

Impact of Emotional Maturity on Coping with Stress among Freshmen in South-Western Nigeria Universities

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Abstract

It is well documented that Nigerian freshmen are not emotionally matured to handle stress associated with transition from secondary school to university. For effective intervention to enhance this competency among this group there is need to ascertain their level of emotional maturity. Ex post survey design was adopted to examine the impact of emotional maturity on coping with stress among freshmen in South-Western Nigerian universities. Simple random sampling technique was utilized in four stages to draw a sample size of 2236 respondents (Male=1021; Female=1215) with age range of 16-20 years (\bar{x} =19.3; SD=7.2) from three categories of universities in South Western Nigeria (Federal, State and Private). Singh and Bhargava (1991) emotional maturity scale was the only source of data. Descriptive statistics was adopted to answer the first three research questions while t-test for independent samples and ANOVA were used for the fourth and fifth questions respectively. The result revealed that 63.2% of the 2236 freshmen were emotionally immatured to cope with stress. The females reported more emotional maturity than their male counterpart. Respondents between ages 22 and above reported more emotional maturity than their younger counterparts. This study has provided empirical evidence to suggest that freshmen are not emotionally matured to cope with challenges that are experienced in universities in Nigeria The outcome of this study will sensitize the lecturers and school administration of the need to ameliorate some of the factors predisposing students to stress since the students level of maturity differs. Counselling psychologist should also institute stress management programme for freshmen in other to cushion the effects of stress associated with transition.

Keywords: emotional maturity, stress, freshmen, university, south-western, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

For many students who got admitted into the university, living home for the first time is a very exciting experience because they no longer have a responsible adult watching over them and have shifted away from reliance on guardianship and the oversight of an adult in decision-making to independence. However, for some students, the transition is a significant life-changing event with an initial shock that can generate a lot of stress for them. This transition has a unique set of challenges and stresses. There is the stress of making a good adjustment and obtaining good Grade Point Average (GPA), stress of making the right choice with respect to course registration for either elective or required courses. In addition to academic stress, studies have shown that students resuming studies in the university for the first time have problem of relating with their room or corner mate due to differences in personality. According to researchers (Wahat, *et al.*, 2012; Saat, *et al.*, 2011) stressors for freshmen included any curriculum and co-curriculum activities, lifestyle, concern about merit system, workload, time management etc.

Increasingly, the level at which stress impedes the abilities of freshmen to succeed academically is attracting attention. Stress is also said to compromises their mental health functioning, and

fosters risk behaviour. of freshmen is attracting attention. This assertion was corroborated with the result obtained from a study conducted in 2012 by the American College Health Association. The undergraduates used for that study reported that the factor which most negatively impacted their academic functioning and also most frequently happened (high frequency & high threat) was stress. The study also shows that within the last 12 months, 55.5% of undergraduates (663) and 57.1% of graduates (548) experienced "more than average" or "tremendous stress." Similarly, Nakalema and Ssenyonga (2013) revealed that 67% of freshmen reported that daily academic hassles was most stressful when compared with personal problems This finding was recently corroborated by Vivek, *et al.* (2016) who reported that out of the 1,224 college students studied 299 representing 34.4% of the study population experienced stress. It is well documented that anything that poses a challenge or a threat to an individual well-being is known as stress. Some stresses get students going and they are good for them. Low-level of stressors is said to boost productivity and concentration by stimulating the production of brain chemicals called neurotrophins, and strengthen the connections between neurons in the brain. However, when the stress undermine the individuals mental and physical health it becomes bad to cope.

The word stress was first used in biological context by Hans Selye (1955). He used it to the nonspecific response of the body to any demand placed upon it. Stress is a key factor in the disruption of the body homeostatic functional equilibrium, in that living systems are in a constant state of flux, incessantly adjusting to the effects of environmental stimuli, both external and internal (emotional, chemical or physical). In contrast, Lazarus (1966) described stress as a two-way process that involves the production of stressors by the environment, and the response of the individual subjected to these stressors. This transactional cognitive postulation indicates that individuals only perceive stress when a challenge or event is both threatening and of such a nature that the individual is unable to cope. The stressors may be acute (e.g., hassles) or chronic (e.g., bereavement), small in magnitude (e.g., test, new environment), or traumatic (e.g., violent attack) (Ofole and Okopi, 2014; Busari, 2014).

