Hopelessness and emotional regulation as predictors of academic responsibility among Young Adults

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Abstract

Many young adults lack a sense of personal responsibility for their learning and are unaware of how their attitude and behaviour impacts their learning outcomes. This study examined the roles of hopelessness and emotion regulation in predicting academic responsibility among young adults. Participants were six hundred (600) secondary school students drawn fromStaff Model Secondary School, Victor International College, Urban Secondary School and Ikwo High School Agubia, all in Ebonyi State. Participants were sampled using a random sampling technique. Participants comprised of 300 males and females, respectively. The average respondent age of the sample was 11.93 (*SD* = .77, ranging from 10 to 19 years). The variables were measured using Perceived Responsibility for Learning Scale, Beck Hopelessness Scale and Emotion Dysregulation Scale - Short Form. A cross-sectional design was adopted for the study. Hierarchical multiple regression statistic was adopted to analyze the data with the use of SPSS.The results of the study demonstrated that hopelessness towards future feelings significantly and negatively predicted academic responsibilities (β = -.09, p< .05), while emotion regulation significantly and positively predicted academic responsibilities among young adults (β = .70, p< .001). The implications of the result projected the need for practitioners, parents and school stakeholders to emphasize academic responsibility by ameliorating hopelessness and encouraging emotional regulation strategies among young adults.

Keywords: Hopelessness, Emotion regulation, Academic responsibility and Young adults.

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Introduction

The home and school are the cradles of shaping an individual for the future. The life of a student is one of the golden periods in an individual's life when they get an opportunity to acquire values and qualities that make them responsible. For a successful academic journey, teachers, parents and students ought to work together. Teachers play important role in directing the students to handle responsibilities for a bright life ahead. Parents shoulder a great responsibility to teach their children to form basic habits and be responsible. Expectedly, many students acknowledge that they are responsible for their learning and that such responsibility can lead to success in many aspects of their lives. Yet there is a seeming disconnect between what students recognize as important and beneficial and what they actually practice (Ayish & Deveci, 2019).

One major responsibility of a student is to acquire education (Prasanna, 2021). A nation develops when the population is educated and can contribute to human resources. To contribute towards building a strong nation is a key responsibility of a student. Therefore, during the process of acquiring education, the student is therefore charged with some academic responsibilities while in school.

Responsibility is the attribute of a human character which implies that an individual should act in a certain manner to take on a few obligations and commitments. The individual must also be accountable for the outcomes of the activities. Academic responsibilities refers to a voluntaristic acceptance of student academic expectations (Neff, 1969). Admittedly, however, anecdotal and empirical evidence (Weimer, 2011; Schmelzer et al., 1987) suggest that students are less responsible for their learning and educational outcomes than desired by both teachers and researchers.

The relationship between personal responsibility and learning has been examined extensively (Bandura, 1993). Some researchers, for example, argue that a common trait among successful learners is that they take active role in ensuring that their needs are met and sustained over time (Alghamdi, 2016). Others suggest that personal responsibility can lead to life-long learning by overcoming many of the challenges inherent in developing deeper and more meaningful learning opportunities over time (Deveci & Ayish, 2017a; Jiusto & DiBiasio, 2006). Indeed, it has been shown that being responsible for one's learning is essential for academic, personal, and professional growth and success (Ning & Downing, 2012), but hopelessness can hinder academic progress.

Hopelessness is described as a mental state in which a person has a persistently pessimistic and sadistic outlook on the future and believes that their current circumstances cannot be changed (Beck, 1986). Abramson et al. (1989) defined hopelessness as the anticipation that terrible events will occur and/or positive events will not occur, as well as the attitude that the individual can do nothing to change this bleak reality. Hopelessness is the subjective assessment of negative expectations on the occurrence of highly valued outcomes, along with the sensation that lacks control over the desired events in the future (Junior et al., 2018). Hopelessness may be experienced when one feels abandoned, life seems out of control, loss of purpose, grieving a loss, poor satisfaction of needs, does something wrong, hurt by someone, gripped by fear and pulled in a wrong direction (Djchuang, 2021).While hopelessness can hinder academic growth and development, emotion regulation can enhance academic responsibility.

Emotion regulation is the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotion in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed (Aldao et al., (2010). Emotion regulation is a dynamic and multifaceted process

through which individuals manage their emotions, how the emotions are experienced or expressed (Gross, 2015). The emotions we feel and express are very important for our psychosocial and physical well-being, example, they might promote goal achievement, facilitate interpersonal interactions, and guide behavior to enhance health promotion.

