

Research Article

Socioemotional Correlates of Academic Grit among University Undergraduates in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated the socioemotional correlates of academic grit among undergraduate students in public universities in Abia State. The study adopted a correlation design. Three research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study comprised all the 53, 479 undergraduate students registered for the 2022/2023 academic session. A sample size of 540 was selected for the study using multi-stage sampling technique. Instruments used to collect data were adapted versions of the standardised Coleman's Emotional Intelligence Scale; General Self-efficacy Scale; Cohen's Interpersonal Support Evaluation Inventory; and Duckworth's Short Grit Scale. The reliability of the instruments was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha technique. The computation yielded coefficients of 0.92, 0.88, 0.79 and 0.81 for the Emotional Intelligence Scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, Social Support Scale and Short Grit Scale, respectively. Face and content validation was done by 3 experts, 2 from the Department of Psychology and 1 from the Department of Psychological Foundations, University of Uyo. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, SPSS:27. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions while simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses. Findings revealed the following; that some of the socioemotional variables had significant associations with academic grit of the respondents. Thus, emotional intelligence had a strong association $B = 0.91$ ($p < 0.05$) with academic grit. Self-efficacy also predicted academic grit $B = 0.83$ ($p < 0.05$). However, social support had no significant association with academic grit $B = -0.08$ ($p < 0.05$), among university undergraduates in Abia State. Based on the findings, recommendations were made that intervention programmes should be designed to improve the mental well-being of students and peer mentorship programmes should be encouraged at the tertiary level of education to help instill grit among undergraduate students.

Keywords: self-efficacy; social support; emotional intelligence; academic grit; tertiary education

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1. Introduction

In a typical school environment, learners experience various adverse stimuli that may make them question their will to continue. Several experiences like bullying, poor academic performance, overloaded curriculum, school anxiety, dilapidated school infrastructure, poor interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers, as well as academic burnout have been identified over time as typical stressors that inhibit academic motivation among learners (Samara et al., 2022; Caymaz & Aydin, 2022; Usain et al., 2022; Al Majali, 2020; Eduwem & Ezeonwumelu, 2020). Irrespective of these identified potential pitfalls that could obliterate motivation, several learners have continued to excel in academic tasks, achieving desirable learning outcomes. In explaining how learners exposed to various negative stressors manage to achieve success in school, several psychological traits have been pinpointed as possible protective factors from school related stress. Personality characteristics (Nicandro et al., 2023) emotional intelligence (Yco et al., 2023) and academic resilience (Singh et al., 2022), are some of the factors found in extant studies that help mitigate adverse school stimuli.

Academic grit has been identified as the tendency to persevere in the face of sustained tension and anxiety emanating from the school psychosocial environment. Reed and Jeremih (2017) defined academic grit as a learner's tendency to persist in the face of pursuing long-

term goals. Thus, every young learner, faced with obstacles to goal attainment, either caves in and has his goals thwarted, or persists until success is attained. Academic grit is obviously the trait that defines the latter. Also, known as academic perseverance, Clark and Malecki (2019) claimed that academic grit is central to the tendency of adolescent individuals to attain adjustment in both curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Academic grit is a desirable trait associated with numerous positive outcomes among young learners (Clark & Malecki, 2019). At the heart of every desirable academic, social, occupational and moral outcome lies an unflinching will to succeed. Perseverance in the pursuit of academic success is known as academic grit and it was defined by Donita et al. (2022) as a persistence in effort and enthusiasm in the pursuit of a goal. Academic grit stems from a range of behaviours that are typified by sustained motivation to succeed and consistent application of individual competence. Jafari et al. (2019) claimed that academic grit also entails sustained academic engagement, expressed in behaviours like good study habit and increased academic participation.

The concept of academic grit was popularised by the work of Angela Duckworth. Duckworth et al. (2007) tried to explain the linkages that exist between perseverance and passion for long-term goals observing that intellect or scholastic talents are vital but not a guarantee for success, Duckworth et al. (2007) looked at other individuals' trait that could be considered as predictors of long-term goal attainment in addition to competencies. It was concluded, from their study, that attainment of difficult goals requires more than talent, it also requires a sustained and focused application of graft and guile overtime.

