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Coping Strategies And Academic Engagement Of Part-Time Undergraduate Student Teachers In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Empirical evidence is inadequate in Nigeria to understand the link between the coping strategies and academic engagement of part-time student teachers who face challenges that might impede their academic success. This study adopted the quantitative research paradigm to ascertain part-time undergraduate student teachers' coping strategy and their academic engagement. One hundred and fifty-five (155) undergraduate part-time student teachers of Nnamdi Azikiwe University formed the

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sample size. Major findings showed that respondents adopted more of problem-focused coping than emotion-focused coping strategies and were academically engaged. Significant mean differences did not occur based on gender and marital status in the dimensions of coping strategies and academic engagement except in extra-curricular engagement but occurred in coping efficacy, emotional support coping and disengagement coping dimensions affective liking for school, extra-curricular engagement and cognitive engagement based on students' specialty. Significant positive relationships occurred in almost all the dimensions of coping and academic engagement and the predictive powers of the independent variables on the dependent variables were ascertained. Demographic variables did not significantly moderate the relationship between problem-focused coping dimensions and the academic engagement while they did on emotion-focused coping and academic engagement. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations made based on the findings.

Keywords: part-time programme, coping strategy, academic engagement, problem-focused, emotion-focused, student teachers

INTRODUCTION

Established in literature is the fact that educational adventures have a level of stress associated with them. Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan and Mannix-McNamara (2014) have noted that the way students cope with psychological distress has significant consequence for their mental health and academic performance. They pointed out that students who receive their trainings in certain courses such as education that comprise practicum programmes are vulnerable to academic stress. This could be worse when students are on part-time programmes in the aforementioned courses because they are laden with responsibilities other than their academics. In stressful circumstances such as combining academics with other

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responsibilities, adoption of appropriate coping strategies becomes critical (Lembas, Starkowska, Mak, Konecka, Bikowska, Groszewska & Korzonek, 2017).

Part-time programmes are established in universities to enable those who could not transit from secondary school to university to continue their education while they may be engaged in other responsibilities. Recognizing the fact that different countries have peculiar reasons for establishing part-time programmes, Irinoye, Ayalomowo, Tijnai (nd) stated that in Nigeria, it is adopted to remedy inadequate carrying capacity of regular programmes in the conventional universities. This is as a result of the fact that the number of students who apply to be trained in regular programmes are more than the admission opportunities in Nigerian universities. This has led to an upsurge in the number of students enrolling in part-time programmes given the inadequate admission opportunities for qualified candidates and difficult financial realities on ground. In the UK, the essence of part-time programmes is to raise, update, and improve the skill level of those in employment and thereby filling in gaps in the required skills in industries (Callender & Wilkinson, 2012).

Part-time programmes in universities have attracted the most vulnerable groups in the society giving them the opportunity to access university education (Butcher, 2015). Even though in Nigeria, some are pushed to enroll in the part-time programmes simply because they could not gain admission in the regular programme, many who are part-timers are students who work to sponsor their education. Others, especially women, are married and as a matter of culture are expected to take care of their homes simultaneously. Osafo (2016) found that married women who are in distance education in South Africa perform laborious home chores before coming to school which resulted to a stressful intersection between family affairs and the academic activities. They were also found to adopt very inefficient coping strategies. Students who are on part-time programmes in the university have identified their major sources of stress to include 'excessive assignment, inadequate time to study,

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work, financial fears and family issues' (Gyambrah, Sesay & Amponsah, 2017:33), high cost of courses leading individuals to borrow from family, or even credit card debt to fund their studies, clashes in lecture timetable and credit over-load as a result of short duration of their programme (Butcher, 2015; Persuad & Persuad, 2016). In a study comparing the stress levels of full-time and part-time undergraduate students conducted by Persuad et al. (2016), findings indicated that part-time learners had higher stress level in summer courses which is linked to their full-time employment. Also, Gyambrah, et al (2017) have noted that stress level of part-time students are high which will likely affect their engagement with their studies leading to stressful academic experience.