In contrast to children or adults, adolescents tend to experience more frequent both positive and negative, high-intensity emotions, and high emotional instability (Bailen et al., 2019). During adolescence, the ability to regulate emotions mediates the emotional experience characteristics (Somerville, 2016). Research on age-related emotion regulation competence suggests a tendency to increase adaptive emotion regulation from childhood to adolescence and then to adulthood (Zimmermann & Iwanski, 2014). This increase may be related to a progressively more sophisticated understanding of emotion-eliciting events and a cumulative repertoire of regulatory strategies, along with the growing maturation of the executive functions (LeBlanc et al., 2017). In later adolescence, the maturation of the cerebral structure (mainly the frontal lobes) enables the decrease of neuronal connections. Although, more regular and more effective synapses arise, this results in more efficient, flexible cognitive processes, and well-adaptive emotional and behavioural regulation (Berk, 2017).

Many young adults lack a sense of personal responsibility for their learning and are unaware of how their attitude and behaviour impacts their learning outcomes. This has been linked to a number of detrimental consequences, including poor interpersonal communication, negative teaming experiences, and unproductive learning opportunities (Deveci & Ayish, 2017a). In addition, the literature is rich in documenting how individual responsibility contributes to individual students' academic performance. However, there is a lack of research that explores secondary school students' academic responsibility. In order to address this, the researchers believe it is necessary to better understand how secondary school students perceive academic responsibility.

Also, the attention to the mental health of students has been raising discussions inside and outside the academic environment, especially in situations in which mental suffering assumes more critical nuances, compromising academic performance and leaving the student more vulnerable to the development of mental disorders and suicidal behavior. The impact of hope and academic responsibility and how important they are in the learning process has been discussed (Gallagher et al., 2017). It has been pointed out that without hope and emotional regulation learners would see no benefit pursuing knowledge. When individuals do not see a point in acting with efforts, they will not act. Hence, the search for the association between hopelessness, emotional regulation and academic responsibility can contribute to the planning of actions that are more in line with the students' needs.

Hopelessness and academic responsibility

Hopelessness may be characterized by several components, which include: biased future thinking, that is, reduced ability to generate positive future events (Ratcliffe, 2015; Roepke & Seligman, 2016), helplessness that is feelings of inability to bring about any significant change (Ratcliffe 2015; Seligman, 1975) and blocked goal-processing that is beliefs that the pursue of meaningful goals is impeded along with feelings of giving-up (Hadley & MacLeod, 2010; Melges & Bowlby, 1969). Hopelessness may be categorized in different ways such as alienation (feeling of being different from others), forsakenness (feeling of abandonment), uninspired (feeling of despair), powerlessness (feeling of weakness), oppression (feeling of injustice), limitedness (feeling of restriction), doom (feeling of tragedy), captivity (felling of confinement) and helplessness (feeling of anguish) (Gill, 2017).

Hopelessness is considered one of the most common mental health issues (Aydin & Isleyen, 2004; Sahin, 2019). People seldom suffer periods of hopelessness, but there are features that might generate negative expectations for the future, which makes hopelessness qualitatively significant when present (Duggleby et al., 2012). Negativity about the future feeling and future expectations can be sparked by a variety of causes, such as chronic sickness, functional deterioration, limited resources, and perceived burden on others, loneliness, and the death of a loved one.

A study conducted in Brazilian federal institutions of higher education showed that 79.8% of students said they had experienced some emotional difficulty in the twelve months prior to the survey, among which 32.5% reported helplessness and hopelessness (National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions, 2016). Williams et al. (2008) reported higher levels of hopelessness among students diagnosed with anxiety and depressive disorders. More so, Karakus (2018) found that students were hopeless about being employed after their education and this led to significant levels of depression as well. Some common factors associated with hopelessness among students are depression, suicidal ideation and suicidal attempt, studying an undesired course, insecurity about professional future and substance use (Lima et al., 2021). These cluster of findings point to the negative effects of hopelessness to students' academic responsibility.

Hopelessness increases the risk of mortality from physical sickness (Zhu et al., 2017), predicts the level of adherence to treatment and compliance for mental (Perley et al., 1971) and physical issues (Nsamenang & Hirsch, 2015), and is linked to shorter inpatient stays and higher survival expectancies and less anxiety (Koenig, 2018) among older persons. When it comes to quality of life, hopefulness has a positive impact on both mental and physical health (Hernandez & Overholser, 2021; Wolverson et al., 2010).