As a desirable trait, academic grit has become a recurring theme of many studies. Linkages have been noted between school work perseverance and other positive learning outcomes. Academic achievement, creativity, improved academic motivation and academic engagement (Ezeonwumelu et al, 2022a; Ezeonwumelu et al., 2022b; Jafari et al., 2019; Reraki et al., 2015; Rojas, 2015). Because of the prominence given to academic grit in recent times, studies have been carried out to understand, not only the nature of grit as obtained in a school situation but also to pinpoint behaviours that either precede or associate with grit for example personality types (Isong, 2022), particularly self-control (Stewart, 2015) and self-esteem (Neroni et al., 2022). However, little has been done to explore the possible links between other aspects of a learner's psycho-social environment and the said individual's tendency to exhibit academic grit.

The concept of psycho-social factors encapsulates issues that revolve around a combination of psychological and social factors that influence a person's behaviour. In studies carried out, overtime, to explore learners' psycho-social realities, emphasis has been placed on several psycho-social constructs including resilience, growth-mindset, time management skills, academic adjustment, stress management, self-discipline, locus of control and self-regulation (Ezeonwumelu et al. 2021; Ikpe et al, 2021; Chukwuorji et al., 2018., Jung et al., 2016; Daniela, 2015). In addition to the afore listed, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and social support are some of common psycho-social constructs continually studied to explain myriads of behaviours, traits and proclivities (Igbo et al., 2019). however, little has been done to explore the associations among these psycho-social variables (emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and social support), and academic grit.

Emotional intelligence refers to the tendency to recognise, understand and manage our own emotions as well as the ability to recognise, understand and influence the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence entails proficiency in identifying and assessing the emotions of oneself, others and groups (Mohamad & Jais, 2016). As a higher order animal, Emotional Intelligence allows an individual to be perceptive of the psychological and social climate around him. It entails applying both cognitive and social competencies in the course of their interaction with other components of their environment.

Emotional intelligence is a widely studied psycho-social construct. Extant research reveals that Emotional Intelligence has been established as a trait vital for attaining success in various endeavours. Igbo et al. (2018) claimed that learners with high levels of Emotional Intelligence are likely to attain academic adjustment faster than their peers who lower scores on the EI Scale. Emotional intelligence has also sufficed in explaining behaviours like trust, empathy and altruism (Arora, 2022; Huang et al., 2018). individuals with high EI were found to show more concern to their peers and are easily trusted with positions that demand responsibility.

The study of emotional intelligence owes a lot to the groundbreaking work done by Daniel Goleman. Goleman et al. (2002) saw emotional intelligence as a skill, rather than a congenital trait. Goleman identified components of EI which include self-awareness, self-

regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. According to Goleman (1996), self-awareness refers to “having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weakness, needs and drives”; self-regulation implies having a grip of one’s emotions and restraining oneself from making impulsive decisions even in the face of palpable tension. Motivation, according to Goleman (1996) entails the propensity to strive to achieve. Empathy, on the other hand refers to a sense of awareness for the plight and feelings of other people. Social skills were also defined by Goleman (1996) as the ability to build and maintain rapport with one’s peers and others

Self-efficacy refers to the level of confidence an individual has about oneself. Ahmed et al. (2011) claimed that self-efficacy could be termed self-reliance, self-trust and self-confidence that typifies an individual’s disposition towards himself, other people around him as well as the activities he partakes in. Self-efficacy stems from positive self-evaluation, the act of assessing one’s behaviour against both objective and subjective norms. Besides, a learner’s belief in his ability to perform a task is shaped by previous positive outcomes. This, to a large extent yields positive feedback from self-appraisal increasing belief on ability to surmount similar tasks in the future.

Amongst the desirable outcomes associated with self-efficacy, academic achievement is well documented. Hayat et al. (2020) found that self-efficacy impacts learning, learning-related emotions and metacognitive learning strategies. Fakhrou and Habib (2021) also claimed that learner’s ability to develop self-efficacy is enhanced by exposure to enriched learning experiences and is a distinctive trait among high and low achieving learners. Beyond academic achievement, self-efficacy has been found to be an attribute common among individuals that attain success in their various areas of endeavour. This has been associated with achievement motivation. Adekanmbi and Ukpere (2021) agreed that self-efficacy explained the difference in achievement motivation levels of employees.

