

## Self-Regulation as a Predictor of Psychological Well-being of Undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria

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### Abstract

The study identified the levels of psychological well-being and self-regulation of undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria and investigated the predictive ability of self-regulation on undergraduate students' psychological well-being in the study area. These were with a view to providing empirical information on the relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised 378,982 undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria. Sawtooth Software was used in selecting the sample size. The sample comprised 1563 undergraduates selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Two adapted instruments were employed to gather data from the respondents. They were Questionnaire on Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS) and Self-regulation Scale (SRS). Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and linear regression analysis. The results showed that 8.6%, 77.5%, and 13.9% of the undergraduates had low, moderate, and high psychological well-being, respectively. The results of the study also showed that self-regulation was a significant predictor of psychological well-being (R-value = 0.530, F-value = 610.584,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concluded that self-regulation was capable of enhancing psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Self-regulation; Well-being; Psychological Well-being.

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## **1. Introduction**

In recent times, it appears that most students have issues or challenges that weigh them down and prevent them from adjusting well to their academics and the environment they find themselves in. The fear of failure, as well as the ability to demonstrate confidence and academic excellence, may prevent students from relating effectively in any social situation. As a result of this, some of them might easily be distracted from focusing on their academics and behaving in ways expected of them. In order to help undergraduate students that are naïve and simpleminded, there might be a need for them to possess relevant skills and knowledge in their various higher institutions of learning so as to function optimally in their academics. Psychological well-being in the context of this study refers to an individual's state of positive feelings and the ability to behave effectively in a social situation. The concept of psychological well-being can be measured in different dimensions.

Ryff affirmed that there are six key dimensions of psychological well-being (autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relationships, meaning in life, and self-acceptance), all of which are important determinants of wellbeing in scientific research [1]. Thus, students' responses to the above indicators of psychological well-being determine whether they have high, medium, or low psychological well-being. The significance of psychological well-being is reinforced by the perspectives of [2] and [3], who assert that it is crucial not only for a healthy adult life but also for effective academic functioning. Psychological well-being serves as a cornerstone for leading a healthy and fulfilling adult life [2,3]. Their viewpoints highlight the interconnectedness between mental well-being and the ability to navigate the challenges presented by academic pursuits. These assertions underscore the far-reaching implications of psychological well-being beyond its immediate impact on academic performance. Indeed, a well-functioning mind is posited as a fundamental component in achieving overall life satisfaction and competence. By emphasizing the dual importance of psychological well-being in both personal development and academic endeavors, these perspectives reinforce the notion that cultivating mental well-being is not only conducive to effective learning but is also a foundational element for leading a balanced and fulfilling adult life.

The assertion regarding the significance of emotional states and social interactions as key indicators of psychological well-being gains further support from the research conducted [4]. Their study, focused on undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University, revealed a high level of psychological well-being among the sampled students. This compelling evidence implies that an individual's emotional experiences and the quality of their social interactions serve as robust indicators of their psychological well-being. The findings [4] provide empirical support for the notion that a positive emotional state and healthy social engagements are integral components of psychological well-being. The observed high level of well-being among the studied undergraduates suggests that subjective feelings and the quality of interpersonal relationships play significant roles in shaping the overall mental health of individuals. This aligns with the broader understanding that psychological well-being extends beyond the absence of distress, encompassing positive emotions and effective social functioning as essential dimensions.