According to Beck, et.al (1974), hopelessness can be categorized into three dimensions; hopelessness toward future feelings, hopelessness towards future expectations and loss of motivation. Hopelessness arises when the individuals 'estimate of the probability to achieve specific goals is pessimistic and they think that the plans of action in the pursuit of the goals are unlikely to lead to their attainment, hopelessness in these dimension are mainly cantered around goal blockade and motivational strive. Dismal expectations about the future are a quintessential feature of hopelessness, as the future is painted as impossible, bleak, and fundamentally devoid of any positivity (Marchetti,2019). Indeed, research shows that positive future thinking is markedly reduced in hopeless individuals (Macleod & Cropley,1995; Roepke & Seligman, 2016), with positive scenarios being less frequent, less likely, less specific, and more difficult to generate (Macleod & Cropley, 1995; Miranda et al.,2008). Moreover, the lack of positive future thinking seems to be particularly relevant only when the thought content is self-relevant rather than focused on other people (MacLeod & Conway, 2005, 2007). We therefore state that:

Hypothesis 1a: Hopelessness towards future feelings will significantly and negatively be associated with academic responsibility.

Hypothesis 1b: Loss of motivation will significantly and negatively be associated academic responsibility.

Hypothesis 1c: Hopelessness towards future expectations will significantly be and negatively predict academic responsibility

Emotional regulation and academic responsibility

One other important variable that has probably been a source of concern to school management, teachers, counsellors, academic advisers, parents/guardians and researchers is emotion regulation. Emotions have a significant impact on learning (Pekrun et al., 2017; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014), such as the ability to diminish disruptive and distractive stimuli when learning (LeBlanc et al., 2017). Research has shown that adolescents are more sensitive to relevant emotional cues, which can selectively disrupt or improve academic performance, depending on their level of engagement with the task and their environment (Somerville, 2016). Emotion regulation has been found to be linked with student engagement (Santos et al., 2021) and academic performance (Usan Supervia & Quílez Robres, 2021).

McLaughlin et al. (2011) revealed that people are continually exposed to a wide variety of potentially arousing stimuli. Inappropriate, extreme or unchecked emotional reactions to such stimuli could impede functional fit within society; therefore, people must engage in some form of emotion regulation almost all of the time. Extensive research indicates that emotion regulation strategies can be classified as either adaptive or maladaptive according to its relation to mental health (Dryman & Heimberg, 2018). The study of emotion regulation is pursued in many disciplinary fields, from neuroscience to developmental, personality, social, and clinical psychology, and in health-related literature (Gross, 2002). Due to the complexity of the construct and its partial overlap with other self-regulatory strategies especially coping strategies, several definitions of the emotion regulation process, and of its strategies, can be found in the literature (Compas, 2009; Kashdan et al., 2006; Zimmer-Gembeck & Skinner, 2011). Indeed, most recent reviews stress the complexity of the emotion regulation construct, its multidimensionality, and thus the need to consider its many facets, such as distinguishing between implicit and explicit processes in relation to goal accomplishment, or considering the effects on emotion regulation of contextual variables, including culture, features of the eliciting situation, and individual characteristics, and analyzing the interactions among such facets (Aldao et al., 2015; Aldao & Tull, 2015; Ford & Mauss, 2015; Morris et al., 2007; Raver, 2004).

If the deterioration in academic responsibility among Nigerian young adults persists, it may affect the development of the country; and be particularly devastating to economic growth of the nation, which had relied heavily in the school system for its development. Thus, the present study investigated the association of hopelessness, emotional regulation and academic responsibility of young adults. This study therefore hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: Emotion regulation will significantly and positively be associated with academic responsibility among secondary school students.

Method

Participants

The total number of600 JSS1 to SS3 students were drawn from four secondary schools at Ikwo, Ebonyi State. Of this number, 300 males and 300 females participated. Their ages ranged from 10 to 19 years old with average age of 11.93 (*SD* = .77). The participants were selected using multi-staged sampling method. The simple random sampling technique was employed to select four secondary schools (two public school and two private school) from the selected local government area, afterwards, convenient sampling technique

was used to select the participants for the study from their various classes. Participation was voluntary and there were no exclusion criteria for participation. With respect to participants' religion 88.5% (n = 531) were Christians, 10.3% (n = 62) were Muslims, while 1.2% (n = 7) indicated they were in African Traditional Religion. Then for their parental status, majority 82.8% (n = 497) had both parents, 7.7% (n = 46) had just single parents, while 6.7% (n = 40) indicated they just had guardians.