Engagement is seen as 'students' attitude towards schooling and the participation in school activities' (Willms, 2003:8) which is an index for their identification and value for academic endeavour. This attachment and value for school activities comprises psychological and behavioural components which have to do with the feeling of being accepted and valued by stakeholders in school as well as visible participation in both curricular and extra-curricular activities (Willms, 2003). Engagement with academic activities is linked with not just positive changes in abilities and skills but also with better psychological adjustment in schools (Wilson, Jones, Bocell, Crowford, Kim, Veilluex, Floyd-Smith, Bettes & Plett, 2015). Researchers have shown that engagement is related to students' achievement (Casuso-Holgado, Cuesta-Vargas, Moreno-Morales, Labajos-Manzanares, Barón-López & Vega-Cuesta, 2013; Hoff & Lopus, 2014; Lee, 2014). A number of research works have identified factors that facilitate student academic engagement. Among the factors are self-efficacy (Wilson, Jones, Bocell, Crowford, Kim, Veilluex, Floyd-Smith, Bettes, & Plett, 2015), perception of school environment (Wang & Eccles, 2013), and peer influence (You, 2011).

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However, the academic engagement of a student could be related to the extent the student could cope with challenges in the course of the programme. Feeling stressed in school has been found to be related to less satisfaction with school (Lovenjak & Peklaj, 2016). A learner who is less satisfied in school is likely not to be engaged with the school activities. This, in a way, could be remediated if an individual has productive coping strategies which are enablers for continuation in challenging academic situations. Considering the myriad challenges faced by undergraduate part-time students and the impact they could have on the engagement with school activities, the researchers examined the following:

a. The coping skills and academic engagement mean scores of undergraduate and if significant differences occurred as a result of gender, marital status and specialty area.
b. If the dimension of copings strategies of part- time undergraduate students relate with their academic engagement.
c. Whether the dimension of copings skills of part- time undergraduate students predict their academic engagement.
d. Whether the effect of the dimensions of coping skills of part-time undergraduate students on their academic engagement is dependent on their gender, marital status and specialty area.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the quantitative research paradigm in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed. The mean differences and relationships existing among variables were ascertained without attempting to manipulate them.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample size was 155 undergraduate part-time student teachers enrolled in the Continuing Education Programme of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University in the 2017/2018 session. Nnamdi Azikiwe University which is located in the Southeastern

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part of Nigeria is one of the Federal Universities authorized to run part-time programme by the regulatory body – National Universities Commission. It has been observed that attrition rate is high among students enrolled in this programme which necessitated the research. The sample size was drawn using purposive sampling technique given the fact that participants were students who have spent at least one year in the programme. It is believed that they would be in a position to adjudge their coping skills in cognizance of the stress they have pass through in the programme. As such, those who were enrolled in the 2nd year and third year educational psychology course which is a faculty-wide course were chosen as participants. Two hundred students agreed to participant in the study while forty-five students eventually dropped out of the study while 155 students completed the questionnaire.

Instruments for data collection

Two adapted instruments were used in collecting the data in this study. The first was questionnaire on students' coping skills originally used by Struthers, Perry and Menec (2000) on college students which was a modified version of dispositional COPE scale which had 48 items measuring thoughts, actions, and strategies following students' poor academic performances. However, the modified version titled SCOPE by Struthers, et al.'s contained 30 items with two broad clusters. The first cluster, problem-focused coping (PFC), contained 15 items and four sub-scales (General Active Coping (factor loading = .77), Academic Planning (.77), Active Study Coping (.67), and Efficacy (.62) while the second cluster, emotion-focused coping (EFC), contained 15 items and four sub-scales (Emotional Venting (.41), General Emotional Support (.37), Denial (.78), and Academic Disengagement (.72)). The overall reliability coefficient was 0.80 for PFC and 0.70 for EFC. In the present work, the scale was reduced to four point scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) and subjected to face and content validity by experts in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University,

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Awka. The reliability coefficients for problem-focused coping using Cronbach Alpha were 0.41, 0.53, 0.86, 0.57 respectively and for emotion-focused, 0.69, 0.69, 0.83 and 0.88 respectively.

The second instrument is adapted from the work of Hart, Stewart and Jimerson (2011) titled Student Engagement in Schools Questionnaire (SESQ). This is a 33-item questionnaire with five factors (Affective: liking for learning, affective liking for school; Behavioural: Effort and persistence, extra-curricular; cognitive engagement). In the present study, two items that cross-loaded in Hart, et al.'s (2011) were not included in the final draft of the questionnaire. Hence, there were 31 items used in the SESQ. The scales adopted in the present study is the four-point Likert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) and subjected to face and content validity by experts in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The reliability coefficients using Cronbach Alpha were 0.50, 0.56, 0.59, 0.91and 0.87 respectively.