A strong relationship is found between stressful life events and reduced academic performance as well as link between healths related quality of life and stress among college students (Rahim, *et al.* 2016; Yahya, *et al.*, 2015; Busari, 2014). This is not surprising because the nervous system is compromised during times of undue stress (Sandi, 2004). It is well recorded that exposure to acute stress affects information processing in the cerebellum, the area of the brain responsible for motor control and movement coordination and is involved in learning and memory formation. Busari (2014) concluded that high level of stress during the first year of college forecast lower level of overall adjustment and can make the students more susceptible to many social and psychological problems, thus leading to a lower grade point average (GPA) in the final year.

Studies suggest that some important factor such as emotional maturity is strongly related with ability to cope with stress in the university, regrettably, it is widely reported that most Nigerian students particularly in south western Nigeria transiting to universities lack this vital asset. Subbarayan and Visvanathan (2011) provided empirical evidence that the emotional maturity of freshmen in the university is extremely unstable. Sharma (2012) reported that the first year undergraduate students utilized in his study were less emotionally matured and had difficulty adjusting emotionally and socially to the changing demands of the environment and faced more academic difficulty compared to the final year students. Stephens (2013) noted that emotionally matured students are resilient and can cope with stress and hard conditions associated with learning. This coping may result in the student bouncing back to a previous state of normal functioning or simply not showing negative effects. Zapata (2015) opines that the extent to which students mature emotionally

play an important role in dealing with situations that test their coping ability. Mahmoudi (2012) observed that when emotionally matured students are faced with stress, adversity, and perceived failure they can maintain self-control. Stated differently, a student who is matured emotionally is said to have the qualities of an adult. He is said to have knowledge and experience about the way the world works, and can adapt accordingly. To be emotional matured means that the student has a specific control over his emotions and have experienced the spectrum of emotions, understands the consequences of each, and knows the benefits of being in control of them. Most importantly, an emotionally matured doesn't fall into panic trying to determine what they feel, and how they should react.

Maturity is defined as the ability of an individual to respond to the environment in an appropriate manner (Roja, *et al.*, 2013). They went further to state that this ability to response appropriately is learned rather than being instinctive. Roja, *et al.* (2013) also noted that maturity encompasses being aware of the correct time and place to behave and knowing when to act, according to the circumstances and the culture of the society one lives in. Emotionally matured person is one who is able to keep a lid on feelings (Sunil, 2014), can suffer in silence and can bide his time in spite of present discomfort (Sunil, 2014). Such a person is not subject to swing in mood and is not volatile, when he expresses his emotion, he does so with moderation, decently and in good order" (Amit *et. al.*, 2013). Unlike emotional intelligence, which enables one to recognize the benefits of becoming adept at handling and recognizing own and others' feelings, emotional maturity includes taking responsibility for ones feelings and not blaming others for causing those (Ofole and Falaye, 2011).

Erikson (1968) stages of psychosocial development and Piaget's theory of cognitive development provided frameworks for recognizing the indicators of emotional maturity. Erikson (1968) described the stage as progression into adult maturity, with each maturational stage characterized by a certain kind of psychosocial conflict. The "Identity" stage according to Erickson is when adolescents navigate a web of conflicting values and selves in order to emerge as 'the person one has come to be' and 'the person society expects one to become (Wright, 1983) Piaget's (1977) theory of cognitive development is another theory that explains how individuals become emotionally matured. Piaget opines that the formal operational stage is a plateau stage that an individual needs to reach and on reaching this stage the individual will begin to think logically using symbols and is marked by a shift away from "concrete" thought, or thought bound to immediacy and facts, and toward "abstract" thought, or thought employing reflection and deduction (Ginsburg and Opper 1988).