Instruments

Perceived responsibility

It was assessed with the Perceived Responsibility for Learning Scale (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2005). It was originally developed to assess responsibility in high school students. The scale consists of 18 items asking students to indicate who is more responsible for certain academic outcomes. The items represent academic outcomes such as motivation (e.g., going through the motions without trying), deportment (e.g., fooling around in class), and learning processes (e.g., not taking notes in class). Example of items on the scale are: "Who is more responsible for a student being unprepared to participate in class?" and "Who is more responsible for a student not valuing good grades in school?" Students rate their level of responsibility for these outcomes on an atypical 7- point Likert scale: 1 (mainly the teacher), 2 (definitely more the teacher), 3 (slightly more the teacher), 4 (both equally), 5 (slightly more the student), 6 (definitely more the student), and 7 (mainly the student). Higher scores in the scale indicate a higher sense of responsibility attributed to the student. Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2005) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .97 in their study. The present study found an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .83 for the scale.

Hopelessness

It was measured with the Beck Hopelessness Scale is a 20-item self-report inventory developed by Aaron T. Beck and colleagues (1974) designed to measure three major aspects of hopelessness: feelings about the future, loss of motivation, and expectation. The scale's items are phrased such that the respondent either assents to a futuristically positively worded statement (yes) or rejects a futuristically negatively worded statement (no) to get a score of one point per question. The developers divided the scale into three subscales: feelings about the future (items: 1, 5, 6, 13, 15, 19), loss of motivation (items: 2, 3, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20), and future expectations (items: 4, 7, 8, 10, 14, 18). Out of the scale's 20 items, nine (items 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19) are negatively scored, with the respondent awarded a point if they indicated 'No' to any of these items. Examples of items are "I look forward to the future with hope and enthusiasm" and "I might as well give up because I can't make things better for myself". The total score ranges from 0 to 20, with higher levels of hopelessness indicated by higher scores on the scale. In a Nigerian population, Aloba et al. (2016) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .72,. The present study found a Cronbach's alpha of .56, .58 and .54 for the future feelings, motivation loss and future expectation subscales, respectively.

Emotional regulation

It was assessed with the EDS-short is a 12-item self-report scale of emotion dysregulation, developed by Powers et al. (2015) from the original EDS 24-item measure of emotion dysregulation. The EDS-short was created based on an exploratory factor analysis of the original EDS 24-item scale. Principal components analysis yielded one factor (eigenvalue = 13.04, 54.4% of variance explained), with the next factor accounting for 5% of total variance (eigenvalue = 1). The 12 items with the highest loadings were then chosen by

Powers et al. (2015) for the EDS-short. On the EDS-short, items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Not true") to 7 ("Very true"). Items assess domains of emotional experiencing (e.g., "Emotions overwhelm me"), cognition (e.g., "When I'm upset, everything feels like a disaster or crisis"), and behaviour (e.g., "When my emotions are strong, I often make bad decisions"). The internal consistency of the EDS-short scale was high across 3 different samples (α = .93; .94 and .95) (Powers et al., 2015). According to the developers, the bivariate correlation between the 24-item and 12-item EDS scales was extremely high (r = 0.98, p<.001). The present study found a Cronbach's alpha of .81 for the scale.

Procedure

With permission obtained from the principal of the schools, students were approached in their classes by the researchers who were assisted by a teacher in each school. The researchers explained the nature of the study to the participants, what they were required to do, and who was undertaking the research. Students were informed that they were free to withdraw at any stage of the study without any prejudice, and that their personal information would remain confidential. Students who gave their assent were given the questionnaire forms to fill. Participants were verbally appreciated for taking part in the study. The questionnaire copies were returned to the researchers by the participants as soon as they were completed. Six hundred and five copies of the questionnaire forms were administered, but 5 copies were discarded due to substantial incomplete data.