Data collection procedure

First of all, informed consent of the students was sought and obtained. They were told that the purpose of the exercise was purely for research and that their responses would be used only for research purposes and kept confidential within the confines of the law and ethical practices. The copies of the questionnaire were given to them. They were instructed that there were no wrong or right answers but that they should respond sincerely as it applies to them. They were also given the option of either filling in the questionnaire immediately after the class and submit or go home with it and submit the next class. Very few were able to fill in the questionnaire immediately after the class and submit because many reported that they had other classes after the session. The majority went home with it and submitted the next class.

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DATA ANALYSIS

The SPSS version 22 was used for the analysis of data collected. Mean, t-test and ANOVA were used to ascertain the mean differences of undergraduate part-time student teachers on their coping skills and academic engagement, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to ascertain the relationship existing among the dimensions of coping skills and academic engagement, multiple regression analysis was used to predict academic engagement from the dimensions of coping skills of students while the moderator multiple regression analysis (MMRA) was used to ascertain if the effect of the dimensions of coping skills of part-time undergraduate students on their academic engagement is dependent on their gender, marital status and specialty areas. In doing this dummy variables and interaction were created and used to run the MMRA. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by socio-demographic characteristics

	Variables	Frequency	Percent(%)
Gender	Male	44	28.4
	Female	111	71.6
Marital status	Single	105	67.7
	Married	50	32.3
Area of specialization	Arts Education	76	49.0
	Science Education	47	30.3
	Social Science Education	32	20.6

Table 1 showed that 28.4% of the respondents are male students while 71.6% are female students, 67.7% are not married and 32.3% are married, 49.0% of the students are in arts education, 30.3% are in science education while 20.6% of students are in social science education.

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Table 2: Mean and test of mean differences of dimensions of coping strategies based on socio-demographic variables

			Coping strategy clusters													
			Problem-focused coping								Emotion-focused coping					
			Academic planning coping		General Active coping		Coping efficacy		Study guide coping		Emotional support		Denial		Emotion venting		disengagement	
Name	Class	No	(x̄)	*P*	(x̄)	*P*	(x̄)	*P*	(x̄)	*P*	(x̄)	*p*	(x̄)	*P*	(x̄)	*P*	(x̄)	*p*
Gender	Male	44	3.85		3.73		3.69		3.59		2.27		2.64		3.12		2.03	
	Female	111	3.91	.227	3.84	.103	3.73	.718	3.57	.866	2.39	.311	2.63	.949	3.18	.404	1.98	.592
Marital Status	Single	105	3.87		3.80		3.73		3.54		2.41		2.63		3.18		2.01	
	Married	50	3.93	.150	3.85	.505	3.70	.765	3.67	.225	2.24	.122	2.65	.813	3.12	.311	1.97	.594
Speciali-ty	Arts Edu	76	3.91		3.83		3.77		3.60		2.37		2.61		3.17		1.90	
	Social Sc. Edu	47	3.93	.055	3.87	.074	3.87	.011	3.57	.953	2.18	.018	2.72	.277	3.23	.053	2.18	.007
	Science Edu	32	3.79		3.68		3.38		3.57		2.59		2.59		3.02		1.95	

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Table 2 showed student teachers' mean scores on the coping strategies based on the socio-demographic variables. Female students scored slightly higher in problem-focused coping dimensions than male students while male students scored marginally higher in emotion-focused coping dimensions than female students. There were no significant differences based on gender. Students who are married scored slightly higher in problem-focused than the unmarried students while those who are single scored slightly more than the married in emotion-focused coping. There were no significant mean differences across the coping dimensions based on marital status. Those in social sciences had higher mean score in both problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping than other students in other specialty areas. Significant differences occurred in coping efficacy, emotional support coping and disengagement coping dimensions.

