



Psycho-Personological Correlates of Academic Help-Seeking Among In-School Adolescents

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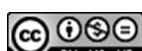
Self-efficacy

Gender

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ABSTRACT

In the field of educational psychology, seeking academic help is a proven success strategy. This study examined the influence of emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender on academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Osun state. The descriptive correlational research design was used. The multi-stage sampling method was used by the researchers. Four hundred (400) in-school adolescents were used for the study. The data for this study were gathered using three reliable and standardized instruments: The Academic Help-seeking Behavior Rating Scale ($\alpha = .77$), the Emotional Stability Scale ($\alpha = .88$), and Self-esteem Scale ($\alpha = .72$). The results demonstrated a substantial correlation between academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents and emotional stability ($r = .146$; $p < .05$), self-esteem ($r = .207$; $p < .05$), and gender ($r = .025$; $p > .05$) which was not significant. All the independent variables jointly contributed to academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents. Self-esteem made the most significant contribution ($\beta = .249$; $t = 5.049$; $p < 0.05$) to academic help-seeking followed by emotional stability ($\beta = .198$; $t = 4.016$; $p < 0.05$) and Gender ($\beta = .032$; $t = 6676$; $p > 0.05$). It was recommended that educational psychologists should assist in raising awareness and providing counseling to students who have poor or low academic help-seeking behavior.

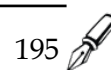


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INTRODUCTION

Most African communities have the view that the majority of the difficulties people encounter are a result of magical power, ethereal metaphysical beings, miraculous agents, sorcery, or magic. To put it more simply, young people and elderlies frequently seek the counsel of family members, close friends, and local elders in every African cultural community, regardless of the issues they face. Numerous members of this society turn to natural resources for assistance when they need to deal with such supernatural problems. Assistants such as religious organizations, large families, and friends can be included in these resources. When it comes to ancient African culture, people would often consult with oracles (IFA), which was a significant resource. Concerning their biological, spiritual, psychological, and social makeup, traditional diagnostic techniques are used to assess the entirety of human beings. However, a substantial setback has been observed particularly among in-school adolescents in the way and pattern of help-seeking. For a better insight into factors that influence an individual's willingness to seek help, social psychologists, educational scholars, and health practitioners have seen the need to conduct studies.

In the field of education, academic help-seeking involves actions like looking for additional academic assistance and asking questions from teachers, parents, and classmates. Seeking academic help is a tactic to prevent academic failure. Moreover, the avoidance of requesting help by adolescents is well alluded to in our present society. Adolescents' mental and



psychological well-being is critically dependent on their propensity to seek help. Help-seeking is a kind of coping strategy that is dependent on the people around an individual; as a result, it frequently relies on interpersonal ties and social skills (Dayne, 2016). Students who actively seek help will be able to identify their learning challenges and find solutions by consulting others. There is no doubt that many academic obligations must be met by students, including passing school exams, participating in class discussions, demonstrating academic progress, paying close attention to the teacher, competing with classmates, and meeting the expectations of both teachers and parents (Olanrewaju & Omoaponle, 2017). These obligations may strain or exhaust the students' capacity, necessitating their need to seek help. The student is actively using the resources at their disposal while actively seeking assistance to improve their chances of success in the future.

In addition, it has been noted that school-age adolescents tend to remain silent when faced with difficulties. These difficulties typically involve disturbed emotions, mental illness, poor academic performance, and career issues, frequently resulting in suicide attempts or fatalities (Newman, 2010). Many students who struggle academically and refuse to get help from sound sources might cheat on tests, use drugs, or be negatively influenced by their peers, all of which could get them suspended or expelled from school. This will have an emotional impact on them and might even cause depression. The student's inability to ask for assistance may also cause interpersonal and social unrest, compromising their ability to maintain emotional stability, while emotionally unstable students may engage in many vices, such as cultism, rape, clubbing, and riots, which are detrimental to their development and the well-being of society as a whole.

