

Psychological Adjustment and Academic Stress as Correlates of Mental Health among College Students in Katsina State, Nigeria

¹Jimoh Mukhtar Ph.D, ²Shuaibu Salisu, ³Bello Bashir Magonho

¹Email: mukhtarjimoh2018@gmail.com

^{1&2}Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling
Faculty of Education, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State

³Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling
Federal College of Education
Gidan-Madi, Sokoto State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated psychological adjustment and academic stress as correlates of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria. Correlation research design was adopted. The sample school comprise of all Colleges of Education in Katsina State while target population consist of 3,125 consists of the 200 Level students 2025/2026 academic session. A sample size of 346 was selected for this study. Three instruments were used for the study; Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ), Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) and Mental Health Questionnaires (MHQ). Split-half technique of reliability test was used and Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability coefficients 0.87, 0.79 and 0.89 for PAQ, ASQ and MHQ respectively. Three research questions were formulated and three research hypotheses were generated and tested, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyzed research question and test hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significant. The result shown that, there was a high level of psychological adjustment, moderate level of academic stress and mental health. Result also, indicates a good level of correlation. $R^2 = .903$ which is equivalent to 90%, indicating the level of shared variance between the dependent variable and the independent variables ($F_c=342, .966 ; < 0.05$). The study concluded that, psychological adjustment significant correlation with mental health and there was significant relationship between academic stress and mental health. Based on these findings, it was recommended that College authority should employ mental health counsellors in college counselling centre to create an enabling environment where students can achieve positively in their life endeavour.

Keywords: Psychological Adjustment, Academic Stress, Mental Health, College Students

Introduction

Tertiary education plays a vital role in shaping both individuals and societies, serving as a key foundation in equipping students for their professional and careers

which can be attributed to adjustment. Students' psychological adjustment is the behavioural processes by which individuals' maintain a state of equilibrium at their various needs or between their needs and the

obstacle of academic environments (Hako *et al.*, 2025). Maintaining equilibrium and stability in the face of internal and external stressors requires psychological wellbeing and emotional adjustment, which involves the application of cognitive strategies including acceptance and adaptability (Yusuf, 2022; Richard & Sumathi, 2015). Psychological adjustment focuses on psychological well-being and satisfaction and adaptation stresses on the ability of the adolescents to discover aesthetically appropriate skills and deal with interactive components of the host environment (Tasnim *et al.*, 2019). This ability is crucial for the efficient control and regulation of emotions and is essential for living a balanced life. Since adjustment has a substantial impact on behaviour, cognition, and decision-making, the capacity to regulate and control emotions is especially important in the academic and professional spheres. It enables students to maintain a balance with their environment, promoting personal and social well-being.

A sequence of psychological adjustment begins when a need is felt and ends when it is satisfied. Hungry individuals, for instance, are stimulated by their physiological state to seek food. Therefore, they reduce the stimulating condition that impelled them to activity, and thereby adjust to this particular need. Hako *et al.* (2025) qualitative findings indicated that students experienced various psychological and academic challenges, including self-harming behaviours, feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress. The results reported poor concentration, difficulties participating in class discussions, frequent

forgetfulness, noticing a decline in academic performance, lacking happiness when attending classes and experiencing memory loss. Matos-Ramírez *et al.* (2024) opined that optimism-pessimism, family support, mood influence psychological adjustment, affecting life satisfaction, emotional and mental health. It involves intrinsic motivation, mental and physical health, balancing study and personal life, promotion of well-being and resilience in achieving personal fulfillment and minimizing academic stress.

Academic stress is described as intricate interaction between students' emotional, psychological and physical reactions to the many demands and stresses deeply involved in pursuing education (Abdullah *et al.*, 2024). Theoretically, students experience academic stress when they are concerned about their capacity to cope with academic challenges (Adi *et al.*, 2022). Addressing academic stress in college students is important given its potentially serious impact on educational attainment and wellbeing of the students. Therefore, higher levels of academic stress are associated with negative mental wellbeing and physical health (Shankar & Park, 2016). Academic stress is the transient experience of pressure, anxiety, or distress related to achieving academic goals (Pascoe *et al.*, 2020). It is the academic pressure that school curriculum poses to college students, which include fear of failing behind the course work, finding motivation to study, time pressures and concern about academic capability. They lamented that academic stress is the students' perception about school as it exerting a great influence over their lives and feelings that they live in a

state of substantial powerlessness (Pascoe *et al.*, 2020). The following can be considered as the major causes of academic stress among College students: pressure from parents, teachers, and self-imposed standards contributes significantly to academic stress (Elton-Marshall *et al.*, 2012), designed curriculum, examination and assignments, projects, all leading to overwhelming academic workloads that contribute to academic stress.