Table 3: Mean and test of mean differences of dimensions of academic engagement based on socio-demographic variables

			Academic Engagement Clusters									
			Affective Sub-Clusters				Behavioural Sub-Clusters					
			Affective liking for learning		Affective liking for school		Effort and Persistence		Extra-Curricular engagement		Cognitive Engagement	
Name	Class	No	$(\bar{x})$	*P*	$(\bar{x})$	*P*	$(\bar{x})$	*P*	$(\bar{x})$	*P*	$(\bar{x})$	*p*
Gender	Male	44	3.90	.636	3.82	.396	3.58	.734	3.08	.024	3.81	.455

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	Female	111	3.88		3.74		3.59		3.18		3.85	
Marital	Single	105	3.88		3.85		3.60		3.17		3.84	
Status	Married	50	3.90	.635	3.82	.525	3.57	676	3.15	.642	3.84	.964
	Arts Edu	76	3.88		3.88		3.60		3.14		3.85	
Specialty	Social Sc. Edu	47	3.92		3.91		3.65		3.22		3.93	
	Science Edu	32	3.82	.332	3.67	.004	3.47	.056	3.06	.021	3.68	.005

Table 3 showed that male and female; single and married students were all academically engaged in school. Male students score slightly higher in affecting liking for learning, effort persistence than female students; married students scored slightly higher in affecting liking for learning, and extra-curricular engagement than unmarried students. Significant differences in mean did not occur based on gender and marrital status except in extra-curricular engagement. Students in Social science education appeared to be more academically engaged in school than students in other specialty areas, and significant mean differences occurred as a result of specialty.

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Table 4: Pearson r table on coping and academic engagement of undergraduate part-time student teachers

Variable	No	Affective liking for learning (r)	Affective liking for school(r)	Effortful persistence(r)	Behavior extracurricular(r)	Cognitive engagement (r)
Problem-Focused Coping						
Academic planning coping	155	.443**	.634**	.684**	.160*	.586**
General Active Coping	155	.360**	504**	.541**	-.068	.640**
Coping efficacy	155	.499**	.622**	.639**	.047	.587**
Study guide coping	155	.477**	.609**	.593**	.144	.628**
Emotion-Focused Coping						
Emotional support	155	.380**	.407**	.605**	-.263**	.420**
Denial	155	-.318**	-.294**	-.334**	.169*	-.537**
Emotion Venting	155	.255**	.321**	.348**	.108	.397**
Disengagement	155	.224**	.438**	.365**	.224**	.228**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).; *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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Table 4 showed the Pearson r of undergraduate part-time student teachers. Significant positive relationships occurred in almost all the dimensions of coping and academic engagement. Negative significant relationships occurred in denial and the dimensions of academic engagement (except behavior extra-curricular), emotional support, general active coping and behavior extracurricular.

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis for predictor variables and academic engagement of part-time undergraduate student teachers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	*p*
Problem-Focused Coping	*B*	SE *B*	*B*		
1 (Constant)	45.927	6.825		6.729	.000
Academic planning coping	1.468	.698	.181	2.104	.037
General Active Coping	1.021	.534	.192	1.912	.058
Coping efficacy	1.526	.228	.440	6.696	.000
Study guide coping	.517	.277	.116	1.867	.064
R	.771				
R^2	.594				
F	54.874				0.000
Emotion-Focused Coping					
1 (Constant)	82.697	6.778		12.201	.000
Emotional support	-1.213	.308	-.284	-3.940	.000
Denial	1.227	.382	.241	3.214	.002
Emotional venting	1.860	.386	.338	4.824	.000
Disengagement	.255	.314	.059	.812	.418
R	.612				
R^2	.375				
F	22.456				0.000

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The result in table 5 showed that the multiple regression coefficient (R) was 0.771 while R^2 was 0.594. This is an indication that problem-focused coping dimensions jointly contributed 59.4% to explain the variances in response and the corresponding F (2, 155) = 54.874, is statistically significant as shown by the p-value (0.000) which was less than the stipulated significance level (0.05). It was therefore concluded that those predictors are jointly significant. Using standardized (*B*), the *B*s for problem-focused coping dimensions, only academic planning and coping efficacy made individual significant contributions.

On emotion-focused coping dimensions, the multiple regression coefficient (R) was 0.612 while R^2 was 0.375. This indicates that emotion-focused coping dimensions jointly contributed 37.5% to explain the variances in the responses and the corresponding F (2, 155) = 22.456, is statistically significant as shown by the p-value (0,000). Also the dimensions; emotional support, denial and emotional venting made individual significant contributions.