Further, social norms, the goal structure of the classroom, teachers' teaching strategies, openness, flexibility, and students' views and beliefs all impact this complex phenomenon known as academic help-seeking behavior. It exemplifies social and educational integration theories of student retention since it requires social interaction and peer learning. Nonetheless, it is well-known that most adolescent students in our nation tend to feel awkward talking to professionals who can offer them support, particularly when they are required to disclose their most private thoughts and feelings with a new adviser or counselor. The inability to recognize or acknowledge the need for assistance, the failure to act on that need, beliefs and attitudes related to getting help, and the idea that getting help is needless are a few of the obstacles to help-seeking. Students who take a mastery approach are more likely to use asking for help as a tactic to accomplish their goals than students who take a performance approach, who view asking for help as a sign of poor perception and avoid asking for it (Butler & Shibaz, 2008; Zusho & Barnettt, 2011).

Consequently, students' decision to refrain from asking for assistance is deliberate and informed. If students do not ask for assistance when needed, they will be prevented from learning (Mansfield, 2005). This is why research on this perspective is of high importance. According to earlier research, academic success and help-seeking avoidance in the classroom have a negative association (Druskat et al., 2016; Villavicencio, 2011). Thus, it cannot be concluded that research carried out elsewhere with a different audience in a different setting will provide the same outcomes when applied to other Nigerian local environments, especially in Osun state. In order to fill the knowledge gap, this research was conducted on the impact of emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender on academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Osun state.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender on academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Osun state.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Stability and Academic Help-Seeking

Emotional stability is one of the essential psychological and personality characteristics that determine a person's resilience to the stress-inducing effects of difficult life circumstances,

including help-seeking behavior. Help-seeking significantly impacts success in the academic, athletic, and professional spheres. Being able to effectively complete a set objective, even if it necessitates requesting assistance from other accessible vital sources, is what it means to adapt to difficult emotional experiences and fight their tendency to produce stress. As emotions have so much value in life, emotional stability is essential for success. People who struggle to control their emotions face numerous challenges in daily life. Being emotionally stable is essential for human existence because it promotes a happy, flexible life. Druskat et al. (2016) found in some empirical studies on the relationship between emotional stability and help-seeking behavior that adolescents with low emotional stability were less likely to ask for help from unofficial sources and more likely to say they would not ask for help from anyone. The same results were discovered in a later study, but this time it was added that young people who needed more emotional stability were also less inclined to turn to professionals or formal sources for help.

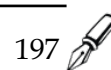
To further explain the role of emotional stability in help-seeking behavior, Dueñas and Castarlenas (2021) and Rickwood et al. (2005) concluded that those with poor emotional intelligence may have difficulty asking for help and less readily available resources. Also, those with low emotional competence could have previously sought help less successfully and might be less likely to do so in the future. Bhadouria (2013) found that emotional stability is "the subgroup of social intelligence that encompasses the ability to monitor one's and others' moods and emotions, to distinguish between them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions." Adolescents who are emotionally stable possess the capacity to be conscious of, regulate, and express their emotions and effectively and sympathetically handle interpersonal connections. The benefits of emotional stability have been demonstrated in a variety of everyday situations and through research and academic studies. Improved help-seeking, better physical and mental health, greater levels of well-being and self-satisfaction, lower dangerous behaviors like drug use, and stronger interpersonal and social ties in both public and private spheres are all characteristics of those who are emotionally stable (Sartorius, 2007). Students with high emotional stability have a variety of cognitive capacities and courage, thus more academic support is required to help these students and make sure they do not drop out, as according to Irvin's (2010) study, these students are found to seek academic help easily.

Self-Esteem and Academic Help-Seeking

A person's opinion of and respect for themselves is called their self-esteem. We develop healthy self-esteem when we believe we are respectable, competent, deserving, loved, and accepted. Unhealthy self-esteem occurs when we feel incompetent, unlovable, undeserving, or unworthy of other people's affection. A person's general attitude toward themselves, including their value sentiments, which permeate all parts of their life is referred to as self-esteem (Statke, 2018). This fundamental understanding of oneself affects many aspects of life, including friendships, successes, asking for academic assistance, and job aspirations. Also, higher self-esteem makes it easier for people to handle stressful situations by asking for assistance when necessary. Yet, people who have low self-esteem are more likely to have bad help-seeking behavior which results in depression, anxiety, loneliness, peer rejection, violence, criminality, and psychopathology (Baumeister et al., 2005).