Numerous literatures indicates the reviews of other scholars such as Barbayannis *et al.* (2022) results indicate that academic stress in college is significantly correlated to psychological well-being in the students. The study of Garos and Abraham (2021) indicated that academic stress significantly predicted mental health among students. In the study of Gupta (2020) explore the academic stress and its relationship with mental health among high school students. In addition, Hosseinkhani *et al.* (2020) opined that there was a direct and indirect relation between academic stress and mental health. Subramani and Kadiravan (2017) found that academic stress had a significant relationship with the mental health of high school students. Therefore, the student's academic stress plays a very important role in students' mental health.

Mental health is an individual's capability to cope with every day's normal stresses, realize their potentialities, fulfill a goal, have a sense of connection to others, and can work efficiently as well as productively and can make a contribution to her or his community (Nikita & Kalpana, 2022; Narjis, 2023) Mental health affect an individual's day-to-

day life, relationships, and physical health. External factors in people's lives and relationships can also contribute to their mental well-being (Adam & Tee-Melegrito, 2024). Mental health can help an individual maintain their capability and ability to enjoy life. This involves balancing their activities, responsibilities, and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

However, mental health encompasses emotional, psychological and social well-being, influencing cognition, perception and behaviour. Mental health plays a crucial role in an individual's daily life when managing stress, engaging with others, and contributing to life overall. This aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2015), particularly SDG Number 3 (Good Health and Well-being), addressing the need for mental health. The SDG, (2015) ensure healthy lives, promoting mental health, preventing and treating substance abuse and improving early warning systems for global health risks (Fahrudinet *al.*, 2024; Ritchie *et al.*, 2018).

Mental health could be classified as Behavioural patterns as indicators of emotional and mental states, Psychological well-being one's own personality, managing responsibilities of daily life (Jordan, 2024; Narjis, 2023), Emotional well-being involves managing and experiencing various emotions healthily for individual's happiness and satisfaction. Cognitive Functioning involve memory, problem-solving, and decision-making. Social well-being is positive functioning includes having something to contribute to society feeling part of a community (Narjis, 2023; Galderisi *et al.*,

2015). Individual could improve mental health by maintaining and strengthening his emotional health, it's important to pay attention to your needs and feelings. Living a free stress life and build up positive emotions and maintain a balance your daily academic responsibilities with enjoy by individual, maintain a positive self-image (Karen, 2025). This study's significance of this finding is a development tailored support services and interventions to address the specific needs of students.

In addition, positive outcomes are more likely to occur in various aspects of individual lives for those who are skilled at managing individual emotions and mental health (Endendijk *et al.*, 2019). Matos-Ramírez *et al.* (2024) mental health as it enables individuals to maintain a balance with their environment, promoting personal and social well-being. Educational institutions should prioritize the implementation of counseling services to address the social, emotional, and educational challenges faced by students (Greenberg *et al.*, 2017). These interventions needed to be tailored for the potential improving and promoting positive mental health outcomes. These insights lay the groundwork for developing strategies that foster a conducive and supportive environment for students, and contribute to their holistic development.

Statement of the Problem

Mental health problems can be associated with a wide range of factors such as significant traumatic deposition as an adult being involved in a serious incident, violent, insurgency, banditry, kidnapped syndicate,

being the victim of a violent or crime, neurological condition and mood disorder. Biological or genetic makeup could determine the state of psychological well-being, as a number of mental health disorders have been found to run in families and may be passed down to offspring such as bipolar disorder, depression disorder, schizophrenia. Individual lifestyle could also be influenced by mental health with poor sleep, a poor diet, substance use, and risky sexual behaviour. These could lead to poor concentration, feelings of isolation, having hallucinations; loosen of weight, suicidal thoughts.

A good behavioural health is an individual's psychological, emotional and social wellbeing that shapes and contribute the way we think, feel, emotional reaction and interact with others. A mental state of health affects how individual cope with academic stress and adjust to school academic activities which are the vital part of College life. But when students have mental health symptoms were more likely to express dissatisfaction with their academic experience and to question the value of higher education compared to their peers without such symptoms. Furthermore, mental health problems were strong predictors of academic dissatisfaction and dropout intentions, while positive mental health was strongly associated with academic satisfaction and persistence. The existing literature delves into the intricate relationship among psychological adjustment, academic stress and mental health outcomes vary due to environmental, cultural and demographic factors. Notably, most studies don't explore how psychological adjustment, academic

stress and mental health correlated leaving a gap in understanding how psychological adjustment and academic stress independently impacts mental health. This study aims to fill this void, unravelling the complex interplay among psychological adjustment, academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state for a more comprehensive understanding.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study investigated the psychological adjustment and academic stress as correlates of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Investigate the level of psychological adjustment among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.
2. Find out the level of academic stress among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.
3. Determine the level of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria
4. Ascertain the combined relationship among psychological adjustment, academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.
5. Discover the significant relationship between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.
6. Examine the significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research question guided the study.