The importance of emotional maturity in coping with stress especially students in transition cannot be over emphasized, little wonder why it has attracted the attention of scholars and researchers for decades. For example, Kaur (2013) conducted a comparative study of emotional maturity of senior secondary school students with respect to gender. The result revealed that there was no significant difference in emotional maturity of secondary school students with respect to gender. Similarly, Subramanian and Veliappan (2013) conducted a study on the emotional maturity of high school students on the basis of type of institution. The study revealed that the students from private schools are more emotionally matured than those from government owned school students and high schools girls are emotionally matured than high school boys. Nuzhat (2013) compared the emotional maturity of male and female university distance learners in India. The results reveal that the female university distance learners and male University distance learners do not differ significantly on emotional maturity so far as composite score is concerned. In addition, Ritu, *et al.* (2013) investigated gender difference on social and emotional maturity of senior school adolescents in India and found significant gender difference. Amit, *et al.* (2013) examined the emotional maturity and coping strategies among the students pursuing rehabilitation studies. The outcome showed low level of emotional maturity. Surjit (2014) carried out a study on the role of emotional maturity in the academic achievement of high school students. The finding revealed that there was no significant correlation between emotional maturity and academic achievement of high school students and girls were found to be more emotionally stable than the boys. Mallick *et al.*, (2014) piloted a study on higher secondary student's emotional maturity and academic achievement. The study revealed that the higher secondary school students were emotionally unstable, no significance difference in the emotional maturity of male and female students and no significant difference in emotional maturity of government and private school students.

It is very evident that these studies were conducted in non African settings. Emotional maturity is usually interpreted with respect to people's culture. Freshmen from developed continents are exposed to different environmental conditions, so any research findings cannot be generalized to African context. In addition, majority of these studies drew their samples from districts or rural communities using purposive sampling technique Purposive sampling poses threat to external validity of the study ie generalizing the outcome of the study to other context.

There is paucity of literature on emotional maturity targeting Nigerian students. Most studies in Nigeria focused on emotional intelligence which is a related

concept (Nwadinigwe, *et al.*, 2012; Oyewunmi, *et al.*, 2016)). However, while Emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional maturity are related concept, EI is merely the ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, of others, and of groups, on the other hand, emotional maturity is broader and indicates how a person responds to the circumstances or environment in an appropriate manner. In view of this scarcity of literature on emotional maturity in Nigeria, this study was conceptualized to contribute to existing literature on the impact of emotional maturity on coping with stress associated with transition to university among students newly admitted into universities in South-Western, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The high level of stress experienced by freshmen in institutions of higher learning is a source of concern to all and sundry. Stress can have both positive and negative effect on the learners. Having optimum stress can lead to optimal academic performance. However, excessive stress in school can result to loss of motivation to learn, decline in mental and physical health. Common stressors among freshmen include separation from home, stress of new environment, adjusting with new room/course mate this is in addition to the stress of obtaining a good Grade Point Average (GPA). Busari (2014) concluded that high level of stress during the first year of college forecast lower level of overall adjustment and can make the students more susceptible to many social and psychological problems, thus leading to a lower grade point average (GPA) in the final year. It is well documented that when individuals are exposed to high level of stress it can lead to chronic fatigue, anorexia nervosa, heart disease, eating disorder amongst other health problems. Stated differently when stress becomes intense or extended it has both psychological and physiological negative outcomes on the freshmen. As noted earlier, in the preceding paragraphs there is paucity of researches on emotional maturity targeting freshmen in Nigerian universities. As an attempt to contribute to the existing literature in the field of coping with stress this study was conceptualized.

Purpose of Study

The broad purpose of this study is to examine the impact of emotional maturity on coping with stress among freshmen in south-Western, Nigeria universities. Specifically, the study

1. Assessed the level of emotional maturity among freshmen in the universities located in South-western Nigerian.
2. Compared the emotional maturity of coping with stress with respect to sex among freshmen in the universities located in South-western Nigerian.
3. Compared the emotional maturity of coping with stress among freshmen in the

universities located in South-western Nigerian with respect to age range

4. Investigated if there is significant difference in emotional maturity of coping with stress among freshmen in the universities located in South-western Nigerian respect to gender.
5. Investigated if there is significant difference in emotional maturity of coping with stress among freshmen in the universities located in South-western Nigerian with respect to age range

Research Questions

The following Research questions guided this study

1. What is the level of emotional maturity of coping with stress among freshmen in Universities in South western Nigeria?
2. To what extent does the freshmen emotional maturity of coping with stress differ by sex?
3. To what extent does the freshmen emotional maturity of coping with stress differ by age?
4. Is there a significant difference in the emotional maturity of coping with stress between the male and female?
5. Is there a significant difference in emotional maturity of coping with stress based on age?