With increasing age, in-school adolescents naturally prefer spending more time with their friends than with family members. Participating in various activities helps them gain independence and happiness. High self-esteem is anticipated to be connected with high help-seeking when employing the consistency hypothesis to describe the function of self-esteem or self-concept in help-seeking behavior. According to this prediction, the threat to the self comes from the conflict between newly received information about the self and one's preexisting self-cognitions. This claim states that those with a strong self-concept or high levels of self-esteem are more inclined than those with low levels to regard themselves as being under threat and, as a result, are less inclined to seek assistance (Keskin, 2014; Olsen et al., 2008).

Healthy self-esteem enables people to adjust to changing circumstances and seek assistance when necessary. It influences a person's task selection, effort, and tenacity, and as a result, how



they respond to academic challenges. Students' ideas of personal responsibility for learning are influenced by their self-esteem beliefs about their learning capacities. According to Zimmerman (2012), students' behavior in seeking academic assistance, directly and indirectly, affects their self-esteem. While students who have developed self-regulatory skills may notice a significant rise in academic help-seeking, students with better-perceived self-esteem are driven to use self-regulatory strategies.

Gender and Academic Help-Seeking

Past research has revealed that students who require academic support avoid asking for it; this is because asking for help is associated with gender-specific traits, classroom dynamics, ego-achievement objectives, stigmatization, feelings of inadequacy, and motivation (Payakachat et al., 2013). Similar findings were made by Brown et al., (2020); Viandan (2009), who discovered that due to societal pressure to achieve, male students who were having scholastic difficulties were less likely to ask for help from the academic environment. Studies by Randell et al. (2015), Omoponle (2020), and Harris (2010) have shown, in particular, that male students are less likely to engage in help-seeking activities due to anxiety over appearing weak or emasculated. These academics also noted that avoiding academic help affects retention, engagement, and achievement rates. Sharma and Nasa (2016) found that girls are more inclined than boys to ask for help and when they do, they opt for adaptable types of aid and recognize the advantages of asking for assistance.

Moreover, Won et al. (2019) discovered that girls expressed a greater desire than boys to seek academic guidance and support from administrators in their investigation of Latina high school pupils. In addition, after controlling for motivation and computer science aptitude, girls were more likely than boys in a poll of 314 high school students from public and private schools to request adaptive support and perceive the advantages of asking for help. There is also strong evidence to support the notion that girls are more prone than boys to seek assistance with their academic assignments (Cheng et al., 2013). It is possible that the link between having positive attitudes toward seeking help and the level of seeking help is stronger for girls than for boys, even though previous studies did not examine whether gender moderated the relationship between attitudes toward seeking help (e.g., perceiving the benefits of seeking help) and seeking help. For instance, in a study involving 300 elementary school pupils from middle- and lower-class families, girls sought assistance more frequently than boys. In this study, Nelson-LeGall (2006) discovered that girls had a higher propensity than boys to seek peer assistance on academic-related issues.

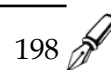
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The investigation was guided by the following research questions:

- a. What is the pattern of relationship between the independent variables (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) on academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria?
- b. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) to academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria?
- c. What is the relative impact of the independent factors (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) on academic help-seeking behavior among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria?

RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive research design of the correlational type was used in this study. All secondary school students in Oshogbo's two local government areas were included in this population. The researchers used the multi-stage sampling technique, employing simple random sampling to choose 10 secondary schools from each local government area. Twenty students from each of the schools were then chosen. Four hundred in-school adolescents in all were used in the study.