1. What is the level of psychological adjustment among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of academic stress among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria?
3. What is the level of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested in the study:

Ho₁: There is no significant combined relationship among psychological adjustment and academic stress as correlates of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted correlation research design. The correlation design was used to examine the relationship that existed among the psychological adjustment, academic Stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria. There are three Colleges of Education in Katsina State, Nigeria. The sample school comprise of all Colleges of Education in Katsina State while target population consist of 3,125 consists of

the 200 Level students 2025/2026 academic session. The decision to choose 200 level students was due to the fact that they are more aware about the issues of psychological adjustment to the academic stress, environment and as they are nearing point of graduation from College of Education as professional teachers.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the College of Education based on school type; Federal, State and Private Colleges of Education own were purposively selected for the study; they are Federal College of Education, Katsina and Isa Kaita College of Education Dutsin-Ma, Katsina state. The proportional sampling technique was used to select the three hundred and forty-six (346) respondents from the selected Colleges of Education using Research Advisor (2006). Thus 194 respondents were selected from Federal College of Education, Katsina and 152 respondents were selected from Isa Kaita College of Education Dutsin-Ma, Katsina state

Three research instruments were used for the study. The first instrument which was titled Psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (PAQ) adopted from Wang (2009) for this study and its items are mostly suitable for students to investigate their adjustment. Academic Stress Questionnaire (ASQ) was adapted from Abdullah *et al.* (2024) and adapted for this research study. The statements were recast to suit students and

relates to the level of academic stress as a result of their ages in stress experience levels. Mental Health Questionnaires (MHQ) developed by Weathers *et al.* (2013) and adapted the version for this study and its items are mostly suitable for College students to investigate their mental health. The respondent are to choose one of options from rating and scoring were based on 4-point Likert modified Scale. The symbols used were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical value of 4, 3, 2, and 1 point for all instruments.

The instruments were validated using face and content validity by two experts from Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling, Federal University Dutsin-Ma Katsina state. The split-half method of reliability procedure was used to determine the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach Alpha Statistic analysis was used to determine the co-efficient of the instruments and this yielded 0.87, 0.79 and 0.89 respectively. The instruments were administered to respondents at various lecture halls for easy recovery and to avoid missing of instruments. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics such as frequency count and percentage, inferential statistics such as Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson product-moment statistic were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Answering Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the level of psychological adjustment among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of Psychological adjustment among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria

Variables	Levels	Scores range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Decision				
22.7	Low	20-40	79	
Psychological adjustment	Moderate	41-60	102	29.7
	High	61-80	165	47.6

Table 1: revealed that out of 346(100%) respondents, 79(22.7%) has low level of psychological adjustment, 102(29.7%) moderate level of psychological adjustment, while 165(47.6%) high level of psychological adjustment. This implies that there was a high level of psychological adjustment mental health among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: What is the level of academic stress among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria?

Table 2: Level of Academic stress among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria

Variables	Levels	Scores range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Decision				
Academic stress Moderate	Low	20-40	97	28.0
	Moderate	41-60	186	53.7
	High	61-80	63	18.3

Table 2: revealed that out of 346(100%) respondents, 97(28.0%) has low level of academic stress, 186(53.7%) moderate level of academic stress, while 63(18.3%) high level of academic stress. This implies that there was a moderate level of academic stress among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What is the level of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria?

Table 3: Level of Mental health among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria

Variables	Levels	Scores range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Decision				
Mental health Moderate	Low	20-40	64	18.6
	Moderate	41-60	191	55.2
	High	61-80	91	26.2

Table 3: revealed that out of 346(100%) respondents, 64(18.6%) has low level of mental health, 191(55.2%) moderate level of mental health, while 91(26.2%) high level of mental health. This implies that there was a moderate level of mental health among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria.