METHODOLOGY

Design

Ex post facto otherwise known as causal comparative descriptive survey design was used for this study. The researcher considered it most appropriate since the variables of interest already existed and the researcher has no direct control over the phenomenon. The researcher merely investigated the reasons or causes of the preexisting differences in the group.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of two thousand two hundred and thirty-six (2236) freshmen were drawn from population of approximately 10,990 freshmen studying in both federal, state and public universities in South Western Nigeria. Of the 2236 freshmen 1212 were female (54.3%) while the male consists of 1021 % (45.7%). The age range of the respondents was between 16-20 years, with mean age of 19.3 and standard deviation of 6.3. Simple sampling technique was adopted in four stages to draw a representative sample out of the target population. In the first stage, three states (Oyo, Ekiti and Lagos) were randomly selected out of the six states in South- Western Nigeria. Other states within South-Western Nigeria but not part of this study are Ogun, Osun and Ondo. In the second stage, three categories of Universities namely; Federal, Public and private were randomly drawn from the three states stated above. For example, one Federal, State, and Private Universities located in Oyo, Ekiti and Osun states. Faculties of Science, Arts, and Education were randomly drawn

out of the several faculties in the universities during the third stage. In the fourth stage students who were admitted for the 2015/2016 academic session were purposively selected from the three faculties. However, freshmen who had National Diploma (ND), National Certificate of Education, and other Advanced level certificates were excluded from the study. The researcher considered them unsuitable for the variable of interest (coping with transition stress) since they have spent at least a semester or more in schools that have similar settings like universities they were considered to have "found their niche" (Tinto, 1993 p. 59).

The researcher enlisted the assistant of the Dean of Students affairs in each of the universities. It was mutually agreed that the researcher should address the students on the orientation day which was set aside to acquaint students with the university rules and regulations and other academic related matters. The researcher accompanied by the research assistants utilized the opportunity to establish rapport with the students, thereafter, the students were assured that their responses would be for purely academic purposes and as such their responses it be strictly confidential. The questionnaire was distributed and collected within 30 minutes as was stated in the scale manual. A total of 2,700 freshmen comprising of 300 from three faculties of the three participating universities were drawn for the study. Out of two thousand seven hundred (2700) questionnaires distributed in the nine universities only two thousand two hundred and thirty-six (2236) was correctly filled and returned. The questionnaire return rate was therefore, 82.8 % which was considered adequate for a survey of this nature since the large sample size allows the researcher to control for the risk of reporting a false-negative finding otherwise known as Type II error (Biau *et al.* 2008).

Measure

The sole source of data for this study was Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS) developed and validated by Singh and Bhargava (1991). It was used to assess the respondents' level of emotional maturity. The scale is a 48 items self-report questionnaire. The forty-eight items were spread across five sub sections which deal with the different aspects of an individual emotional maturity. They are; (a) emotional instability (b) emotional regression (c) social maladjustment (d) personality disintegration (e) lack of independence. The questions on the scale were positively worded and anchored on four point Likert format of ; very much like me =4; much like me= 3; probably= 2 and never = 1. Therefore, the higher the score on the scale, the greater the degree of emotional immaturity while the lower the scores the higher degree of emotional maturity. Mean, median and mode was used to classify scores obtained by the respondent as follows; of 50 - 80: Emotionally Stable; 81 - 88:

moderately stable; 89 - 106: unstable; 107 - 240: extremely unstable. Their level of emotional stability is taken to mean emotional maturity.

The instrument has satisfactory psychometric properties as stated by previous researchers such as Shafeeq *et al.* (2015); Sunil, *et al.* 2014 and Agrawal *et al.* (2016) who reported that the instrument was valid and reliable to measure emotional maturity. However, to adapt the instrument to suit Nigerian respondents the psychometric properties were reestablished in the following ways; it was given to test and measurement expert of the Department of Counselling University of Ibadan who confirmed that it has face and content validities. Reliability of the scale was determined by administering the instrument to sixty students from universities located in Ogun state which is not part of the state used for this study. The same test was re-administered within one week interval. Test retest reliability index of the instrument was $r=0.85$ using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) while internal consistency for the sub sections ranged from $r=0.62$ to $.86$

