



Psychological Capital and Satisfaction with Course of Study as Correlates of Psychological Well-Being among Undergraduates

by

Ifeoma Ebele and Marvellous K. Mamah

Department of Psychology, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

iebele@delsu.edu.ng; mamahmarvellous@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the association of psychological capital, satisfaction with the course of study and psychological well-being among undergraduates. Three hypotheses derived from the specific objectives of the study were tested. This study's design was cross-sectional survey and quantitative data gathered with questionnaires were used. The questionnaire was used to elicit responses from 250 respondents, that made the sample size. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Results showed that the relationship between psychological capital and psychological well-being among undergraduates is negative, and the relationship between course of study satisfaction and psychological well-being among undergraduates is positive. It was recommended that interventions aimed at increasing psychological capital, such as teaching students positive psychological skills, can be effective in improving psychological well-being, efforts should be made to increase student satisfaction with their course of study, such as through careful course planning and advising, as well as providing opportunities for meaningful involvement in the learning process among others.

Keywords: Psychological capital, satisfaction, Course of study, Psychological well-being, Undergraduates.

1. Introduction

Academic demands on students vary across educational level and institutions, and feat in in academic endeavors remains a goal for every student. Therefore, the teaching community is always interested in academic success optimization of students, usually expressed in dimensions like psychological capital, satisfaction with the course of study, and psychological well-being. For a long time, psychological well-being studies are guided by two basic understandings. First, a distinction is made between positive and negative effects, and happiness is the balance between the two. The other understanding comes from the sociologists which considered life satisfaction the main indicator of well-being. Consequently, it is stated that life satisfaction complements happiness and gives a more

operative dimension to positive functioning (Ryff & Keyes, 2015). Studies on psychological well-being largely concentration on understanding the underlying causes of employees' psychological health. Studies on psychological health state of teachers and students are mostly linked with settings containing negations such as stress and fatigue (Spilled, Koomen, & Thijs, 2016).

Primarily, school environment is an indispensable organization that can influence students' satisfaction with the course of study, like occupational-related activities of employees in the workplace. Further, the activities like attending lectures, completing classwork, preparing and submitting assignments in time, are considered as work which to varying levels is affected by their individual psychological capital, satisfaction with the course of study and psychological well-being. Therefore, understanding association between the above-mentioned variables may increase the literature on educational practices that are positive. In addition, psychological well-being fosters academic achievements, degree of satisfaction with achievements and level of coping with stressful situations.

Psychological capital refers to a state-like condition that is positive and motivational which comes from the individual endorsement of optimism, hope, self-efficacy and resilience (Werner, 2016). The four dimensions of psychological capital: hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. Hope is related to mindset, which encompasses enthusiasm to achieve chosen goals. Optimism is related to expectations that decent and constructive things will take place in the future. Resilience as one's competency to meritoriously acclimate it when facing prominent hardship and negative situations, and self-efficacy means an individual's perceived capability to achieve specific behaviors (Lambesis & Volk, 2017).

Satisfaction indicates a feeling of happiness that comes with the fulfills needs and desires. It is a state expressed by the individual that experienced performance or an outcome that fulfilled their expectations (Clarke, 2013). Therefore, satisfaction can be defined as an experience of accomplishment of expected results. People feel satisfied when they realize their prospects, hence satisfaction is a determined achievement that results that give the individual contentment. Therefore, satisfaction with the course of study refers to attitudes and feelings of students about their experience and outcome in a course. Students' satisfaction is a short-term attitude that results from an evaluation of their educational experiences (Muse & Barnes, 2012). Satisfaction with the course of study is a positive precursor of student loyalty which comes from the educational system (Zeithaml, 2011).

Elliot and Shin (2012) defined student satisfaction as students' disposition which arises from subjective assessment of educational experience and outcomes. Therefore, student satisfaction is a function of the relative level of experiences and educational services as perceived during the period of study. It is a short-term attitude that comes from an appraisal of educational experience of the students, services, and facilities available in the educational setting. Student satisfaction studies is an important strategy for universities as it guards intervention geared towards improving schools and students' relationships and healthy school experience (Nair & Ragavan, 2016). Satisfaction with course of study refers to how students feel about the different aspects of their course of studies ranging from teachers, teaching methods, intellectual feedback from their classmates and school

curriculum which could be negative or positive (Bowyer, 2018). While internal factors which affect study satisfaction among students covered age, gender, education level, motive, personality, , knowledge, skill and abilities, physical conditions, study conditions, and grading system (Telman & Ünsal, 2019).

