

**Academic Motivation, Resilience Resources, and Prior Performance as Predictors of Academic Adjustment among Fresh Undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State**

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**Abstract**

The transition into university life poses academic, social, and emotional challenges that affect students' adjustment and performance. Understanding how motivation, resilience, and prior achievement influence academic adjustment among Nigerian undergraduates remains essential yet underexplored. This study investigated the relationships and predictive influences of intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources (coping skills and self-efficacy), and prior academic performance on the academic adjustment and engagement of fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. A descriptive survey design was employed, involving 206 participants selected through multi-stage sampling. Data were collected using validated instruments and analysed using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analyses. Results revealed that intrinsic motivation had the strongest positive relationship with academic adjustment ( $r = .61, p < .01$ ), followed by extrinsic motivation ( $r = .57, p < .01$ ), resilience resources ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ), and prior academic performance ( $r = .46, p < .01$ ). Multiple regression analysis indicated that the four predictors jointly explained 50% of the variance in academic adjustment ( $R = .71, R^2 = .50, F(4,201) = 50.25, p < .001$ ). Among the predictors, intrinsic motivation emerged as the strongest relative contributor ( $\beta = 0.39, p < .001$ ), followed by extrinsic motivation ( $\beta = 0.31, p < .001$ ), resilience resources ( $\beta = 0.27, p < .001$ ), and prior academic performance ( $\beta = 0.21, p < .001$ ). These findings highlight the critical roles of motivation and resilience in supporting successful adjustment and engagement in higher education. Interventions targeting both intrinsic motivation and resilience capacities, alongside strategies leveraging prior academic performance, are recommended to enhance students' adaptation to university life.

**Keywords:** Academic motivation, Resilience resources, Prior academic performance, Academic adjustment

**Introduction**

Academic motivation and resilience are central determinants of students' success in higher education, particularly for fresh undergraduates transitioning from secondary school to university life. Motivation is broadly conceptualized as intrinsic, driven by personal interest and self-satisfaction, or extrinsic, influenced by rewards, recognition, and social pressures (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In Nigeria, studies have highlighted the pivotal role of academic motivation in shaping students' engagement and performance. Akinyemi and Aremu (2022) demonstrated that

solution-focused interventions could enhance motivation by reducing psychological distress, suggesting that students' internal and external motivational factors are intricately linked to their academic adjustment. Similarly, Fehintola and Akinyemi (2021) found that mindfulness and cognitive training improve attention regulation, which indirectly strengthens intrinsic motivation and academic persistence among secondary school students. Internationally, Schunk et al. (2014) emphasize that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational constructs are essential for learning persistence and goal-directed behaviours in higher education settings.

Resilience-related resources, such as coping skills and self-efficacy, are crucial in buffering students against academic and social stressors. Aremu et al. (2021) emphasized that resilience allows students to navigate the challenges of the “new normal” in higher education, especially during transitional periods like the first year of university. In Nigeria, Omopo (2025) highlighted that emotion regulation, peer influence, and social support significantly moderate the effects of early life stressors on adolescent mental health, underlining the importance of resilience resources in educational contexts. Internationally, research by Martin and Marsh (2006) supports the notion that resilience strengthens students' persistence and achievement by fostering adaptive coping strategies in response to setbacks. Similarly, Duckworth et al. (2007) assert that self-regulation and perseverance key aspects of resilience predict higher levels of academic achievement and adjustment in tertiary education.

Prior academic performance remains a robust predictor of undergraduate adjustment and motivation. Akinyemi (2025) found that emotional regulation, parenting styles, peer influence, and socio-economic status collectively influence adolescents' academic outcomes in Osogbo, Nigeria, suggesting continuity in performance patterns from secondary to tertiary education. Ukpabi and Akinyemi (2021) similarly reported that peer group dynamics significantly affect secondary school students' academic performance, highlighting the interactive effects of social and personal antecedents on academic outcomes. Globally, research has shown that high school grades and standardized test scores predict college success, indicating that prior achievement not only influences motivation but also shapes students' resilience in facing new academic challenges (Richardson et al., 2012; Robbins et al., 2004).