Table 6: Moderator multiple regression analysis for problem-focused coping strategy dimensions and academic engagement

						Change Statistics			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.771[a]	.594	.583	.64558643	.594	54.874	4	150	.000
2	.772[b]	.596	.577	.65074015	.002	.211	3	147	.889
3	.774[c]	.599	.577	.65007460	.004	1.301	1	146	.256

The R Square Change in table 6 showed a 0.04% increase explained by the addition of the interaction term. The increase is not statistically significant which shows that the demographic variables (gender, marital status and specialty) do not moderate the relationship between problem-focused coping dimensions and the academic engagement of undergraduate part-time students.

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Table 7: Moderator multiple regression analysis for emotion-focused coping strategy dimensions and academic engagement

					Change Statistics			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.771[a]	.594	.583	.64558643	.594	54.874	4	150	.000
2	.772[b]	.596	.577	.65074015	.002	.211	3	147	.889
3	.785[c]	.616	.595	.63634017	.020	7.728	1	146	.006

The R Square Change in table 7 showed a 2% increase explained by the addition of the interaction term. The increase is statistically significant which shows that the demographic variables(gender, marital status and specialty) under study do moderate the relationship between emotion-focused coping dimensions and the academic engagement of undergraduate part-time students.

DISCUSSION

Findings from the study showed that part-time undergraduate student teachers adopted more of problem-focused coping strategies in the studies than emotion-focused strategies. This shows that in coping with stressful academic, respondents relied on strategies that can alter the situation (Struthers, Perry & Menec, 2000). This finding agrees with other studies in which students reported that they adopted more of problem-based/positive coping strategies in handling academic-related stress (Majumdar & Ray, 2010; Kwaah & Essielfie, 2017). However, the mean ratings on maladaptive coping strategies were also high showing that a good number of students are involved in using strategies that may not help them cope. Such strategies include denial, disengagement, and venting. These could jeopardize the success of the learner. Studies with undergraduate students (even though not with part-time students) in other climes have shown that most undergraduate students adopt very deficient coping strategies in handling academic stress which is deleterious to their mental well-being (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan & Mannix-

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McNamara, 2014). The fact that, students' mean scores are high in almost all the dimensions of coping strategies shows that they adopt both positive and negative coping strategies in their studies. This is in agreement with the findings of Dexter, Huff, Rudecki and Abraham (2018) which revealed that college students in the United States deal with stressors in both positive and negative ways.

Considering gender differences in coping, female students scored higher in emotion-focused coping strategies than male students while male students scored higher than female in problem-focused coping strategies even though significant mean differences did not occur. This agrees with similar studies by Matud (2004); Deasy, Coughlan, Pironom, Jourdan and Mannix-McNamara (2014) who reported that female students adopt more emotion-focused coping strategies (escape-avoidance coping) than male students. In order words, they tend to handle stressful situations by enduring than trying to alter them. Also, studies show that high masculine individuals were more likely to engage in problem-focused coping strategies (Sharp, 2014). These may confirm the conclusion of Osafo (2016) who noted that some married female students do not have effective coping strategies since problem-focused coping strategies appear to be better than emotion-focused strategies. However, the study differs with the study of Craciun (2012) who found that male and female students differ significantly in their choice of coping strategies.

Also, students who are married scored slightly higher in problem-focused coping than those who are unmarried while those who are unmarried scored slightly more than the married in emotion-focused coping. There were no significant differences in the mean scores of married and unmarried students in the coping dimensions. What this implies is that, even though no significant differences occurred in the dimensions of coping strategies, married students adopted better coping strategies than their unmarried counterparts. This might have resulted from the fact that being exposed to higher level of stress could have helped in equipping them with

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more appropriate coping skills than those who are unmarried. Findings in stress studies have revealed that married students are more stressed than unmarried students (Persuad, et al, 2016)

Those in Social Science Education had the highest mean score in both problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, followed by those in Arts Education. Significant differences occurred in coping efficacy, emotional support coping and disengagement coping dimensions. What this implies, is that those in social science had more coping strategies than others. The fact that students in the sciences scored lower may indicate that their courses may be more tasking than others. Many studies in stress with students in the sciences showed that they are stressed (Benavente, da Silva, Higashi, Guido & Costa, 2014; Bamuhair, Farhan, Althubaiti, Agha, Rahman, & Ibrahim, 2015). Though there is dearth of literature comparing coping strategies based on disciplines, insight into the nature of disciplines could help explain why those in social sciences could cope better than others. Their discipline could help them understand the nature and feelings of human beings thereby helping them to adjust in stressful situations.