RESULTS

Table 1 was used to present the demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Variables	Frequency N=(2236)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	1021	45.7
Female	1215	54.3
Age Range		
16-18yrs	523	23.4
19-21yrs	1314	58.8
22-24yrs	356	15.9
25 and above-	43	1.9
Faculty		
Faculty of Science	715	31.9
Faculty of Arts	766	34.3
Faculty of Education	755	33.8
School Type		
Federal	1031	46.1
State	774	34.6
Private	431	19.3

Table 1 presented the demographic characteristics of respondents. It reveals the distribution of respondents by sex, age range, Faculty of study and type of school. Out of 2236 respondents, 1021 respondents representing 45.7 % of the study population were male, while 1215 respondents representing 54.3% were female. This result implies that there was unequal number of male and female in this study, the female constitute the majority (54.3%).

Out of the 2236 respondents, 523 (23.4 %) and 1314 (58.8%) of respondents were within the age category of 16-18yrs and 19-21 yrs respectively while 356 (15.9%) and 43 (1.9 %) of the respondents fall

within the age group of 22-25 years and above respectively. This indicates that majority of the respondents were within the age category of 16-21 years. The table also shows that of the 2236 respondents 82.1 % were draw from the age range of 19-21 years. This implies that majority of the students who got admitted into universities in south western Nigeria universities for 2015/2016 academic session was within the age range of 19 - 21 years.

Seven hundred and fifteen (715) respondents representing 31.9 % were students from the Faculty of Science, while 766 respondents representing 34.3% were drawn from Faculty of Arts. Seven hundred and fifty –five (33.8%) freshmen were drawn from the Faculty of Education. This result shows that the three Faculties were equally represented in the study.

The respondents’ type of school was classified according to ownership of the school namely; Federal, State and Private. Freshmen from Federal Government owned universities were 1031 constituting 46.1% of the study population, while students drawn from state owned schools were seven hundred and seventy-four representing 34.6 % of the study population. Few of the respondents 431 (19.3%) out of 2236 were drawn from private universities. This finding is not surprising since most students patronize public (federal) universities which they considered cheaper in terms of tuition when compared with either the private or state.

Research Question 1: What is the level of Emotional Maturity of Freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities? In order to answer this research question, mean, median and mode was adopted, the result is presented on table 2

Table 2: Level of Emotional Maturity of freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities

Test Norm	No of students	Percentages of students	Test Interpretation
50-80	345	15.4	Emotionally Stable
81-88	478	21.4	Moderately Stable
89-196	602	26.9	Emotionally Unstable
107-240	811	36.3	Extremely Unstable
Total	2236	100.0	

Table 2 presents the level of emotional maturity of freshmen in Southwestern Nigeria. It reveals that of 2236 respondents 345 (15.4 %) and 478 (21.4%) representing 36.8 % of the study population were emotionally matured. In essence, the majority consisting of 1413 (602+811) (63.2%) freshmen reported emotional immaturity. This finding is represented with a pie chart on figure 1 graphically

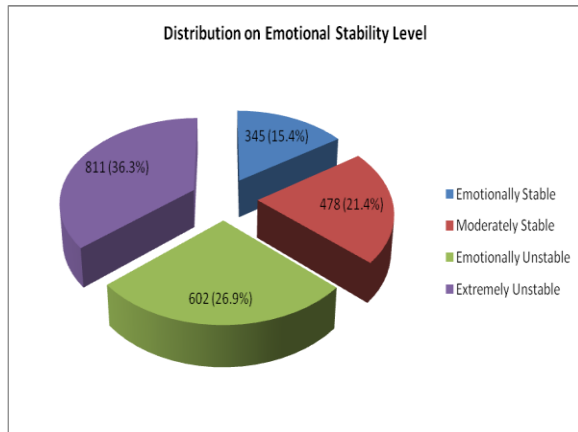


Figure 1: Pie Chart showing the level of Emotional Maturity of freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities

Research Question 2: What is the level of Emotional Maturity of Freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities based on gender? The result on emotional maturity of coping with stress is presented on table 3

Table 3: Level of Emotional Maturity of freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities Based on Gender