In addition, to occupational proficiency, self-efficacy has also been found to predict social outcomes. Social adjustment was identified as a possible attainment for individuals that are self-efficacious (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2021). Gazo et al. (2019) also noted that social self-efficacy negatively correlated to socially maladaptive behaviours. That implies that when an individual has high level of self-efficacy, he can engender healthy coping skills rather than succumb to addictive behaviours that have long-term implications.

Social support plays an important role in the lives of young individuals. It acts as an emotional buffer for individuals struggling with myriads of socio-emotional problems. Several studies have found a nexus between social support and mental well-being among young learners (Chang et al., 2018). With the increase in suicide ideation and depressive symptoms among young individuals, research into protective factors for serious mental health problems have revealed that individual that enjoy social support from significant others are less susceptible to acute depression, anxiety attacks and self-harming behaviours (Chang et al., 2018).

Social support has also been suggested as a therapeutic intervention for individuals that need psychotherapy. Studies have found social support to be helpful in preventing relapse in clients with major depression, improving temperament and enhancing coping skills (Melemis, 2015). In addition to these, social support has also been identified as a veritable strategy for building trust between the client and therapist as well as providing practical day to day assistance for those with impaired daily functioning (Krafft et al., 2023).

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivational theory that focuses on understanding individuals’ motivations and the conditions under which they thrive and flourish. Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the 1980s, SDT proposes that people have psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness and when these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to experience self-determined motivation, psychological well-being and optimal functioning. Deci and Ryan (2008) formulated the SDT on the assumption that individuals have three basic psychological needs; autonomy, competence and relatedness. Deci and Ryan (2008) claimed that basic psychological needs entailed the desire to experience freedom, feeling capable and effective in achieving desired outcomes, as well as the need for social connection and a sense of belonging.

SDT also suggests that motivation falls on a continuum ranging from non-existent to extreme forms of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic). Ryan and Deci (2000) affirmed that fostering intrinsic motivation enhances optimal functioning and well-being. Finally, SDT also holds that when individuals have their basic psychological needs met, they are more likely to engage in self-determined behaviour characterized by greater persistence positive emotions and better performance outcome.

The SDT is relevant to this study as it allows for a proper dissection of the sub-variables (emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and social support), in the context of the problem of the study. SDT acknowledges that emotional intelligence is vital to self-determination as persons with high EI can regulate their emotions, make autonomous choices and maintain motivation in the face of obstacles. Also, SDT recognizes that self-efficacy plays a vital role in promoting autonomy and competence as individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to feel capable of achieving their goals and taking autonomous actions. Finally, SDT identifies social support as a potential external motivating factor that could spur an individual to maintain focus in the face of numerous challenges.

Significant work has been done to understand how adverse school psychosocial experiences are mitigated by individual peculiarities and desirable traits. Over the last two decades, it has been observed that among equally intellectually endowed learners, there is always a tendency for discrepancies to be noted in performances. Extant studies have identified several factors that explain this teacher factors, access to equipment, motivation and several sociodemographic variables.

Academic grit has become a very popular construct that has roused the interest of researchers in recent years, as they continued to study the linkages that exist among psychogenic variables, socio-demographic factors and positive academic outcomes. With emphasis placed on motivation there is a gap that needs to be filled by assessing the relationship among the psychogenic variables and academic grit in order to explain the factors that predict academic perseverance. This study seeks to fill this gap by studying the relationship that exists among emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, social support and academic grit of undergraduate learners in public universities in Abia State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study sought to examine emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, social support and academic grit of undergraduate students. Specifically, this study intends to:

- (1) Ascertain the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic grit of undergraduate students.
- (2) Determine the relationship between self-efficacy and academic grit of undergraduate students
- (3) Examine relationship between social support and academic grit of undergraduate students.