Although, findings revealed that the undergraduates in the study area demonstrated low level of psychological well-being [5,6]. Often times, students' psychological well-being may be unstable because they are unable to

achieve the academic goals, they have set for themselves or obtain financial support from their families to meet their daily needs. Some students may decide to drop out of school or show a negative attitude that can affect their relationships with others. They are likely to be disappointed, sad, emotionally depressed, and unable to maintain positive relationships with each other. This can lead to academic maladjustment. Expanding on this perspective, [7] contribute valuable insights by underscoring the potential detrimental effects of frustration on students. According to their viewpoint, unaddressed frustration not only has the potential to lead students towards an unsuccessful life but can also inflict harm if not managed effectively. This underscores the intricate relationship between emotional experiences and the overall trajectory of students' lives. The connection between frustration and psychological well-being becomes more apparent in light of [7] assertion. Negative reactions to frustration may serve as observable manifestations of low psychological well-being among students. In essence, how individuals navigate and cope with frustrating situations can provide valuable insights into the state of their mental well-being. Understanding and addressing these emotional reactions become crucial not only for immediate well-being but also for shaping the long-term outcomes and success trajectories of students.

Many undergraduate students might struggle with controlling their impulses and managing their time. This could cause problems with their grades and how they feel in general. This problem might happen because they don't recognize their own thoughts, feelings, and actions, which can make it hard for them to control their impulses and behavior. If we don't deal with this problem, these students might keep having a hard time reaching their school and personal goals. Undergraduate students may need help with managing their emotions and behaviors to be psychologically stable. If they can't control themselves well, they might have trouble dealing with stress, managing their feelings, and making good choices. This could make them feel psychologically distressed.

Self-regulation is something that can affect how psychologically stable a person is. Students should be able to control and manage their actions when they are learning [8]. This means that students need to concentrate on their goals to reach them. Building on the study of what affects how people feel, [9] looked into how students' learning habits can affect their psychological well-being. In their research, they found a strong link between being able to control oneself and being psychologically stable. The study adds an important aspect to what we know by showing that being able to control how we learn helps our psychological well-being. This supports the idea that psychological well-being is important in many different ways, showing that controlling one's feelings and actions affects more than just doing well in school. The results show that students who use good studying habits not only do well in school but also feel better psychologically. The connection between being able to control one's behavior and feeling psychologically stable shows how thinking and feeling are connected in a student's overall psychological well-being. So, because self-regulation is linked to feeling good mentally, it's clear that helping students learn to manage themselves better can improve their grades and also make them happier and healthier overall. This bigger picture shows that it's important to focus on how students think and feel in school to help them do well and stay healthy. Self-regulation refers to students' capacity to identify specific goals, monitor their behavior, and exert the necessary effort to achieve those goals [10]. It seems that many students tend to attribute their failures to external factors rather than self-reflecting to identify the underlying causes for falling short of their goals. Students may cite reasons such as power supply shortages, inadequate infrastructure, congested schedules for lectures and exams, and more as explanations for not meeting their targeted objectives. Studies have also confirmed a significant positive correlation between self-regulation and psychological well-being

among undergraduate students in Bangalore [11]. When students effectively regulate themselves in pursuit of their goals, they can potentially avoid poor academic performance and distractions, impacting their satisfaction with life and fostering a positive sense of self (psychological well-being). Research on adolescents' self-control and psychological well-being revealed the importance of studying conscious self-regulation in learning activities as a resource for students' psychological health. This was identified as a valuable indicator of their psychological development in later years [12]. Additionally, a systematic review of studies examining the connections between self-regulation and student well-being published between 2010 and 2020 found a substantial relationship between various aspects of student well-being, executive functions, and self-regulation strategies employed in the learning process, as well as certain self-regulatory impairments [13]. Predictors of mental well-being among students, such as health-related behavior, locus of control, self-esteem, and resilience, were identified in these studies [14]. However, there is a lack of research on the self-regulated ability of students as a predictor of undergraduate psychological well-being and effective solutions to address this issue. Therefore, further study is needed to comprehend the complexities of undergraduate students' psychological well-being and to identify viable solutions.

### ***1.1 Research Objectives***

The study aims to investigate the predictive ability of self-regulation on psychological well-being of the undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- (i) identify the level of psychological well-being of undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria;
- (ii) examine the predictive ability of self-regulation on psychological well-being of undergraduate students in the study area

### ***1.2 Research Question***

What is the level of psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria?