Psychological well-being has two central sides. The first refers to the extent people experience positive emotions and feelings of happiness and this aspect of psychological well-being is discussed to as subjective well-being (Diener, 2000). The other type refers to a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Even though past studies did not focus on academic accomplishment, previous research with college students confirmed that increased psychological capital fosters lower levels of anxiety, increase motivation and success in training programmes, brings about positive perceptions of group work, and lower levels of distress and avoidance among post-traumatic stress disorders collegiate women (Timarova & Salaets, 2017). These findings in addition with others that indicate that psychological capital impacts learning, language development (Deák, 2014; Jacques & Zelazo, 2015), and math skills (Bull & Scerif, 2014), suggest a link between psychological capital and achievement in academic backgrounds. Outside academics, psychological capital has the potential to affect the extent college students consider various academic paths and explore several career options. Adams (2016) found that first-year college students higher in psychological capital report stronger professional identity than those lower in psychological capital. The findings submitted that psychological capital could be impactful to career choice and self-confidence, essentially at some stage in students' collegiate education because the Adams (2016) research is limited first-year students.

The relationship between satisfaction with the course of study and psychological well-being of students has been explored with students at the middle school level, a time of shift and a point when students are becoming aware of how much effort and intelligence contribute to educational success (Duckworth, 2012). Duckworth (2015) studied middle school students and found that satisfaction with the course of study and psychological well-being of students predict grades better, while IQ predicts standardized achievement test scores better. He concluded that psychological well-being aids students learn and solve problems autonomously of formal teaching, while satisfaction with the course of study inspires students to study, complete assignment, and behave well in the teaching space.

Students with higher psychological well-being are in general better at battling enticements, are more likely to be focused on academic task with less distraction of work from leisure activities, and do not procrastinate on schoolwork (Friese & Hofmann, 2018). The capacity to manage conditions of school-leisure conflict by planning instead of postponing schoolwork for leisure activities is critical to gaining academic competence and by formal instruction.

In Nigeria's formal education, poor satisfaction with course of study of undergraduates may be attributed to a variety of factors such as low psychological capital, dissatisfaction with course of study and negative psychological well-being culminating in examination malpractice, truancy etc as well as low academic psychological capital. This may be that undergraduates with mental health challenges in Nigerian schools may have the fear of exposing their problems because of the negative psychiatric labels often attached

to such problems. Though, several of the cognitive factors may influence other variables necessary to succeed in academic settings. The association of psychological capital, satisfaction with course study and psychological well-being of undergraduates has not been examined in the literature. Therefore, this study pioneered the research efforts on the relationship between psychological capital, satisfaction with course of study and psychological well-being among undergraduates.

The broad objective of the current study is to determine the link between psychological capital, course of study satisfaction, and psychological well-being among undergraduates. By serving as a reference point, this study will be of immense importance to future researchers interested in carrying out similar research.

Given the foregoing, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: Psychological capital will positively predict psychological well-being among undergraduates.

Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction with the course of study will positively predict psychological well-being among undergraduates.

2. Materials and Methods

Participants and Procedure

Two hundred and fifty students across departments from Delta State University, Abraka, were involved in the study with varying socio-demographic characteristics. The systematic sampling technique was employed to sample the participants. Furthermore, two hundred and fifty questions of the questionnaires were administered, and two hundred and nineteen were returned (Females = 125, males = 94). Nineteen were misplaced by the respondents, while twelve were incorrectly filled, rendering them null and void. The researchers, with a letter authorizing the research, introduced themselves to the respondents in their lecture hall, sampled them after their consent was given. Two hundred and fifty copies of the survey were distributed to the participants while in their classrooms, and they were given some time to respond to the instrument and returned to the researchers immediately

Measurement

Three research instruments used to measure the variables are psychological capital Scale by Platania and Paolillo (2022); Satisfaction with course of study Scale by Liu, Wang and Wu (2017); & Psychological capital Scale by Ryff and Keyes (1995). The psychological capital scale developed by Plantania and Paolillo (2022) has 12 items measuring four dimensions, which covered Hope, Optimism, Resilience, and Self-efficacy, and each of the dimensions has three items. In Platania and Paolillo (2022), the reliability coefficient of the psychological capital scale was .90. The scale items are scored on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' (scored 1) to 'Strongly Agree' (scored 5). An example of items in PCS is, "If I should find myself in a difficult situation, I could think of many ways to get out of it". Reliability analysis in the present study revealed a Cronbach's alpha of .90

Satisfaction with course of study scale was measured with a 16-item scale developed by Liu, Wang and Wu (2017). The scale developers reported Cronbach alphas of

.83 and .85 in two different studies and test-retest reliability of .87. The scale items were scored on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ (scored 1) to ‘Strongly Agree’ (scored 5). Example of items in SCS is, “I am satisfied with the learning atmosphere in the school”. Reliability analysis in the present study revealed a Cronbach’s alpha of .84.