Research Questions:

- (1) Does any relationship exist between emotional intelligence and academic grit of undergraduate students?
- (2) Is there any relationship between self-efficacy and academic grit of undergraduate students?
- (3) Does any relationship exist between social support and academic grit of undergraduate students?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁ Emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with academic grit of undergraduate Students.
- Ho₂ Self-efficacy has no significant relationship with academic grit of undergraduate students.
- Ho₃ Social Support has no significant relationship with academic grit of undergraduate students

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. General Design

This study adopted a correlation design. Nworgu (2018) claimed that correlational design is ideal for the study as it makes it possible for the researcher to ascertain the direction and magnitude of relationships that exist between the studied variables.

The area of the study is Abia State. The State was created on August 27, 1991 by the military junta of General Ibrahim Babangida. The State was created from old Imo State and has a population of 3.5 million people (NPC, 2006). Abia State comprises 17 Local Government Areas. Abia State lies on the geographical coordinates 5.53333oN latitude and 7.4861oE longitude. Abia State is home to two public universities, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUAAU); and Abia State University, Uturu (ABSU). While MOUAAU is a federal owned institution, ABSU is a state-owned institution. The people of Abia State are predominantly Igbo, with a handful of people from other ethnicities. A majority of inhabitants of the state are Christians with a significant traditional religion practitioner.

Abians are renowned craftsmen, petty traders, farmers and civil servants.

2.2. Population and Sampling of Study

The population of the study comprises the 53,479 undergraduates in both MOUAU and ABSU who were enrolled for the 2022/2023 academic session. 540 students (270 from each school) were selected using multi-stage sampling technique. Simple Random Sampling was used to select 5 departments each from the universities. This was done using the hat and draw method. To achieve these, the names of the departments were written on strips of papers. In addition to this, yes or no were also inscribed on these papers. The folded strips of papers were thoroughly shuffled. The departments that had the “yes” inscription was used for the study. From the 10 departments samples, 27 students were selected from each department using proportional sampling.

2.3. Data Collection

Four instruments were used to collect data for this study. An adapted version of Emotional Intelligence Scale based on Goleman’s dimensions of EI was used to measure students’ emotional intelligence. The General Self-Efficacy Scale designed and standardized by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) was used to collect data on respondents’ self-efficacy, while social support will be measured using Cohen et al (1985) shortened version of the Interpersonal Support Evaluation Inventory. To measure academic grit an adapted version of Duckworth (2009) Short Grit Scale will be used.

The adapted Emotional Intelligence Scale consists of 15 items scored on a 4-point Likert scale. Strongly Agree (SA) has a score of 4; Agree (A) has a score of 3; Disagree (D) has a score of 1, while Strongly Disagree (SD) has a score of 1. The adopted Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1985) General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) consists of 10 items also scored on 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). SD is scored 1; D is scored 2; A is scored 3, while SA is scored 4. The third instrument, the shortened Social Support Scale adapted from Cohen et al (1985) consists of 12 items scored on a 4-point Likert scale, Definitely False (DF); Probably False (PF); Probably True (PT) and Definitely True (DT). Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 were scored thus; DF (1); PF (2); PT (3); DT (4). Items 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 12 were reverse scored. The Short Grit-Scale consists of eight items on a four-point scale as follows; Very much like me (VM), Somewhat like me (S), Not much like me (NM), and Not like me at all (NL). Items 2, 4, 7 and 8 were scored 4, 3, 2, 1 respectively, while items 1,3,5, and 6 were scored 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

The validity of the instruments were ensured by distributing the instruments to 3 experts, 2 from the Department of Psychological Foundations and 1 from the Department of Psychology, University of Uyo. Expert suggestions were incorporated into the final copies that were distributed to the respondents. Reliability of the instruments was calculated by distributing the questionnaires to 60 undergraduate students from Abia State Polytechnic, Aba. Data collected were subjected to Cronbach Alpha Analysis which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.92, 0.88, 0.79 and 0.81 for the Emotional Intelligence Scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, Social Support Scale and Short Grit Scale, respectively.

The researcher with the help of the Dean of student’s affairs and course representatives of selected undergraduate classes that were sampled were gathered and addressed. The researcher explained the purpose of the research, the supposed benefit of findings to both students and educational heads and assured them of confidentiality. The questionnaire was then administered using the online google form for easy data collation, to save cost and time.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data collected will be analyzed using SPSS.25. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) will be used to answering the research questions, while Simple Regression Analysis will be used to test the hypotheses.