### ***1.3 Research Hypothesis***

There is no significant relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria.

### ***1.4 Method***

This study used a type of research design called a descriptive survey. The study focused on students who are currently studying in Southwestern Nigeria Universities. A total of 1620 students were selected for the study using have been chosen for the study using the multistage sampling technique. Three states were selected using a simple random sampling technique from the six states in Southwestern zone. Three universities were selected (federal, state, and private universities) from each of the three states were selected based on ownership, making nine universities. Four faculties (Social Sciences, Sciences, Engineering, and Health Sciences) were selected from each of the nine universities using a simple random sampling technique. Three departments each were selected

from each of the selected universities. In the selected Southwestern zone, fifteen undergraduates were chosen from each department using a proportionate sampling technique. A total of one hundred and eighty undergraduates were selected from each university in the selected Southwestern Nigeria. Two scales, titled Psychological Well-being Scale (PWBS) adopted from [1] and Self-Regulation Scale (SRS) adapted from [15] were used to obtain information from respondents for this study.

**1.5 Results**

**Research Question: What is the level of psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria?**

To answer this question, on the 18 items scale, the Strongly Agree response was scored 1, the Somewhat Agree response was scored 2, the A little Agree response was scored 3, the Neither Agree nor Disagree response was scored 4, the A Little Disagree response was scored 5, the Somewhat Disagree response was scored 6, while the Strongly Disagree response was scored 7. However, items 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17 and 18 which are positive items were scored reversed. Some items were reversed scored because reversed-scored items are worded in the opposite direction of what the scale is measuring. Furthermore, all the responses to all the items of section B measuring psychological well-being were summed up to constitute respondents’ psychological wellbeing among undergraduate. Table 1.1 shows the descriptive statistics of psychological well-being scores of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Computed Level of Psychological Well-being Scores of Undergraduate Students

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>	
Minimum Score (Obtainable)	18
Maximum Score (Obtainable)	126
Minimum Score (Obtained)	50
Maximum Score (Obtained)	118
Mean Score	79.71
Standard Deviation	10.02
Number of Respondents	1563

The undergraduate students whose scores were below the group mean score (i.e., 50-69) after computing mean

minus one standard deviation were adjudged as having low psychological well-being. Also, those whose scores were between the mean (i.e., 70-89) after computing mean plus one standard deviation were adjudged as moderate psychological well-being while those whose scores were above the group mean score (i.e., 90-118) after adding the mean to the standard deviation were adjudged as having high psychological well-being. The results are presented in Table 1.2.

**Table 2:** Level of Psychological Well-being among Undergraduate Students

<b>Level of Well-being</b>	<b>Psychological</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Low</b>		134	8.6
<b>Moderate</b>		1212	77.5
<b>High</b>		217	13.9
<b>Total</b>		1563	100%

From Table 1.2, the results showed that 134 (8.6%) of the respondents had a low level of psychological wellbeing, 217 (13.9%) of the respondents had a high level of psychological well-being, and 1212 (77.5%) respondents had a moderate degree of psychological well-being. Hence, it can be concluded that the majority of the respondents had a moderate level of psychological well-being.

### ***1.6 Research Hypothesis***

**There is no significant predictive ability of self-regulation on the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria.**

To tests this research hypothesis, the computed scores of each respondent on the self-regulation scale and psychological well-being was subjected to linear regression analysis with psychological well-being used as dependent variable. The results of the linear regression analysis are presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 3:** Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Predictive Ability of Self-regulation on the Psychological Well-being of Undergraduate Students

R=0.530 R <sup>2</sup> =0.281 Adj.R <sup>2</sup> = 0.281 F-Value= 610.584 P-Value= 0.000	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	40.354	1.607		25.112	0.000
Self-regulation	0.569	0.023	0.530	24.710	0.000*