Gender	Emotionally Stable	Mode rately stable	Unstable	Extremely unstable	Total
	50-80	81-88	89-196	107-240	
Male	110	143	336	432	1021
Female	235	335	266	379	1215
Total	345	478	362	811	2236

The result presented on 3 shows that of the 1021 male that participated in the study 253 representing 24. 7% of the study population was emotionally matured. On the other hand, majority of the respondents 768 (75.2%) were emotionally immature. On the other hand, 570 (46.9%) of female were emotionally matured, while 645 (53.1%) were not matured emotionally. This shows that more female (570) than the male (253) were emotionally matured. This result is depicted graphically on the bar graph on figure 2.

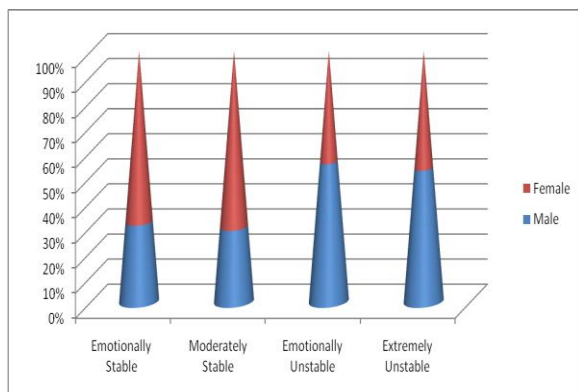


Figure 2: Bar Chart showing the level of Emotional Maturity based on Gender

Research Question 3: What is the level of Emotional Maturity of Freshmen in South-Western Nigerian Universities based on their Age Range? The result is presented on table 4

Table 4: Level of Emotional Maturity of freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities Based on their Age Range

Age Range	Emotionally Stable	Moderately stable	Unstable	Extremely unstable
	50-80	81-88	89-196	107-240
16-18yrs	47	98	182	298
19-21yrs	54	102	170	227
22-24yrs	87	135	128	148
25 and above	157	143	122	138
Total	2236	478	602	811

Classification of the respondents on the basis of their age as presented on table 4 shows that the minority (301) representing 13.5% of the study population between the age range of 16-21 years were emotionally immature. On the other hand, the majority 522 consisting 23.3 % of the total population were emotionally unstable which is evident of emotional immaturity. Table 4 also shows that freshmen between ages 22 and above were more matured more than their counterpart in the age range of 16-21 years. This result is also presented graphically on figure 3

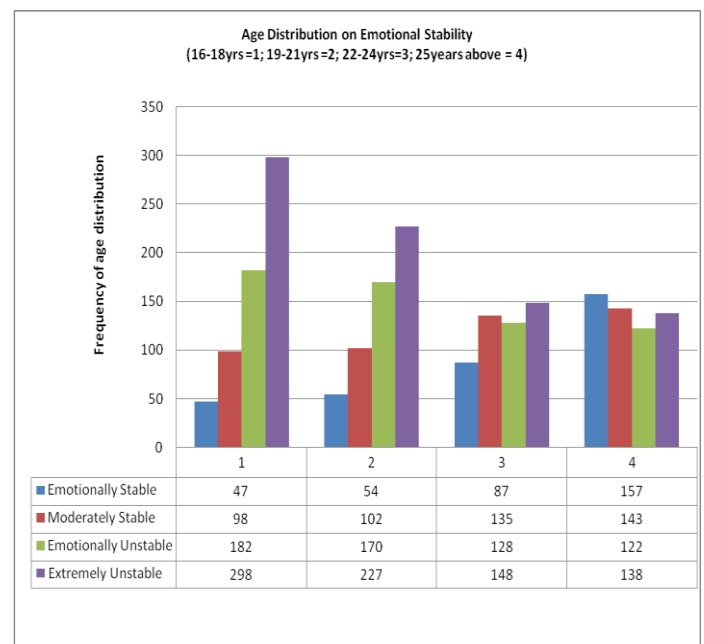


Figure 3: Level of Emotional Maturity of freshmen in South Western Nigerian Universities based on their Age Range

Research Question 4: Is there a significant difference in the emotional maturity of coping with stress between the male and female?