Instrumentation

Data gathering involved the use of a structured questionnaire. There were two sections to the questionnaire (A&B). The respondents' demographic data were included in Section A, e.g., name of school, gender, and age range. Section B covered other reliable and standardized instruments employed in this study to collect data. They were:

1. Emotional Stability Scale ($\alpha = .88$)
2. Self-esteem Scale ($\alpha = .72$)
3. Academic Help-seeking Behavior Rating Scale ($\alpha = .77$)

Data Analysis

Multiple regression, simple percentages, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to statistically analyze the study's data at the 0.05 significance level. Simple percentage was used for the analysis of the demographical data of the respondents while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to establish the relationship among the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study. The multiple regression was used to establish the relative and combined effects of the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research question one

What is the relationship pattern between the independent variables (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) and academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the variables

Variables	N	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Academic help-seeking	400	33.825	13.42	1.00			
Emotional stability	400	22.79	14.31	.146**	1.00		
Self-esteem	400	34.53	9.29	.207**	.208**	1.00	
Gender	400	1.537	.49	.025	.004	-.031	1.00

**Correlation significant at 0.01 levels

Table 1 provides inter-correlations between the study variables and descriptive statistics. The data indicated a strong correlation between academic help-seeking and emotional stability among in-school teenagers ($r = .146$; $p < .05$), self-esteem ($r = .207$; $p < .05$), and gender ($r = .025$; $p > .05$), but not between academic help-seeking and gender. Significant correlations between the independent variables were also present.

Research question two

What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) on academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis demonstrating the combined effects of the independent variables on academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents

Model	Analysis of variance		Mean square	F
	Sum of square (SS)	DF		
Regression	5830.392	3	1943.464	11.657
Residual	66021.358	396	166.721	
Total	71851.750	399		

a) $R = .258$

b) $R^2 = .081$

c) Adjusted $R^2 = .074$

d) Standard error of estimate = 12.91203



Table 2 demonstrates that seeking academic assistance among teenagers enrolled in school was influenced by the independent variables of emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender. R Square has a value of .258 and Multiple R² (adjusted) has a value of .081. The multiple regressions' analysis of variance produced an F-ratio value of 11.657, which was significant at the 0.05 level.

Research question three

What is the relative contribution of each independent variable (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) to academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria?

Table 3. Relative contribution of independent variables to the prediction

Model	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients			
	B	Standard error	β	t	p
Constant	23.315	2.639		8.834	.000
Emotional stability	.116	.029	.198	4.016	p<0.05
Self-esteem	.097	.019	.249	5.049	p<0.05
Gender	.864	1.295	.032	.667	p>0.05

Table 3 shows how the independent variables substantially impacted the prediction of adolescents seeking academic aid. The strongest predictor of academic help seeking was self-esteem ($r = .249$; $t = 5.049$; $p < 0.05$), followed by emotional stability ($r = .198$; $t = 4.016$; $p < 0.05$), and gender ($r = .032$; $t = .667$; $p > 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The first study question examined the associations between academic help-seeking and the independent variables (emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender) among school-aged adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. The findings showed that academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents is largely connected with emotional stability and self-esteem while gender was insignificant. This suggests that emotional stability and self-esteem affect how much an adolescent engages in academic help-seeking behavior. The findings also showed that adolescents with high self-esteem and emotional stability seek academic help more than their counterparts with low self-esteem and emotional instability. However, whether a student is a boy or girl does not affect this behavior. This is consistent with research by Busari and Adewuyi (2018) and Rickwood et al. (2005), which found that people with high self-esteem or a positive self-concept sought help more frequently than people with low self-esteem or a negative self-concept. This is due to the lower degrees of positive self-belief and self-respect that people with poor self-esteem or low self-concept exhibit which expose them to information that could be construed as self-threatening; therefore, they avoid circumstances that could be construed as self-threatening, such as asking for assistance.