Also findings showed that respondents are academically engaged. What this means is that they have a high sense of belongingness that could enable them persist in their studies. They scored high in the dimensions of affective liking for school, effort persistence and cognitive engagement and lower in affective liking for learning and extra-curricular engagement. Male and female students were all academically engaged in school. Male students score slightly higher in affective liking for learning and effort persistence. There were no significant differences in mean based on gender except on extra-curricular engagement dimension. Similar findings, even though not on part-time student teachers, have shown that gender may not necessarily lead to significant mean differences (Casuso-Holgado, et al, 2013).

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Equally interesting is the fact that both married and unmarried students were all academically engaged in such a way that there were no significant differences in all the dimensions of academic engagement. One would have taught that those who are not married would have been better engaged academically than those who are married going by additional responsibilities. This points out the fact that other factors such as self-efficacy (Ugwu, Onyishi & Tyoyima, 2013), satisfaction with programme (Çaliskan & Mercangöz, 2013) resilience, perception of challenge and motivation (O'Brien, 2015) could influence academic engagement and counter the effects stress could have on it. Students in Social Science Education appeared to be more academically engaged in school than others and mean differences occurred as a result of specialty in the dimensions of affective liking for school, extra-curricular and cognitive engagement.

A major finding in this study is the significant positive relationships occurring in almost all the dimensions of coping and academic engagement. Negative significant relationships occurred in denial coping dimension and the dimensions of academic engagement (except in behavior extra-curricular), emotional support, general active coping and behavior extracurricular. However, the relationship is higher among the dimensions of problem-focused coping and academic engagement than among the dimensions of emotion-focused coping strategies. The dimensions of the problem and emotion-focused coping strategies significantly jointly predicted their academic engagement, even though only the coping self-efficacy and active planning made individual contributions to academic engagement in the problem-focused dimension. The prediction was higher in problem-focused dimensions. This shows that part-time student teachers' coping strategies are related to their engagement in school showing the importance of coping in academic engagement. The fact that the strength of the relationship is positively stronger and even the predictive power more, in problem-focused coping strategy indicates that coping strategies that alter the challenging

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situation will enable students to be more engaged. Jacobs (2015) found a significant relationship between South African students' coping and their academic engagement. This agrees with the views of Skinner and Pitzer (2012:21) that the 'same personal and interpersonal resources that promote engagement may shape students' reactions to challenges and obstacles, with academic coping an especially important bridge back to reengagement'. Against hypothetical assumptions are the positive relationships that existed among such 'unproductive' coping strategies as venting and disengagement with students' academic engagement. One would have expected negative relationships. However, it has been noted that where the problem-focused coping strategies are unavailable, that such emotion-focused strategies could be effective (see Jacobs, 2015). This necessitates intervention programmes on effective coping strategies. Also, the relationship between the dimensions of problem-focused strategy and academic engagement was not moderated by the socio-demographic variables under consideration indicating that problem-focused coping is a strong predictor of the respondents' academic engagement. However, the relationships existing among the dimensions of emotion-focused coping and academic engagement were moderated by the socio-demographic variables.

CONCLUSION

This study is one of the first attempts to investigate part-time undergraduate student teachers' academic coping strategies and their academic engagement in Nigeria. There is dearth of works on this student population in Nigeria more especially when it comes to their engagement with their studies. It is concluded in this study that the respondents adopted more of problem-focused coping and are academically engaged in their study; their coping and academic engagement were significantly related. These variables were not greatly moderated by the socio-demographic variables considered in this work. This is an eye-opener to school counselors and

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psychologists on how intervention programmes should be provided for part-time student teachers' in Nigeria. They should emphasis problem-focused strategies in order to enhance academic engagement and students who rely so much on inefficient dimensions of emotion-focused coping strategies should be counseled. The limitations of this study borders on the small sample size. Future studies should adopt triangulated research approaches so that more robust understanding could be ascertained.

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