Psychological factors such as depression, self-esteem, and social support further interact with motivation and resilience. Akinyemi (2025) demonstrated that among unemployed graduates in

Lagos, coping strategies and perceived social support reduce psychological distress, which can be analogously applied to first-year university students adjusting to higher academic demands. Omopo (2023) also found that suicidal ideation among university students is often precipitated by poor coping mechanisms and low self-efficacy, suggesting that promoting resilience and supportive networks is essential for academic and mental well-being. In correctional contexts, Omopo (2024) illustrated how cognitive reframing therapy reduces maladaptive behaviours, highlighting the broader applicability of psychosocial interventions in fostering resilience. Cross-cultural studies by Zimmerman (2013) and Masten (2014) support the universality of coping skills and social support as critical buffers against academic and psychosocial stressors.

Parental and environmental influences further shape motivation and resilience trajectories. Quadri et al. (2025) reported that childhood trauma, parenting styles, and peer pressure collectively predict adolescent substance abuse in Ibadan, indirectly affecting educational engagement. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2024) emphasized the detrimental effects of parental substance abuse and criminal behaviour on children's educational and behavioural outcomes. Adebayo-Oke et al. (2021) showed that environmental stressors, including familial and societal factors, interact with students' psychological states, affecting aggression and motivation in educational settings. Internationally, research by Fan and Chen (2001) also highlights the impact of parental involvement and family environment on students' academic motivation and adjustment. Collectively, these studies underscore the necessity of considering individual, familial, and social determinants when examining academic motivation and resilience.

Despite these insights, there remains a paucity of research focusing explicitly on fresh undergraduates in Nigerian universities, particularly regarding the interactive roles of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance. This gap warrants investigation to inform interventions promoting academic persistence and mental well-being.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to examine how intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources (coping skills/self-efficacy), and prior academic performance jointly and relatively predict academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates of

Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. The study aims to provide empirical evidence on how motivational, psychological, and prior academic factors influence students' learning outcomes within the Nigerian higher education context. The study was specifically designed to:

1. Examine the relationships among intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources (coping skills/self-efficacy), prior academic performance, and academic adjustment and engagement of fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State.
2. Determine the joint contributions of intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance to the prediction of academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State.
3. Assess the relative contributions of intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance to the prediction of academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised and answered:

1. What are the relationships among intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources (coping skills/self-efficacy), prior academic performance, and academic adjustment and engagement of fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State?
2. To what extent do intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance jointly predict academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State?
3. What are the relative contributions of intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance in predicting academic

adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State?

## **Method**

The study adopted a quantitative research design grounded in the descriptive survey approach to examine the predictive influence of intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources (coping skills/self-efficacy), and prior academic performance on academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State. This design was considered appropriate as it allowed the collection of data on naturally occurring variables without manipulation, enabling the observation of authentic relationships among the independent and dependent variables. The population of the study comprised all fresh undergraduates admitted into various faculties. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed: first, five faculties were randomly selected; second, two departments were randomly chosen from each faculty; and finally, students were systematically selected from each department. A total of 206 students participated in the study, ensuring that the sample represented the diversity in academic disciplines, prior educational backgrounds, and motivational profiles among fresh undergraduates.

Data were collected using standardized and validated instruments. Academic motivation was measured with the Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al., 1992), resilience-related resources with the Resilience Scale for Adults (Friborg et al., 2003), prior academic performance through official secondary school grades, and academic adjustment and engagement with the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1984). All instruments had demonstrated satisfactory reliability in Nigerian and international studies, with coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.90. Data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis to determine the relationships, joint, and relative contributions of the independent variables to students' academic adjustment and engagement. Statistical analyses were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance, providing a reliable threshold for interpreting the findings.

## **Results**

### **Demographic Representation of Participants**

The demographic characteristics of the 206 participants in this study are presented in Table 1. Variables included gender, age group, and prior academic performance (secondary school grades).

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 206)**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	102	49.5
	Female	104	50.5
Age (years)	16–18	78	37.9
	19–21	92	44.7
	22 and above	36	17.5
Prior Academic Performance	A1–B3 (Excellent/Very Good)	84	40.8
	C4–C6 (Credit/Good)	122	59.2

The table shows that the gender distribution of participants was almost equal, with 102 males (49.5%) and 104 females (50.5%). The majority of participants were between 19 and 21 years old (44.7%), followed by those aged 16–18 years (37.9%), while a smaller proportion were 22 years and above (17.5%). Regarding prior academic performance, most participants had C4–C6 grades (59.2%), indicating credit-level achievement, while 40.8% had A1–B3 grades. This distribution reflects a balanced representation of gender, a typical age range for fresh undergraduates, and a variety of prior academic achievement levels, providing a representative sample for examining the predictive influence of academic motivation and resilience-related resources on academic adjustment.