Table 5: Difference between the mean scores of emotional maturity of by the respondents' gender (male and female)

Sex	N	Mean	Std Dev	T	df	P
Male	1021	14.99	4.46	2.12	2234	0.036
Female	1215	15.30	5.59			

The results from Table 5 indicates that $t = 2.12$, $df = 2234$ and $p < 0.05$. Therefore, since $p < 0.05$ is less than the calculated value, the null hypotheses are rejected. It implies that there is significant difference in the emotional maturity of coping with stress between male and female

Research Question 5: There will be no significant difference in the level of emotional maturity of coping with stress based on age range. This hypothesis is analyzed with Analysis of Variance. The result is presented on table 5 as follows

Table 5: Difference between the level of emotional maturity of coping with Stress based on age range ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	102.234	3	34.07	340.7	.000 ^b
Residual	224.709	2232	.10		
Total	326.943	2235			

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Maturity

b. Predictors: (Constant) age range:16-18yrs, 19-21yrs, 22-24yrs, 25 and above

Table 5 shows the Analysis of Variance, the F-Calculated (340.7) is greater than the F-tabulated (3.89), this indicates that there is significant difference in the emotional maturity of coping based on the age range of respondents. The null hypotheses was therefore, rejected

DISCUSSION

This study examined the impact of emotional maturity on coping with stress among freshmen in South-Western, Nigerian universities. The parameter used to accomplish the study purposes include the respondents' level of emotional maturity, gender differences as well as age differences in emotional maturity. The result of the first research question reveals that 63.2% out of the 2236 freshmen were emotional immaturred. This finding suggests that the majority of students admitted into universities in south western Nigeria for 2015/2016 academic session were emotionally immature. This implies that the students may not likely have the ability to deal with ups and downs associated with transition to university. Moreover, it can also be inferred that they may not be able to control their emotions and take full responsibility for their life and actions along with being able to handle their resentments, insecurities, disappointments, fears, guilt, and a lot of other emotions in a new environment. This finding

corroborates Amit *et al.* (2013) who reported that students who are emotionally matured have confrontive coping and positive reappraisal coping competencies. They concluded that less emotionally matured students tend to prefer primitive and often inefficient coping methods, while more matured students lean towards more sophisticated and more useful methods. The outcome is also in agreement with Mukhtar and Masih (2015) finding that 54% of students in their study were emotionally unstable and 21% extremely unstable. Shafeeq and Thaqi (2015) also found that 51% of their study sample was emotionally immaturred.

Another outcome of this study is that a significant difference exists between the emotional maturity of male and female, the female reported superior emotional maturity in comparison with their male counterpart. There is controversy concerning differences in emotional maturity based on gender. While some researchers (Ritu and Kusha, 2013; Subramanian and Veliappan 2013; Surjit, 2014; Sol *et al.*, 2015) reported significant gender differences in emotional maturity others found a contrary result. Those who found significant difference claim that the females mature faster in certain cognitive and emotional areas due to the fact that their brain establishes connections and “prunes” itself faster than the male brain from the age of 10 while men have to wait until 20 before the same organizational structures take place. On the other hand, others researchers (Amit *et al.*, 2013; Kaur, 2013; Mallick *et al.*, 2014; Lakshmi, and Krishnamurthy, 2011; Stewart et al, 2001) found no significant difference between male and female emotional maturity. Stewart et al., (2001) for example, argue that birth position rather than gender is responsible for differences in emotional maturity. The researcher opined that the birth order in which a person is born into their family plays a substantial role in the individual’s development of personality, character, and intelligence (Stewart et al., 2001). He claimed that first-born children are usually introverted and relatively matured for their age. This may be in part due to the fact that first-born children tend to spend more time with adults, so it is natural that they would grow up faster. Herrera, *et. al.* , (2003) corroborated Stewart et al., (2001) findings when he averred that first-borns are exposed to more maternal and paternal participation because there are no other children to divide attention (Herrera, *et. al.*, 2003). Herrea et al, (2003) and Stewart et al. (2001) thereafter concluded that family, peer group, school and society play an important role in the emotional stability of individuals and not the gender