3. Results

Research Question One: *Does any relationship exist between emotional intelligence and academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State?*

Data in Table 1 revealed that the correlation coefficient between emotional intelligence and academic grit is 0.913. This implies that there is a strong and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State. Thus, it could be inferred that learners that score high on the emotional intelligence scale have a tendency to possess high levels of academic grit.

Table 1. Pearson product moment correlation showing the relationship between emotional intelligent and academic grit

Variables	R-values	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Sig. Values
Emotional intelligence – academic grit	.913*	.834	.82	.000

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question Two: Does any relationship exist between self-efficacy and academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State?

Results in Table 2 revealed that the correlation coefficient of the relationship that exists between self-efficacy and academic grit is 0.83. This indicates a strong and positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic grit among undergraduate students in Abia State. This implies that students that have belief in their own ability exhibit grit in their academic pursuits.

Table 2. Pearson product moment correlation showing the relationship between self-efficacy and academic grit

Variables	R-values	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Sig. Values
Self-efficacy – academic grit	.83*	.68	.69	.000

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question Three: Does any relationship exist between social support and academic grit of un-dergraduate students in Abia State?

Table 3 showed that the correlation coefficient of the relationship that exists between social support and academic grit is -0.08, which implies a negative relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, social support has a negative relationship between social support and academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State

Table 3. Pearson product moment correlation showing the relationship between social support and academic grit

Variables	R-values	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Sig. Values
Social support – academic grit	-.08	.007	.00	.32

Hypothesis One: Emotional intelligence has no significant relationship with academic grit

Table 4 revealed that the predictive power of emotional intelligence on academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State yielded a score, B = 0.91 (p < 0.05). The p-value (0.01) is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, emotional intelligence predicts academic grit among undergraduate students in Abia State.

Table 4. Simple linear regression on the predictive power of emotional intelligence on academic grit

Model	Coefficients ^a											
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig	R	Adj R ²	S. E	F	df ₁	df ₂	Sig. F-value
	B	S. E	Beta									
Constant	1.55	0.05		34.54	0.00							
Emotional intelligence	0.00	0.01	0.91	0.11	0.01	.91 ^a	0.82	0.09	1.24	1	538	0.01

^a Dependent variable: academic grit

Hypothesis Two: Self-efficacy has no significant relationship with academic grit

Table 5 revealed that the predictive power of self-efficacy on academic grit among undergraduates in Abia State, B = 0.83 (p < 0.05). The p-value (0.02) is lower than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was not accepted. Therefore, self-efficacy significantly predicted academic grit among undergraduate students in Abia State

Table 5. Simple linear regression on the predictive power of self-efficacy on academic grit

Model	Coefficients ^a											
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig	R	Adj R ²	S. E	F	df ₁	df ₂	Sig. F-value
	B	S. E	Beta									
Constant	1.53	0.04		34.42	0.00							
Self-efficacy	0.00	0.01	0.83	0.22	0.02	.83 ^a	0.69	0.06	1.05	1	538	0.02

^a Dependent variable: academic grit

Hypothesis Three: Social support has no significant relationship with academic grit



The predictive power of social support on academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State as revealed in Table 6 yielded the value $B = -0.08$ ($p < 0.05$) and the p -value (0.32) which is greater than 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between social support and academic grit of undergraduate students in Abia State.

Table 6. Simple linear regression on the predictive power of social support on academic grit

Model	Coefficients ^a											
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig	R	Adj R ²	S. E	F	df ₁	df ₂	Sig. F-value
	B	S. E	Beta									
Constant	1.58	0.04		39.62	0.00							
Social support	0.01	0.01	-0.08	-1.01	0.32	-.08 ^a	.00	.07	1.01	1	538	0.51

^a Dependent variable: academic grit

4. Discussion

Finding in Table 1 revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between emotional intelligence and academic grit. Results in Table 4 also indicated that emotional intelligence significantly predicted academic grit among undergraduate students in Abia State. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This is in concord with the findings of Esin (2021) that there is a strong and positive relationship between grit and emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence entails the presence of self-awareness. Individuals that exhibit grit have a tendency to score high on emotional intelligence scales. Also, Arias et al. (2023) also found that high emotional intelligence associated with high academic motivation. This could be attributed to the fact grit subsumes motivation, as individuals willing to prevalence in the face of academic hassles are mostly very motivated individuals inspired to attain both performance and mastery goals of learning.

