Academic Overload and Help-Seeking Behaviour as Predictors of Academic Performance of Biology Undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education

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ABSTRACT: Academic overload may be a major obstacle to academic attainments of students and inability to manage it may have negative impact on the education system. This study was designed to investigate academic overload and help-seeking behaviour as predictors of academic performance of Biology undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. Simple random sampling was adopted in selecting two hundred Biology undergraduates from 100-400 level. Adopted help-seeking behavior scale and academic overload were used as research instrument. The demographic data of the respondents were analysed using percentages while the formulated hypotheses were tested using simple linear regression. The results showed that there was no significant relationship ($r=0.108$; $p=0.130$; $F=2.31$) between academic overload and academic performance; help-seeking behaviour did predict ($r=0.195$; $p=0.006$; $F=7.79$) academic performance of students in Biology. There was a composite significant effect of academic overload and help-seeking behaviour on academic performance of Biology. Results implied that academic overloads did not determine the academic performance of Biology students; help-seeking behavior did predict the academic performance of biology students in Tai Solarin University of Education. Based on findings, it was therefore recommended that students should have positive attitude towards help-seeking and also be confident in handling tasks at hand and upcoming ones. The university management should encourage students to seek help when they are overwhelmed by academic tasks

KEYWORDS: Academic overload, help-seeking behavior, performance.

1.   BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Education is a tool that helps in socio-economic development of a nation. It is not only about reading, writing and arithmetic, but is the most essential investments a country can make in its people and future. Academic performance is regarded as knowledge acquired by students over a specific period of time which is assessed by a teacher and or educational institution using objective criteria such as tests, grades and reports (Kumar, Agarwal and Agarwal, 2021).

However, academic performance of students can be influenced by academic overload and help seeking behaviour. Academic overload is the act of overburden students with academic responsibilities or task while striving for university degree. Students most especially those in their first year are struggling with the management of academic workload at the university because they are just adapting to the university system. These students are faced with challenges such as developing a new social network, adjusting to having many lecturers, making up with academic work in an environment where they are autonomous, surmounting, temptations of the university environment (Chong *et al*., 2009; Kamel, 2018). The ability of students to successfully complete demanding academic tasks is influenced by the amount of energy they put into the academic work and less effort may lead to academic failure (Petersen, Louw and Dumont, 2011). In addition, students may get stuck and end up achieving nothing when they have many tasks to complete even though they are cognitively capable. Some students may not be aware of how to combine workload and their ability to juggle multiple priorities (Wilson, 2017). School-related competencies such as academic motivation, scholastic performance, school engagement and school conduct are threatened by exhausting experience and emotional distress (Balarabe, 2003). The desire to meet the deadline for a loaded academic work can be disheartening (Jain, 2018). Help-seeking refers to the behavior of actively seeking help with regards to knowledge, a problem or worrying issue, guidance, information and ideas from other people. Help-seeking is a form

of coping strategy that is based on social and interpersonal relationships (Payakachat *et al.*, 2013). Help-seeking sources are not limited to professionals (such as teachers, counsellors) but there might be informal sources which are parents, relatives and friends (Nguyen, Le, and Meirmanov, 2019). In particular, Goodwin, Behan, Kelly, McCarthy, and Horgan (2016) found that formal source of seeking help was less popular among university students than informal source and students that seek help informally have higher level of success and well-being.

When students are always overloaded in their academics, this makes them to have strong feeling of frustration, role ambiguity and role strain (Okorie, 2016). As mental capacity is stretched to its limits, efforts are made to maintain performance by either altering the circumstances or changing ones perception about the situation. Students that are struggling with their daily academic tasks will find it difficult to adapt to university demands, so it is important for them to lighten their academic load in order to feel more comfortable in their academic environment. Student's inability to effectively handle their workload could potentially lead to negative consequences for their academic acclimation to university life and academic performance (Kamel, 2018).

Although, seeking help is a key learning tactic that has been linked with improved academic performance. Many students may refrain from seeking help due to a desire to maintain their self –esteem and fear of being juded by others (Kitsantas and Chow, 2007). A student who lacks confidence may be reluctant to ask for assistance and may struggle to effectively find the support they need (Orey *et al.*, 2015). Hence this study investigates academic overload and help seeking behaviour as predictors of academic performance.

2.   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to investigate academic overload and help seeking behaviour as predictors of academic performance of Biology undergraduates at Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State (TASUED).

3.   OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between academic overload and academic performance of Biology undergraduates at TASUED.
2. To find out the relationship between help seeking behaviour and academic performance of Biology undergraduates at TASUED.
3. To determine the composite effect of academic overload and help seeking behaviour on academic performance of Biology undergraduates at TASUED.

4.   RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between academic overload and academic performance of Biology undergraduates at TASUED.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between help seeking behaviour and academic performance of Biology undergraduates at TASUED.

H_{03}: There is no composite effect of academic overload and help seeking behaviour on academic performance of Biology undergraduates at TASUED.

5.   METHODOLOGY

For this research, descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study comprised all Biology undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. Using simple

random sampling, two hundred (200) Biology undergraduates consisting of fifty students from each level were randomly selected from100 level to 400 level for the study.

The instruments for data collection were adapted questionnaire by Quayyum (2018) for helping seeking behaviour and Muller and Louw (2004) for academic overload. The students' Grade Point Average was used as their academic performance. Twenty students who were not selected for the study were used to determine the reliability of the research instrument using Cronbach's alpha and the reliability value was 0.804. The data obtained from the study was subjected to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Percentage was used for the demographic information of respondents while simple linear regression was used to test the formulated hypotheses

6.   RESULTS

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. 41 respondents representing 20.5% were male while 159 respondents representing 79.5% were female. Fifty students representing 25% were selected from each level

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	**Male**	41	20.5
	Female	159	79.5
		200	100.0
Level	**100L**	50	25.0
	200L	50	25.0
	300L	50	25.0
	400L	50	25.0
		200	100.0

7.   TEST OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between academic overload and academic performance of Biology undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. In order to see if academic overload predicts academic performance of students in Biology, regression analysis was conducted.