The finally, finding of this study is that freshmen between ages 22 and above were more matured emotionally than their counterpart in the age range of 16-21 years. The relationship between emotional

maturity and age is a difficult one because there has been much debate over methods of determining maturity, considering its subjective nature, relativity to the environment and/or other factors, and especially regarding politics, religion, culture, laws and other social issues (Steinberg, 1996). This finding corroborates Steinberg (1996) who was of the opinion that older persons are generally perceived as more matured emotionally. Johnson, *et al.*, (2009) argues that young people do not always make good decisions because they are not matured. Cross-sectional age comparisons also point to the possibility that there is steady and marked improvement in emotional experience from early adulthood into old age. On the other hand, Lakshmi, and Krishnamurthy, (2011) reported no significance in emotional maturity due to age since they argue that relationship with family, peers, teachers and other significant others shape ones emotional maturity rather than age. Rani *et al.*, (2013) corroborated this finding when they asserted that emotional maturity is the ability to respond to the environment in an appropriate manner and the response is generally learned rather than instinctive, and is not determined by one's age.

Limitations of Study

One of the limitations of this study is the use of survey design instead of experimental which provides the opportunity to observe the trend of emotional maturity over a long period of time. The study merely collected data at a single point in time, it is therefore difficult to measure changes in the population unless two or more surveys are done at different points in time. This study therefore touched only the surface of the field of emotional maturity and did not make a deeper thrust into it.

Another limitation of this study is the use of questionnaire. Scholars are of the opinion that questionnaires do not allow asking follow-up questions or further probing based on the given answer, which may be critical for the research. Similarly, questionnaires do not encourage respondents to contribute anything extra than what is asked for. Most importantly there is tendency for response bias is a general term for response biases a situation whereby the falsify responses. Nevertheless, the researcher adopted some measures to ensure that the study has methodological strength. Some of the measures include proper randomization, ensuring that the instrument has satisfactory psychometric properties and meticulous analyzes of data using suitable statistical tools. Above all the sample size used for this study is adequate to generalize the outcome to freshmen studying in Nigerian Universities in South Western Nigeria.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this study has provided empirical evidence to suggest that the freshmen admitted in

universities in south western Nigeria are emotionally immature to cope with stress associated with transition from secondary school to the university. The outcome has implications for counselling psychologists to organize to utilize therapeutic interventions with proven effectiveness to remediate the emotional immaturity of freshmen to enable them navigate challenges in a new academic environment. Some students that have been identified emotionally immature can be referred to counselling psychologists. The counselling process will assist them to gain greater insight into the behaviours that have kept them from attaining a higher degree of maturity and will provide a pathway for gaining that needed maturity. Therapists can offer guidance that will help you resolve long-lasting childhood issues that are making them feel stuck, and will lead to gaining greater self-acceptance.

Seminars, programmes and workshops should be organized by school counsellor for parents. This is to empower them with the skills to raise matured children by validating, mirroring, loving, and accepting their children. Parents should be made to understand the need to allow their children to express their emotion because negating their strong emotions can result in fearfulness, confusion, shame and resentment, which can interfere with their emotional maturity. When negative emotions are suppressed, they usually resurface and cause problems. School Teacher/lecturers should be encouraged to honestly express their feelings in constructive ways to foster children's emotional growth. When educators model self-understanding and emotional maturity, their students are more likely to do the same.

Another finding of this study which has practical implications is the fact that the female were more emotionally matured. In order to assist the male to increase their level of emotional maturity Parents and others should communicate understanding and empathy by reflecting the emotion observed in the boy. For example, say, "You seem not clam" or "You seem to be easily then, if the child confirms this reflection begins talking to them in a quiet manner. Parents, teachers/lecturers should avoid negative statements like, "Can't you do anything right?" or "What's your problem?" This is because studies have found that these comments discourage open communication and suggest that when a child does not behave perfectly, he or she is "bad." In addition, parents and educators should avoid moralizing ("That was wrong of you!"); humiliating ("I can't believe you did that."); lecturing ("You should have known better."); denying ("You'll be okay."); pitying, ("Poor you. It's all their fault."); and rescuing, ("I'll take care of it). Teachers should problem solve with the students by encouraging him or her to think of options and decide what constructive action to take. Parents/teachers/

lecturers could also watch a student's facial expressions, posture, play or art work for signs that a child is experiencing a strong negative emotion that could impair maturity.

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