Psychological well-being was measured with a 18-item scale developed by Ryff and Keyes (1995). The scale’s authors reported Cronbach alphas of .78 and .79 in two different studies and test-retest reliability of .79. The scale items are scored on a 5-point Likert response format ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ (scored 1) to ‘Strongly Agree’ (scored 5). Example of items in PWS is, “I like most parts of my personality”. Reliability analysis in the present study revealed a Cronbach’s alpha of .79.

Design and Statistical Tool

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistical tool was used to test the stipulated research hypotheses. This design is the most obvious design that is used in the social sciences. This design is deeply rooted in survey research method of data collection. A cross-sectional design allows a researcher to obtain a representative sample to respond to a number of questions about their attitude or opinion in a given issue.

3. Results and Discussion

The sociodemographic characteristics of participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participant

Participants characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	85	38.8
Female	134	61.2
Marital Status		
Married	9	4.1
Single	219	95.9
Level of study		
100	20	9.1
200	105	47.9
300	53	24.2
400	38	17.4
500	3	1.4
Religion		
Christianity	213	97.3
Islam	2	0.9
Others	4	1.8
Faculty		
Social Sciences	31	14.2
Science	36	16.4
Basic Medical Sciences	33	15.1
Pharmacy	5	2.3
Art	19	8.7
Education	35	16.0

Management Science	60	27.4
Ethnicity		
Ibo	69	31.5
Urhobo	90	41.1
Itsekiri	9	4.1
Ijaw	15	6.8

The sample had more female than male respondents. Most participants were single and identified as Christians. Respondents were drawn from various faculties, with the Faculty of Management Sciences having the highest representation. The majority were 200-level students. In terms of ethnicity, Urhobo was the most represented group, followed by Ibo, with smaller numbers from other ethnic groups.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 2: *Mean, standard deviation, and correlation of research variable*

		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1	Psychological capital	219	4.19	0.41	-	-	-
2	Course of study satisfaction	219	3.24	0.81	-	-	-
3	Psychological well-being	219	3.73	0.48	.278*	.106*	-

*, $p < .05$

As seen from Table 2, the results supported Hypothesis 1 as the Pearson correlation coefficient showed a significant positive relationship between psychological capital and psychological well-being among students, $r = .278$, $p < .05$. The R^2 statistic indicates that psychological well-being explained 7% variance in the psychological well-being of the undergraduates. The results also offered support for the study's second hypothesis, as a significant positive relationship between course of study satisfaction and psychological well-being was found, $r = 0.106$, $p < .05$. The R^2 statistic indicates that psychological capital explained 1% variance in the psychological well-being of the undergraduates.

The first finding revealed that psychological capital is a significant predictor of psychological well-being among students. This finding is in tandem with Adams, Hean, Sturgis, and Clark (2016) who reported that first-year college students with higher psychological capital are stronger in professional identity than those with lower psychological capital. The findings indicate that psychological capital has implication for career choice and self-assurance, at least at some stage in students' collegiate education as the Adams (2016) was on first-year students. The findings with those that show that psychological capital influences learning, language progress (Deák, 2014; Jacques & Zelazo, 2015), and skill in math (Bull & Scerif, 2014), advocate possibility of a link between psychological capital and academic achievement

The second finding showed that satisfaction with course of study is a significant predictor of psychological wellbeing among students. This finding is synonymous with Duckworth (2015) who study of middle school students with the conclusions that satisfaction with course of study and psychological well-being of students predict grades better, while IQ predict standardized achievement test scores stronger. They showed that psychological well-being aids students in learning and problems solving independent of formal teaching, while satisfaction with course of study stimulates students to study, finish homework and behave well in the classroom. More to the outcome on psychological

wellbeing, the social capital produced through interpersonal relationship in families and schools plays vital role in encouraging youth accomplishment of knowledge and academic skills and prevent dropping out from school (Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2015). And this is used in multiple empirical studies to explain educational accomplishment and attainment (Parcel & Dufur, 2017). As instance Parcel and Dufur (2017) study on 5- to 14-year-olds reported that both family and school social capital contribute positive to children's math and reading accomplishment, with family social capital wielding stronger influence than school social capital.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The design limitations of the current study are the use of cross-sectional and single-source data. The adoption of single-source data leaves the study to the negative effect of common-method bias. More so, cross-sectional studies do not offer the possibility of cause-and-effect interpretation of findings. Consequently, longitudinal and multisource approaches are recommended for future studies. In addition, this study only examined the direct influence of psychological capital and satisfaction with the course of study on psychological well-being. Future studies should examine the mediating and moderating roles of demographic factors in the relationship between psychological capital and satisfaction with the course of study and psychological well-being.