Design/Statistics

Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted. Pearson's correlation (r) analysis was conducted among the study variables while hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Correlations of demographic variables, hopelessness, emotion regulation and academic responsibility

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
1	Gender	-									
2	Age	.71**	-								
3	Religion	-.19**	-.39**	-							
4	Class	.15**	.36**	-.80**	-						
5	Parental status	.35*	.35**	-.66**	.69**	-					
6	Future feelings	-.10*	-.12**	.03	-.05	-.04	-				
7	Motivation loss	-.06	-.10*	.03	-.07	-.04	.59**	-			
8	Future expectation	-.03	-.09*	.07	-.09*	-.06	.27**	.64**	-		
9	Emotion regulation	.23**	.26**	-.18**	.20**	.22**	-.11**	-.06	-.03	-	
10	Academic responsibility	.16**	.19**	-.10*	.13**	.17**	-.08*	-.03	-.02	.70**	-

Note: N = 600; *p<.05, **p<.01; Gender was coded as male = 1, female = 2. Parental status was coded as 1 = Both parents, 2 = Single parents, 3 = No parent, 4 = Guardian

In Table 1, the correlations showed gender was positively correlated with age (r = .71, p<.01), class (r = .15, p<.01), parental status (r = .35, p<.05), emotion regulation (r = .23, p<.01) and academic responsibility (r = .16, p<.01), while it was negatively correlated with religion (r = -.19, p<.01) and hopelessness towards future feelings (r = -.10, p<.05). Age was

positively correlated with class (r = .36, p<.01), parental status (r = .35, p<.01), emotion regulation (r = .26, p<.01) and academic responsibility (r = .19, p<.01), while it was negatively correlated with religion (r = -.39, p<.01), hopelessness towards future feelings (r = -.12, p<.01), loss of motivation (r = -.10, p<.05) and hopelessness towards future expectation (r = .09, p<.05). Religion was negatively correlated with class (r = -.80, p<.01), parental status (r = -.66, p<.01), emotion regulation (r = -.18, p<.01) and academic responsibility (r = -.10, p<.05). Class was positively correlated with parental status (r = .69, p<.01), emotion regulation (r = .20, p<.01) and academic responsibility (r = .13, p<.01), while it was negatively correlated with hopelessness towards future expectation (r = .09, p<.05). Parental status was positively correlated with emotion regulation (r = .22, p<.01) and academic responsibility (r = .17, p<.01).

Hopelessness towards future feelings was positively correlated with motivation loss (r = .59, p<.01) and hopelessness towards future expectation (r = .27, p<.01), while it was negatively correlated with emotion regulation (r = -.11, p<.01) and academic responsibility (r = .08, p<.05). Loss of motivation was positively correlated with hopelessness towards future expectations (r = -.64, p<.01). Emotion regulation was positively correlated with academic responsibility (r = .70, p<.01).

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression for predictors of academic responsibility

Variable	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	B	B	T	B	B	T	B	β	T
Controls									
Gender	.30	.04	.61	.28	.03	.58	-.11	-.01	-.30
Age	1.14	.12	2.11*	1.08	.12	2.00*	.05	.01	.12
Parental status	.99	.12	2.68**	1.00	.12	2.69**	.15	.02	.54
Predictors									
Future feelings				-1.08	-.09	-1.69*	-.26	-.02	-.55
Motivation loss				.60	.05	.84	.44	.04	.84
Future expectation				-.15	-.02	-.32	-.19	-.02	-.55
Emotion regulation							.83	.70	22.85***
Adjusted R^2		.043			.043			.491	
ΔR^2		.048			.005			.444	
ΔF		9.978***			.958			522.180***	

Note: * = p< .05, ** = p< .01, *** = p < .001.

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression in Table 2 in which academic responsibility was the criterion variable indicated that the demographic variables entered as controls (i.e., gender, age and parental status), in Step 1 of the equation, collectively accounted for 4.8% variance in academic responsibility. Age (β = .04 p< .05) and parental status (β = .12 p< .01) made a positive and significant contribution while gender (β = .30 p = .542) did not make a significant contribution to the prediction of academic responsibility. This indicates that older students and students who stayed with their guardians had higher academic responsibility.

When hopelessness was entered in Step 2 of the equation as a predictor, its dimensions collectively accounted for 4.3% variance in academic responsibility. Hopelessness towards future feelings was a significant and negative predictor of academic

responsibility (β = -.09, p< .05), thus H_{1a} was confirmed. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) showed that for every one unit increase in hopelessness towards future feelings, academic responsibility decreases by 1.08 units. Loss of motivation did not significantly predict academic responsibility (β = .05, p = .403), thus H_{1b} was not confirmed. Hopelessness towards future expectations did not significantly predict academic responsibility (β = -.02, p = 746), thus H_{1c} was not confirmed.

