaires were distributed but 209 copies were returned and 200 of the returned questionnaires yielded usable data for analysis.

**Design/Statistics**

The study adopted a cross-sectional design and multiple regression was used for data analysis.

**Results**

**Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviations and Correlations of gender, age, resilience and Satisfaction with academic major**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20.83</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS_14</td>
<td>66.66</td>
<td>14.77</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Academic Major</td>
<td>17.29</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.29*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .001.*
Table 1 showed that there was no significant relationship between gender and age (r = -.04). Gender was not significantly related to resilience (r = .08). The relationship of gender and satisfaction with academic major was not significant (r = .04). Age was neither significantly related to resilience (r = -.03) nor satisfaction with academic major (r = -.01). There was a significant relationship between resilience and academic major (r = .29, p < .001). Individuals who scored higher in resilience also obtained higher scores on satisfaction with academic major.

Table 2: Model summary of Regression for contribution of gender, age, resilience and Satisfaction academic major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>Change Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Together, resilience, age and gender contributed 7% of the variance in satisfaction with academic major among the students, as shown by the R² Change of .07.

Table 3: Regression coefficients for role of gender, age, resilience and satisfaction academic major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .001

Table 3 indicated that resilience positively and significantly predicted the students’ satisfaction with academic major (Beta = .29, t = 4.23, p < .001). It indicated that students who were reported higher resilience were found to also have higher satisfaction with their academic majors. Age did not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among the students (Beta = -.02, t = -.03). Gender was not found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction with academic major (Beta = .06, t = .93).

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that resilience positively and significantly predicted the students’ satisfaction with academic major. It indicated that students who were reported higher resilience were found to also have higher satisfaction with their academic majors. Thus the first hypothesis which stated that Resilience will not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among undergraduates was rejected. This supports the findings of Akbar,
Akram, Amed, Hussain, Lal & Ijaz (2014) that individual with high level of resilience cope with the life adversity well and have a higher level of satisfaction in all spheres of life. Resilience was positively correlated to the life satisfaction.

In the academic domain, numerous studies have been conducted to examine the influence of gender on students' satisfaction. While some researchers (Perry, Sekelsy & Sharsten, 2003; Sax & Harper, 2005; Umbach & Porter, 2002) found that gender has significant influence on student’s satisfaction levels. Others (Dirkin, Mishra, & Altermatt, 2005; Mupinga, Nora, & Yaw, 2006; Witowski, 2008; Ilias, et al., 2008; Corts et al., 2000; Carey et al., 2002; Strayhorn & Saddler, 2009) found no significant difference between male and female students regarding satisfaction. These support the finding of this study that Gender was not found to be a significant predictor of satisfaction with academic major. Age also did not significantly predict satisfaction with academic major among the students.

Implication of Findings

Several factors are associated with student’s satisfaction. This study has again shown another factor that is very pertinent in University student’s satisfaction. Resilience was found in this study to be positively related to student’s satisfaction. Therefore since resilience promotes satisfaction with academic major and improved outcome, students should be encouraged and affirmed to help enhance their self-esteem and self-efficacy. This in turn will help enhance their level of satisfaction with academics not minding the conditions. Again it will also contribute to the quality of graduates in the labour market as stated by Martirosyan, Saxon and Wanjohi (2014) that student satisfaction impacts the quality of students graduated and placed in the workforce and Community. Resilience according to Hassim, Strydom and Strydom (2013) is at the background of every action a student takes. It moderates, motivates and activates the mind. Therefore it is very crucial that resilience be built in every individual for a better outcome in every activity of life.

Recommendation

This study was conducted in only one University. Therefore in order to generalize and validate the findings of this study, a similar study is needed to examine the findings.

Limitations of the study

This study has its limitations and one is that the study was conducted one only one University. Another limitation of this study is the sample size. Thus the result should be interpreted with caution when comparing to students in other universities.

References