### Research Question 1

What are the relationships among intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources (coping skills/self-efficacy), prior academic performance, and academic adjustment and engagement of fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State?

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Predictor Variables and Academic Adjustment**

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Intrinsic Motivation	1			
2. Extrinsic Motivation	.58**	1		
3. Resilience Resources	.49**	.45**	1	
4. Prior Academic Performance	.42**	.38**	.34**	1
5. Academic Adjustment/Engagement	.61**	.57**	.53**	.46**

The correlation analysis shows that all predictor variables - intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance are positively and significantly associated with academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates. Intrinsic motivation demonstrated the strongest relationship ( $r = .61, p < 0.01$ ), followed closely by extrinsic motivation ( $r = .57, p < 0.01$ ) and resilience-related resources ( $r = .53, p < 0.01$ ). Prior academic performance exhibited a moderate correlation ( $r = .46, p < 0.01$ ).

These findings suggest that students who are internally driven by personal interest, curiosity, and a desire to achieve mastery tend to adjust more effectively to the academic demands of university life. This aligns with Akinyemi (2025), who found that intrinsic motivation strongly predicts academic engagement and psychological well-being among Nigerian undergraduates. Extrinsic motivation, reflecting social recognition, rewards, or parental expectations, also supports engagement, though to a slightly lesser extent, corroborating Aremu, Akinyemi, and Adeyemo (2021) who highlighted the motivational benefits of structured external incentives in higher education contexts.

Resilience-related resources, including coping skills and self-efficacy, showed significant positive associations with adjustment and engagement, consistent with Fehintola and Akinyemi (2021), who reported that cognitive and mindfulness training improves attention regulation and performance. These results indicate that students who can manage stress effectively, maintain confidence in their abilities, and adapt to new academic challenges are more likely to engage proactively in learning activities. Prior academic performance, while moderately correlated, remains important, suggesting that past educational experiences provide foundational skills that support adjustment, as highlighted by Ukpabi and Akinyemi (2021). Collectively, these findings highlight that academic adjustment among fresh undergraduates is a multifactorial phenomenon,

influenced by motivational orientation, psychological resilience, and prior learning experiences. They underscore the importance of interventions targeting both intrinsic motivation and resilience capacities, as well as strategies that leverage students' prior academic successes to enhance engagement and adaptation in the university environment.

## Research Question 2

To what extent do intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance jointly predict academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State?

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Joint Prediction of Academic Adjustment**

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
Intrinsic Motivation	0.42	0.07	0.39	6.00	.001
Extrinsic Motivation	0.35	0.08	0.31	4.38	.001
Resilience Resources	0.28	0.06	0.27	4.67	.001
Prior Academic Performance	0.24	0.07	0.21	3.43	.001
R = .71, R <sup>2</sup> = .50, F(4,201) = 50.25, p < .001					

The multiple regression results indicate that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance jointly account for 50% of the variance in academic adjustment and engagement. This suggests that half of the differences in students' adjustment and engagement can be explained by these four factors.

The findings emphasize that academic adjustment is determined by a combination of internal motivational factors, external reinforcements, coping capacities, and prior educational experiences. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation provide the drive necessary for sustained engagement, while resilience-related resources enable students to navigate academic stressors effectively. This is consistent with Akinyemi and Aremu (2022), who reported that psychological and motivational resources collectively improve coping and adjustment among young adults facing novel challenges. Moreover, the joint prediction underscores the interdependence of these factors: a highly motivated student with strong coping skills is likely to adjust better even if prior academic performance was moderate. Conversely, students with excellent prior performance but low resilience or motivation may struggle with university adjustment. Omopo (2025) similarly



emphasized that the combination of emotional regulation, peer support, and motivation enhances academic engagement and overall psychological adaptation among Nigerian undergraduates.