When emotion regulation was entered in Step 3 of the equation as a predictor, it accounted for 49.1% variance in academic responsibility. Emotion regulation was a significant and positive predictor of academic responsibility (β = .70, p< .001), thus H_2 was confirmed. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B) showed that for every one unit increase in emotion regulation, academic responsibility increases by .83 units.

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between hopelessness (future feelings, lack of motivation, and future expectations). The result showed that hopelessness towards future feelings significantly and negatively predicted academic responsibility, while loss of motivation and hopelessness towards future expectations did not significantly predict academic responsibility among secondary school students. Hence hypothesis 1a which stated that hopelessness towards future feelings will significantly and negatively predict academic responsibility was confirmed, while hypothesis 1b and 1c which stated that lack of motivation will significantly and negatively predict academic responsibility and hopelessness towards future expectations will significantly and negatively predict academic responsibility were not confirmed.

The finding of the present study is in agreement with previous studies (Banihani, 2022; Bitew & Birhan, 2021) that found a negative relationship between hopelessness and positive academic outcomes. Students who are hopeless are less willing to be involved in academic activities, and are not willing to take responsibilities for their academic outcomes. Students experiencing hopelessness have been reported to attend school less (Keppens et al., 2019) as well as complete less home works (Alverson, 2014).

The result of the study further showed that emotion regulation was also positively associated with academic responsibility among young adults. Thus hypothesis 2 which stated that emotion regulation will be significantly and positively associated with academic responsibility was confirmed. The finding of the present study agrees with past findings (Hafizah & Hafiz, 2015; Yuliana, 2019). Maintaining an academic responsibility involves emotion experiences especially when students deal with stressors such as examinations and assignments. In the course of their academic curriculum, students go through several evaluations. Their level of responsibility in these evaluations represents the primary criterion to determine if students meet the minimum requirement of academic requirements. Therefore, emotion regulation is related with students' academic responsibility as they might acknowledge the emotion experiences during academic sessions.

Implications of the study

The current study has both theoretical and practical implication that are noteworthy. This study suggests more research is needed to identify and understand the extent of young adults in secondary school' hopelessness, emotion regulation and academic responsibility. Particularly, investigation of how these self-perceptions develop in young adults is needed. Though some studies have started to explore the processes underlying young adults' hopelessness (e.g., Lester, 2015; Medley, 2019) and emotion regulation (e.g., Mulyati, 2019),

further replication or adaptation of these studies with students is warranted. Also, research should be conducted regarding a primary diagnosis of hopelessness and its relationship to alcohol use, gender, financial strain, family type and education level among young adults. Such information could provide insight for developing interventions that best support young students' perceptions and beliefs about academic responsibility.

Limitations and Suggestions for further studies

Data were collected at only one point in time. As such, the findings do not allow for understanding potential developmental changes in students' self-perceptions throughout the school year and between years. Several researchers (e.g., Jones et al., 2020; Shek, & Li, 2015) have noted that it is important to take into account the evolving nature of students' self-perceptions as they grow and acquire new experiences. Exploring this evolution over time will help to better understand the processes underlying hopelessness and emotion regulation and the role these play in students' academic responsibility. The study also included selected secondary school students only from one Local Government Area of a state in Nigeria, hence the generalizability of the study is limited. Future studies should endeavour to include samples from other region of Nigeria to enhance the extent to which the study can be generalized. More so, the study adopted self-report by the participants with the use of questionnaires leading to common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future studies should consider obtaining data from other sources (multiple) such as from the class teachers or classmates to cushion the impact of social desirability biases.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the understanding of how certain contextual factors may influence academic responsibility. It also presented an analysis of the predictive roles of hopelessness and emotion regulation on academic responsibility among young adults, something which has not been examined previously with this age group. The study aims to add to the existing literature. The following theories were reviewed in this work to explain the study variables: causal attribution theory, the triangle model of responsibility, hopelessness theory, and process model of emotion regulation and Koole's model of emotion regulation. Results showed that hopelessness towards future feelings significantly and negatively predicted academic responsibility, while emotion regulation significantly and positively predicted academic responsibility among young adults. Practitioners, parents, and school stakeholders should take note of these results in order to improve the academic responsibility of young adults. Interventions targeted toward this population can aid in reducing the rate of developing hopelessness and enhancing emotion regulation in young adults.

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