4.3 Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant combined relationship among psychological adjustment and academic stress as correlates of mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of psychological adjustment, academic stress and mental health

R = .830^a R Square = .903 Adjusted R Square = .780 Standard Error = 10.96191					
Analysis of Variance					
Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	S
Remark					
Regression	351.222	3	117.074	0.966	.003 ^b Significant
Residual	41437.746	342	121.163		
Total	41788.968	345			

a. Dependent Variable: Mental health.

b. Correlates: (Constant), Psychological adjustment and Academic stress

The analysis on table 4 revealed that, the combined independent variables (Psychological adjustment and Academic stress) as correlates of mental health. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = .830$ and multiple $R^2 = .903$. This suggested that the two factors when combined accounted for 78% (Adjusted $R^2 = .780$) variance in mental health. The other factors accounting for the remaining variance are beyond the scope of this study. The table indicated the F-calculated value as ($R^2 = .903$, $F_{(342)} = .966$; $p < 0.05$). Therefore, hypothesis was rejected. Hence, that there is significant relative combined relationship among psychological adjustment and academic stress as correlates of mental health among College students' in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Table 5: Correlation between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students in Katsina state

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r-value	p-value	
Decision							
Psychological adjustment	346	42.12	8.07				
Mental health	346	47.92	10.26	344	.007	.021	Sign.

Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 indicated the relationship analysis psychological adjustment and mental health. The finding revealed that the r -value is .007 and the p -value .021 which is less than .05 level of significant alpha level at 344 degrees of freedom. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Table 6: Correlation between academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	df	r-value	p-value	Decision
Academic stress	346	39.55	6.48	344	.353	.001	Sign.
Mental health	346	47.92	10.26				

Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 indicated the relationship analysis between academic stress and mental health. The finding revealed that the *r*-value is .353 and the *p*-value .001 which is less than .05 level of significant alpha level at 344 degrees of freedom. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. Hence, there is significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria

Discussion of the Findings

In answering of research questions, the finding shows that, there was a high level of psychological adjustment with (47.6%), moderate level of academic stress with (53.7%) and mental health with (55.2%) among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria. The finding of this study is in line with the finding of Tasnimet *al.* (2019) revealed that psychological adjustment is moderate among students. Also, the finding of this study is corroborated with the finding of Garos and Abraham (2021) academic stresses are moderate among students of high school. In addition, the finding of this study supported with the finding of Sherienet *al.* (2025) found that mental health is moderated examined among students.

The results from hypothesis one states that, there was significant combined relationship among psychological adjustment and academic stress as correlates of mental health. The finding of this study corroborates with the finding of Gupta (2020) conducted a study to explore the academic stress and its relationship with mental health among high school students. The results of this finding is in line with finding of Amakali-Nauseb *et al.* (2019), students are reported to

experience academic stress, depression, and anxiety frequently, which can affect their quality of life, mental health. In the contrary, the finding of this study is in contrast with the finding of Jin, *et al* (2016) there were no differences in mental health literacy for anxiety as component of academic stress, which was low across all participants. In contrary, the finding of this study is in contrast with the finding of Hakoet *al.* (2025) revealed that psychological adjustment challenges affect psychological health and academic success in higher education students.

The result from hypothesis two states that there was significant relationship between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students. The finding of this study corroborated with the finding of Matos-Ramírez *et al.* (2024) opined that optimism-pessimism, family support, mood influence psychological adjustment, affecting life satisfaction, emotional and mental health. The results of this finding is in agreement with finding of Hako *et al.* (2025) findings indicated that students experienced various psychological adjustments and academic challenges stresses are related to mental health. In the contrary, the finding of

this study is in contrast with the finding of Fahrudin *et al.* (2024) reveals that mental health issues such as anxiety, depression of individual is due to their limited adaptive capacity and exposure to psychological adjustment.

The results from hypothesis three, it states that, there was significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among College students. The finding of this study corroborated with the finding of Garos and Abraham (2021) indicated that academic stress significantly correlates of mental health among students. The result of this finding is in line with finding of Subramani and Kadhiraavan (2017) found that academic stress had a significant relationship with the mental health of high school students. In the contrary, the finding of this study is in contrast with the finding of Zhu et al. (2021) reported that the association between academic stress and poor mental health appears to be stronger among students.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were reached based on the outcomes of the study. There was a high level of psychological adjustment, moderate level of academic stress and mental health among College students. There was significant relationship between psychological adjustment and mental health among College students. There was significant relationship between academic stress and mental health among College students in Katsina state, Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in light of the outcomes of the study

1. College authority should employ mental health counsellors in college counselling

centre to create an enabling environment where students can achieve positively in their life endeavour.

2. Colleges of Education management should re-structured its operational systems to enhance stability, reliability and effectiveness of mental health, that can minimize academic stress and create an enabling environment for students to pursue their academic goals.

3. Creating awareness and access to mental health resources would robust psychological adjustment; however it played pivotal roles in addressing these academic stresses and improving overall conducive learning environment.

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