Table 2: Regression analysis of academic overload and academic performance in biology students

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.108[a]	.012	.007	10.868

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance
	Regression	273.743	1	273.743	2.318	.130[b]
1	Residual	23385.252	198	118.107		
	Total	23658.995	199			

a. Dependent Variable: SCORE

b. Predictors: (Constant), OVERLOAD

Table 2 shows r=0.108 which indicates weak correlation between academic overload and academic performance of respondents and R^2 value (0.012) indicates that 1.2% of academic overload account for academic performance. Therefore, the null hypotheses is accepted. There is no significant ($p>0.05$) relationship between academic overload and academic performance in biology undergraduates.

H$_{02}$: There is no significant relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic performance of Biology undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. Linear regression analysis was used to investigate help-seeking behaviour of students to predict their academic performance.

Table 3: Regression analysis of help-seeking behavior and academic performance in biology undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.195[a]	.038	.033	10.722

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1	Regression	896.361	1	896.361	7.797	.006[b]
	Residual	22762.634	198	114.963		
	Total	23658.995	199			

a. Dependent Variable: SCORE

b. Predictors: (Constant), HELP

Table 3 shows r=0.195 which indicates weak correlation between help-seeking behaviour and academic performance of respondents and R^2 value (0.308) indicates that 3.8% of help-seeking behaviour account for academic performance. The p <0.05 therefore the null hypotheses (H$_0$) is rejected. This implied that there is significant relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic performance in biology undergraduates.

H$_{03}$: There is no composite effect of academic overload and help-seeking behaviour on academic performance of biology undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to see whether both academic overload and help-seeking behaviour have effect on the academic performance of biology undergraduates.

Table 4: Regression analysis of academic overload, help-seeking behavior and students' academic performance in biology.

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.206[a]	.043	.038	10.696

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Significance
1	Regression	1007.622	1	1007.622	8.808	.003[b]
	Residual	22651.373	198	114.401		
	Total	23658.995	199			

a. Dependent Variable: student performance in biology

b. Predictors: (Constant), Academic overload and help-seeking behaviour

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	74.407	8.341		8.921	.000
Academic overload and help-seeking behaviour	-.262	.088	-.206	-2.968	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Students' academic performance in biology

Table 4 shows r=0.206 which indicates weak positive correlation between academic overload, help-seeking behaviour and academic performance of respondents. The R^2 value (0.043) indicates that 4.3% of academic overload, help-seeking behaviour account for academic performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that academic overload and help-seeking behaviour jointly (p=0.003) are strong enough to predict students' performance in biology.

8.   DISCUSSION

The study revealed that there is no significant relationship between academic overload and academic performance of biology students. This is an indication that Biology undergraduates can be overloaded but is in no relationship with their performance. This could be due to availability of resources or coping strategies that enhance their learning. This is similar to the findings of Okorie (2016) that when people appraise that they have the resources to cope with an event, that event is not a threat but when people lack the resources to cope with a threat, and then they experience overloading. The non-significant relationship between academic overload and academic performance might be due to the perception of students in accomplishing academic tasks, amount of energy and time devoted to having a successful task. However, this is not in line with the findings of Kamel (2018) who reported that academic overload leads to lower academic achievement. Petersen *et al.,* (2009) proposed that students who are successful in managing both the academic and personal challenges of the university life tend to feel a strong connection to their school and typically earn higher grades. However, students who feel overwhelmed by rigorous academic demands may struggle to keep up with their coursework and often end up with lower grades at the end of the academic year.

The study also found that there is significant relationship between help-seeking behaviour and academic performance of Biology undergraduates. This indicates that help-seeking have good impact on academic performance of biology undergraduates. This study agrees with Umurani (2020) that stated help-seeking is a learning strategy that facilitate student learning and benefit students' academic performance. This also supports the findings of Fong *et al.,* (2023) that help-seeking among students promote learning.

The study showed that there is a composite effect of academic overload and help-seeking behavior on academic performance of biology students. This agrees with the findings of Petersen *et al.,* (2009) that academic overload and adjustment were the significant predictors of academic performance. This also supports the findings of Petersen *et al.,* (2010) state that the effects of students' individual characteristics (such as academic motivation and self-confidence), their capacity to handle stress and academic demands, and their engagement with different university support systems on academic success are influenced by how well they adapt to university life

However, academic performance is impacted by students' abilities, attitudes and behaviour, such as their perception of their academic abilities, their ability to regulate learning, their motivation and their willingness to seek help.

9.   CONCLUSION

Based on this study, academic overload and help-seeking behaviour have composite effect on academic performance of biology students in Tai Solarin University of Education. The study revealed that the perception of students about the demands of their academic tasks will determine their performance not the overloading situation itself. Students' inability to manage workload may have negative impact on academic adjustment; one of the ways students can cope or be adjusted to the overloading academic task is help-seeking which involves reaching out to others for assistance and support when facing a problem or difficult situation.

10.   RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it is recommended that students should be confident enough to deal with overloading situation instead of seeing the tasks to be very demanding because their perception of the demands of the academic tasks and their perception of their ability to succeed in completing the tasks influence the amount of time and energy devoted to the task which invariably have effect on their academic performance. The students should have positive attitude towards help-seeking as this will help them adjust to the university academic demands. Also, the university management should provide an enabling environment whereby lecturers and students at all levels interact and relate with one another.

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