Moreover, adolescents with high emotional awareness are less likely to turn to unofficial sources for assistance and more likely to say they would not ask for aid from anyone. Research has found that people with emotional incompetence may have a more challenging time asking for help and have fewer readily available resources. Low emotional competence may also be accompanied by a history of unsuccessful help-seeking, making people more reluctant to request help in the future (Druskat et al., 2006). However, the results of this study do not agree with several studies that found gender disparities in how people seek help. Elhai et al. (2008), Rochelle and O'Brien (2017), and Ryan and Shim (2012) showed that females reported higher positive attitudes toward asking for help than their male counterparts. Nam et al. (2010) in a meta-analysis on the differences between gender attitudes toward seeking out psychological help, found that female students had more positive attitudes toward asking for academic aid according to their main conclusion from studying college students.

The answer to the second research question revealed that emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender all worked together to influence whether in-school adolescents sought out academic



help. These results are in line with Wang's (2013) conclusion that adolescent help-seeking behavior was predicted by personal self-esteem. The outcome is consistent with Wei's (1999) study, which showed that secondary school adolescents with stronger academic self-concepts reported being more likely to seek help when facing academic difficulties. Self-esteem, cultural background, and emotional intelligence correlate significantly with attitudes about obtaining professional psychological help in research by Ciobanu, (2013), Al-Darmaki (2003) and Nadler et al. (1984); similar findings were reported by Anne and Rinn, (2014). According to Rochlen and O'Brien (2017), academic help-seeking involves requesting assistance to better one's academic performance or comprehend challenging subjects; men are discouraged from seeking medical care, emotional support, or academic assistance due to conventional gender stereotypes associated with masculine behavior, such as being in charge and independent.

The last research question looked at how much each independent variable, emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender contributed to adolescents' academic help-seeking in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. According to the findings, self-esteem made the most contribution followed by emotional stability. Gender did not significantly influence the prediction of academic help-seeking. Wimer and Levant (2011) found that when students consider asking for academic assistance as a danger to their self-esteem and social position, they are more inclined to avoid doing so. They also found that students who conform to masculine norms are significantly less likely to avoid help-seeking behaviors. The findings go against those of Viandan (2009) and Karabenick and Newman (2006), which found that male students who struggled academically were less likely to ask for help from academic professionals. This occurred due to societal pressure to achieve independence and the idea that their classmates did not require it. Male students are less likely to seek assistance than female students because they are concerned about being seen as frail or emasculated according to studies by Randell et al. (2016), Harris (2010), and Adewuyi, (2021). This reason could be as a result of the way society views the main gender as being powerful, strong and resilient compared to their female counterpart. Society particularly in Africa respects the male masculinity; the male adolescents, therefore may see no reason to seek help (academic) so that the value placed on them will not be removed.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated emotional stability, self-esteem, and gender as correlates of academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents in Oshogbo, Osun State, Nigeria. This research has given in-depth knowledge of the level of academic help-seeking among adolescents in school. The study concluded that self-esteem and emotional stability significantly and jointly contributed to academic help-seeking among in-school adolescents. Most significantly the study concluded that gender was found not significant in the prediction of academic help seeking among adolescents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- The school administration should assist students by planning seminars that will improve students' attitudes toward asking for academic assistance.
- To encourage desirable psychosocial features among teenagers, such as self-esteem and emotional stability, public and private schools should work to create an environment that supports pupils.
- The importance of parenting teenagers should be explained to the parents or guardians. This will aid in the collective attempts to pinpoint any issues with teenage behavior and offer suitable solutions for enhancing students' help-seeking behaviors.
- The organization of programs and conferences on the effects of self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and gender on academic help-seeking should be prioritized by school counselors. Students who exhibit poor or minimal academic help-seeking behavior should receive appropriate counseling from their counselor.



Ethics Statement

The University of Ibadan examined and authorized the investigations that used human subjects. The participants' legal guardian/next of kin gave their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Data Availability Statement

The article/supplementary material contains the study's original contributions; contact the corresponding author for more information.

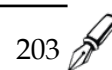
Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that no financial or commercial ties exist that might be interpreted as having a potential conflict of interest.

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