In conclusion, this study highlights that psychological capital and satisfaction with one's course of study significantly influence students' psychological well-being. Psychological capital—which includes hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism—serves as a vital internal resource that promotes positive mental health, enhances academic performance, reduces stress, and strengthens interpersonal relationships. Similarly, students who are satisfied with their course of study tend to report higher life satisfaction and lower levels of anxiety and depression. This satisfaction stems from enjoying their classes, feeling challenged, and seeing alignment between their academic path and personal goals. To enhance students' psychological well-being, it is essential to implement strategies that build psychological capital through skill-based interventions, improve satisfaction with academic programs through thoughtful course design and guidance, and strengthen both academic and non-academic support systems. Creating a campus environment that fosters inclusion, belonging, and access to mental health resources will further contribute to a more resilient and mentally healthy student population.

References

- Adams, F. 2016. Psychological Capital among University Students, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bowyer, M. 2018. Methods of Countering Pressure as an Intermediate Variable between Psychological Capital and The Psychological Well-being of Teachers. *Psychological Studies*, 29, Issue II, p.
- Bull, F. & Scerif, S. M., 2014. Positive psychological capital: Measurement and relationship with students performance and satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology*, 60, pp. 541-572.
- Clarke, N.A. 2013. Does higher education service quality effect student satisfaction, image and loyalty? A study of international students in Malaysian public universities. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 24(1), 70-94.

- Deák, Y. 2014. —JD-R model on psychological well-being and the moderating effect on students: findings from the MIDUS, *European Journal of Educational Development*, 43(3/4), 232-249.
- Diener, M. H. 2000. Understanding the determinants of users' subjective well-being in social networking sites: An integration of social capital theory and social presence theory. *Behaviour and Information Technology*, 35(9), 720-729.
- Duckworth, T. & Seligman, S. 2015. The impact of personality on students well-being", *European Scientific Journal edition*, 9(20), pp. 43-52.
- Duckworth, T.T. 2012. psychological well-being among university students", *Educational Review*, 49 (1), pp. 43-66
- Dufur, T., Parcel, M. & Troutman, A. 2015. Impact of Psychological Wellbeing on students Behaviors *Journal of Behavioral Development*, 12(1), pp. 35-55.
- Elliot, T. & Shin, O. 2012. Measuring student satisfaction at a UK university. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 14(3), 251-267.
- Friese, C. & Hofmann, E. 2018. Forging Macro Micro Linkages in The Study of Psychological Well-being among Students", *The Self and Society in Aging Processes*, (PP247278), New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Jacques, L. & Zelazo, L. 2015. The mediating role of psychological capital on students: a cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, 22.
- Lambesis, A. & Volk, O. 2017. Positive Psychological Capital and Outcomes Among Adolescents: The Moderating Role of Positive and Negative Emotions, Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, University of Sargodha, Pakistan.
- Liu, L., Wang, Y-S & Wu, T-J. (2017). Student Satisfaction Scale Development and Application for Sport Management in China. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 13(5):1429-1444. DOI: 10.12973/eurasia.2017.00678
- Muse, A. E. & Barnes, M. B. 2012. College Persistence: Structural Equations Modeling Test of an Integrated Model of Student Retention. *Journal of Higher Education*, 64(2), 123-139.
- Nair, J. & Ragavan, J. 2016. Understanding student satisfaction and dissatisfaction: an interpretive study in the UK higher education context. *Student in Higher Education*, 40(2), 329-349.
- Platania, S. & Paolillo, A. (2022). Validation and measurement invariance of the Compound PsyCap Scale (CPC-12): a short universal measure of psychological capital. *Anales de Psicologia*. 38(1):63-75 DOI: 10.6018/analesps 449651
- Ryff, A. & Keyes, H. 2015. The Impact of Psychological Capital on Career Creativity by Applying to Private Banks in Mansoura Cite', *Commerce and Finance Magazine*, Tanta University Faculty of Commerce, First Issue.
- Spilled, O., Koomen, V. & Thijs, T. 2016. A proposed model to measure the extent to which psychological capital affects talent management: a field study applied to fertilizer and chemical companies in Netherlands. *Journal of Financial and Commercial Research*, 65-68.
- Telman, S. & Ünsal, A. 2019. Psychological well-being in a sample of Northern Border University students in light of some demographic variables. *Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 20 (Part 9), pp. 1-32.
- Timarova, R.V. & Salaets, D.W. 2017. Determining psychological capital among students", *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, pp. 607-610.
- Werner, A. 2016. Psychological Happiness and Its Relationship to Some Psychological Variables in The Children of Adolescents of Both Sexes", *Journal of Psychological and Educational Research, Issue (02)*, 255308.
- Zeithaml, Z. 2011. Assessment of students' satisfaction of the quality of classroom teaching in colleges.