**NB: Dependent Variable:** Psychological Well-being  
**Independent Variable:** Self-regulation

From Table 2.1, given the R-value of 0.530, p-value  $0.000 < 0.05$ , the result of the simple regression shows that there is a significant predictive ability of self-regulation on the psychological well-being of the undergraduates. Given the R-value, it showed that the self-regulation will account for 53% predictive power on the psychological well-being of the respondents. The unstandardised coefficient B of 0.569 indicates that for every one unit increase in self-regulation, there is an average increase of 0.569 units in the psychological well-being (holding all other predictors constant). The standard error of 1.607 suggests that estimated coefficient is precise. Standard error of self-regulation shows 0.569, which means that there is an extent of variability in the estimate of the regression coefficient due to random sampling error. The standardized coefficient Beta for self-regulation is 0.530, which indicates that self-regulation is a strong predictor of psychological well-being. The t-value for self-regulation coefficient is 24.710, which is a measure of how many standard errors the coefficient is away from zero. This indicate that the coefficient is statistically significant at a very high level of confidence ( $p=0.000$ ), which means that it very unlikely to have occurred by chance. It can be concluded that self-regulation is a strong predictor of psychological well-being of the undergraduate students.

### 1.7 Discussion

The ultimate goal of this study was to determine if self-regulation could predict the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria. The research question that was raised stated; what is the level of psychological well-being of undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria? The results of the research question showed that most of the university undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria possessed a moderate level of psychological well-being. The majority of undergraduate students in southwestern universities possessed moderately needed skills in maintaining a relatively moderate level of psychological well-being, according to the research data analysis findings. It could also be that the undergraduate students already possessed the needed training and knowledge before gaining admission into the universities.

Hence, it could be concluded that there is a moderate level of psychological well-being among undergraduate students in Southwestern Nigeria. The study's culmination suggests that undergraduate students in Southwestern

Nigeria exhibit a moderate level of psychological well-being. This aligns with the findings that observed a moderate level of psychological well-being among university students in their study [2]. However, a notable contrast arises when comparing these results with the research conducted by [4]. Their study reported a predominant high level of psychological well-being among the sampled students, diverging from the moderate trend found in the current study [4]. One possible reason for this difference may stem from the fact that the present study specifically gathered data from a solitary university located in the Southwestern region of Nigeria. The limitation of drawing samples exclusively from one university introduces a potential bias, given that the psychological well-being of students can vary significantly across different academic institutions. Focusing solely on one university may not adequately capture the diverse range of experiences and levels of well-being present throughout the entire Southwestern region. Consequently, the moderate level of psychological well-being observed might be specific to the characteristics of the sampled institution, and caution should be exercised when attempting to generalize these findings to the broader undergraduate population in Southwestern Nigeria.

The outcomes of this study stand in contrast to the research conducted by [5,6]. Both studies highlighted a prevailing low level of psychological well-being among the majority of students they examined, particularly within the context of medical undergraduate programs. These investigations further underscored the significant impact of stressors on the psychological well-being of medical students. In examining the potential reasons for the disparity in findings, it's important to consider the context of the data collection period. The present study suggests that a heavy workload was imposed on the participating students during the data collection phase. This introduces a crucial factor that may contribute to the observed differences in psychological well-being levels. The imposition of a substantial academic burden could potentially elevate stress levels and influence the overall psychological well-being of the students. This temporal aspect becomes pivotal in interpreting the divergent results. It suggests that the psychological well-being of students can be dynamic and influenced by contextual factors such as workload, academic demands, and stressors during specific timeframes. Therefore, the current study's findings might be indicative of a temporary elevation in stress levels due to the workload imposed during the data collection period, leading to a departure from the low psychological well-being levels reported in previous studies. Hence, based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that undergraduate students possess a moderate level of psychological well-being.