Results in Table 2 indicated that a strong and positive relationship exists between self-efficacy and academic grit. In addition to this, results in Table 5 also showed that self-efficacy predicted academic grit among undergraduate student in Abia State. Thus, when learners have a belief in their own ability to excel in goal-oriented tasks such learners may exhibit an amazing level of tenacity in pursuit of various goals. However, the findings of Honicke et al. (2023) slightly differed from the findings of this study. Honicke et al. (2023) found that self-efficacy did not moderate the relationship among self-efficacy and goal orientation. As regards desirable academic behaviours, goal-orientation is seen as a trait that explains learner fortitude. Honicke et al. (2023) was of the view that while academic goal orientation predicts academic achievement, self-efficacy did not interact with other variables (goal orientation and academic achievement). However, Honicke et al. (2023) found that there is a reciprocity of relationship among self-efficacy, problem-solving ability and academic achievement. Problem-solving is seen as central to persistence as it explains how individual could remove obstacles that could hinder success. Belief in one's ability to excel, as a matter of fact, could be said to be pivotal to the attainment of several school desirable outcomes.

Results in table 3 showed that social support has a negative relationship with academic grit. Table 6 also revealed that social support did not predict academic grit among undergraduate students in Abia State. Social support encapsulates the benefits derived from social networks around individual. Several negative outcomes were found to be mitigated by social support. Furthermore, social support has also been attributed to positive outcomes among learners. Hutagalung and Suriyadi (2021) found that perception of social support had significant relationship with learners' self-esteem. While this does not agree with the findings of this study, it could be explained by the importance of feedback on individuals' self-evaluation. When a learner receives positive feedback from significant others, the said individual develops a positive concept of self which reflects on self-esteem. Also, Ye et al., (2021) found that there is a negative social support and academic burnout. With the findings of this study, it could be suggested that there is a diverse multicollinearity between social support is seen as a predictor of positive outcomes, academic grit entails a deterministic disposition that is rooted in an individual's personality.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study inferred that some of the studied socioemotional variables had significant associations with academic grit among the studied population. Emotional intelligence was found to have strong and positive correlation with academic grit, and also predicted academic grit. This implies that students that expressed traits of empathy, social awareness, motivation and other components of emotional intelligence also expressed traits of perseverance in their academic pursuits, or may have a tendency of exhibiting resilience in the face of future challenges in their academic endeavours. Also, self-efficacy was found to have a strong and positive relationship with academic grit. It was also inferred that self-efficacy predicted academic grit. This shows that undergraduate students that believed in their ability to surmount various challenges that stem from both curricular and extracurricular pursuits in school are predisposed to exhibiting grit in their academic endeavours. Such students may have performed reliably in previous situations and have the confidence that previous success can be transferred to present challenges in scholarly tasks. However, social support was found to have a negative relationship and did not predict academic grit among university undergraduate in the study. It could be surmised, from this finding, that academic grit is a trait that is dependent to an individual's characteristic trait and may not rely on external social factors that are explained by peer or family support variables. Thus, to develop grit is akin to developing other core person-centred characteristics.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for development of intervention programmes targeted at improving the emotional well-being of undergraduate students.
2. Relevant stakeholders and policy makers should focus on advocacy for policies that foster a healthy school climate. This is important for the social and emotional adjustment of young learners.
3. Peer mentorship programmes should be executed in tertiary institutions to help inculcate grit among undergraduate students.
4. Lecturers should show empathy and altruism in their daily interactions with learners. This would be helpful towards the psychosocial well-being of the young learners.
5. There is need for the establishment of feedback mechanisms for students to assess their emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and social support levels in order to provide guidance for improvement where necessary.

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