These results reinforce the need for holistic student support programs that foster intrinsic motivation, develop resilience-related skills, and recognize the importance of leveraging prior academic experiences. Interventions such as mentorship, counseling, and cognitive-behavioral or solution-focused therapies (Akinyemi & Aremu, 2022) could therefore be effective in improving academic engagement and adjustment in Nigerian universities.

### Research Question 3

What are the relative contributions of intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance in predicting academic adjustment and engagement among fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State?

**Table 4: Relative Contributions of Predictor Variables on Academic Adjustment**

Predictor Variable	$\beta$	t	p	Interpretation
Intrinsic Motivation	0.39	6.00	.001	Strongest predictor
Extrinsic Motivation	0.31	4.38	.001	Moderate predictor
Resilience Resources	0.27	4.67	.001	Moderate predictor
Prior Academic Performance	0.21	3.43	.001	Weakest predictor

The results indicate that intrinsic motivation is the strongest predictor of academic adjustment and engagement, followed by extrinsic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance. This hierarchy highlights that internal drive, goal orientation, and personal interest are more influential than external incentives or prior achievement.

Intrinsic motivation's prominence reflects the significance of self-directed learning and personal goal pursuit in fostering sustained engagement, consistent with Akinyemi (2025). Students motivated intrinsically are more likely to embrace challenges, persist in difficult tasks, and demonstrate higher academic self-regulation. Extrinsic motivation, while significant, plays a supporting role, implying that recognition and rewards enhance engagement but do not replace the impact of personal drive. Resilience-related resources, including coping strategies and self-

efficacy, also contributed moderately, reinforcing findings by Fehintola and Akinyemi (2021) that cognitive and emotional competencies improve students' capacity to adapt to academic stressors. This indicates that students who effectively manage stress and maintain confidence in their academic abilities are better positioned to engage and succeed.

Finally, prior academic performance, while statistically significant, made the smallest contribution, suggesting that past grades alone are insufficient to guarantee adjustment in a new academic environment. This aligns with Quadri, et al. (2025), who argued that while prior performance provides a foundation, adaptive skills, motivation, and resilience are crucial for effective engagement. These findings collectively underscore the importance of interventions that cultivate intrinsic motivation, strengthen coping resources, and complement prior academic achievements to optimize students' adjustment and engagement in university settings.

## **Conclusion**

The study investigated how intrinsic and extrinsic academic motivation, resilience-related resources, and prior academic performance influence the academic adjustment and engagement of fresh undergraduates at Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between all predictor variables and academic adjustment, with intrinsic motivation showing the strongest influence. Together, the variables jointly predicted a substantial proportion of the variance in students' academic adjustment, highlighting the combined importance of personal drive, adaptive coping skills, and prior academic experience. While prior performance provided a foundational support, motivation and resilience-related resources were pivotal in shaping students' ability to navigate the new academic environment successfully. Overall, the study emphasizes that academic adjustment is multifaceted, relying on both psychological and experiential factors, and underscores the need for strategies that strengthen students' motivation, resilience, and adaptive capacities to enhance engagement and academic success.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhancement of Intrinsic Motivation:** University management and lecturers should design learning environments that foster intrinsic motivation, such as problem-based learning, self-directed projects, and activities that allow students to pursue personal interests. Recognizing students' efforts and achievements can also reinforce internal drive.
2. **Promotion of Resilience-Related Skills:** Workshops, seminars, and counselling programs should be implemented to strengthen students' coping strategies and self-efficacy. Techniques such as mindfulness training, stress management programs, and cognitive-behavioural interventions can enhance students' adaptive capacities.
3. **Supportive Extrinsic Incentives:** Although intrinsic motivation is central, extrinsic motivators remain important. Universities should maintain recognition schemes, scholarships, and awards that acknowledge students' academic performance and engagement, fostering a balanced motivational environment.
4. **Bridging Gaps in Prior Academic Performance:** Fresh undergraduates with lower secondary school grades may benefit from foundation courses, mentorship, and remedial support to ensure they can adjust effectively to university learning demands.
5. **Integrated Student Support Programs:** A holistic approach combining motivational enhancement, resilience development, and academic skills support should be institutionalized. This could include peer mentoring, counselling services, and structured induction programs for fresh students.
6. **Future Research Directions:** Further studies could explore the longitudinal impact of these predictors on academic performance over the course of undergraduate study, as well as investigate other psychosocial factors, such as social support, emotional intelligence, and learning environment quality.

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