As per the research hypothesis, there was initially no observed significant predictive influence of self-regulation on the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in the Southwestern region. However, the results of the research hypothesis ultimately revealed that self-regulation indeed possesses a significant predictive capacity regarding the psychological well-being of these students. Consequently, it becomes imperative to pay increased attention to students in Southwestern Nigeria to enhance their psychological well-being. Alongside these considerations, it is crucial to integrate insights that provide additional context to the observed variations in psychological well-being among undergraduate students [9, 11].

The research identified self-regulation as a robust and positive predictor of psychological well-being, underscoring the substantial role that an individual's capacity to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors plays in contributing to overall well-being [9]. The alignment of these findings establishes a strong correlation between self-regulation and psychological well-being, contributing coherency to the interpretation of the



observed results [11]. This suggests that differences in levels of self-regulation among the sampled students may contribute to variations in psychological well-being outcomes.

Effectively self-regulating, particularly in the face of demanding academic workloads or stressors, could potentially mediate the impact of external factors on psychological well-being. Therefore, the observed disparity in psychological well-being levels between the present study and previous research may be influenced by the degree of self-regulation exhibited by the students during the specified data collection period [5,6]. This underscores the importance of considering individual differences in self-regulation abilities as a potential moderating factor in the relationship between external stressors and psychological well-being. This might be a result of the fact that the students understand the consequences or negative outcome of not being able to regulate themselves in an academic environment.

A study that was on two-wave longitudinal, self-regulation and Psychological Well-being, discovered the importance of looking into students' intentional regulation of one's learning activities as a resource for their psychological wellbeing, was a good indicator of how they would develop psychologically in later years [12]. The finding of the present study is consistent with the findings of the former study. It can be deduced from the present study that self-regulation learning has a strong predictive ability on the Psychological Well-being. This explains the importance of self-regulated learning on Psychological Well-being. A study that was centered on emotion regulation, mindfulness, and well-being, also stated that emotional regulation is related to Psychological Wellbeing [16]. This therefore means that emotional regulation, being a component of self-regulation, could also predict the Psychological Well-being of undergraduate students.

Expanding on the discussion, a study conducted on a systematic review focusing on self-regulated learning and its impact on undergraduate students' well-being [13]. Their comprehensive examination highlighted a strong connection between techniques employed during classroom activities, self-regulation deficiencies, and various aspects of student well-being. This aligns seamlessly with the present study, reinforcing the notion that self-regulation plays a pivotal role in shaping psychological well-being among undergraduate students. The parallels observed between the two studies emphasize the robustness of the relationship between self-regulation and psychological well-being. Findings collectively explain the critical influence of self-regulation on student well-being [9, 11, 13]. The acknowledgment of self-regulation as a significant predictor of psychological well-being provides a valuable lens through which to understand and address any shortcomings among undergraduate students, attributing them, at least in part, to variations in self-regulation capabilities. This comprehensive perspective reinforces the multifaceted nature of factors contributing to the psychological well-being of students, enriching the overall understanding of the study's outcomes.

### ***1.8 Conclusion***

This study highlights that the psychological well-being of the majority of university undergraduate students is at a moderate level. The independent variable (self-regulation) was found to have a significant prediction on the dependent variable (psychological well-being). It was therefore concluded that self-regulation was capable of enhancing psychological well-being.

### **1.9 Recommendation**

1. Based on the finding that self-regulation had a significant predictive ability on psychological well-being, it is therefore recommended that educational psychologists, counselors and teachers aid undergraduate students in learn to focus on enhancing their self-regulation abilities as a means to promote their psychological wellbeing. Facilitators could make use of self-regulation skills developed through various techniques such as mindfulness, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and practicing self-compassion.
2. It is important that educational psychologists and counselors also help to identify and address any barriers that might hinder an individual's ability to regulate themselves effectively. This might involve seeking professional help or support from trusted individuals. Finally, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise, good sleep hygiene, and a balanced diet, can also promote self-regulation and contribute to overall psychological well-being.

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