

**FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG FIRST YEAR STUDENTS IN
SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES IN ETHIOPIA**

By

Demissie Semebo Bikamo

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR REGIS CHIRESHE

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DECLARATION

Name: DEMISSIE SEMEBO BIKAMO

Student number: 50788949

Degree: D.Ed. IN PSCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Factors affecting academic success among first year students in southern universities in Ethiopia

I certify that the above thesis is mine, and all sources I utilized or used are dually acknowledged or cited in-text citation and reference section.

I further affirm that I submitted the thesis through originality-checking software and that it complies with the standards for originality that are generally acknowledged.

I also certify that I have never before submitted this work, in whole or in part, to UNISA for a qualification examination or to any other higher education institution.

SIGNATURE



DATE 02 June 2023

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is devoted or dedicated to my late father Mr. Semebo or Seyfu Bikamo

ABSTRACT

The study intended to assess factors affecting academic success among first-year students in southern universities in Ethiopia. The challenges faced by the university first-year students are made worse to the point that some students decide they cannot handle the adjustment and quit during or after their first year. The assessment serves as a springboard to establish a model to improve first-year students' academic success. A mixed-method concurrent design was employed in the current study. Self-designed questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. A sample of eight hundred and twenty-six first-year students was selected using stratified simple random sampling. Besides, fourteen lecturers who taught first-year students, seven department heads, and seven college deans or freshmen coordinators participated in the study purposefully. The Social Sciences Statistics Package (IBM SPSS) version 25 was employed to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data were analyzed with a thematic approach. This study employed Bandura's social cognitive theory, Vygotsky's social constructivism, Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration and Astin's theory of Student involvement. The study revealed that most first-year students' inadequate self-efficacy, low perceived academic control, and severe stress influenced their current academic success negatively. The study also showed that first-year students had poor prior academic success that negatively affected their university performance. Students' experiences in institutional commitment, engagement, and active involvement were positively and strongly associated with enhanced perception of academic control and academic achievement. On the other hand, students' gender did not show a significant difference in their academic success. The study finally established that students' healthy and improved adaptive coping mechanisms positively affected their academic success. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should have a binding policy that clarifies and specifies services and strategies that could help improve first-year students' academic success in university settings. It is encouraged that Universities should be empowered by policies that mandate lecturers' methodology for first-year students' academic achievement in students' curricula. Besides, universities should establish first-year academic success support offices within their premises. It is further recommended that universities review curricula in tandem with the theory of academic achievement pedagogy. Finally, the study recommended a proposed model to increase first-year students' academic success.

KEYWORDS: Academic failure, academic success, academic performance, engagement, Ethiopia, persistence, first-year students, transition, stress

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

WHO	World Health Organization
CGPA	Cumulative grade point Average
HSGPA	High School Grade Point Average
NSSE	National Students Survey Engagement
HE	Higher Education
UNESCO	United Nations Children's Fund Institute for statistics
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONTEXT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to assess factors that affect first-year university students' academic success. This chapter outlines the problem and its setting, particularly the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, and research questions. The chapter also presents the significance of the study, theoretical framework, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions. Definitions of terms and the chapter outline are also presented.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

All first-year university students experience a transition period that varies from student to student. Transition is assumed as the time when students shift in direction in education from high school academic practice to higher education. During this transition, the students have diversified needs and interests (Alipio, 2020:1; Karwacinski, 2017:3; Maupa, 2020:3). For some, that experience will be exciting (Burton & Dowling, 2005: 68). These students are prepared to meet the difficulties presented by new educational and social experience. Others, however, may find the experience less pleasant and perhaps even traumatizing, which will force them to complete their tertiary education sooner (Burton & Dowling, 2005:68; Trinh, Nhi & Tran, 2020:222). Others will leave university because they realize that university is not for them now (Burton & Dowling, 2005:68). As a result, the transition experience may have a significant impact on the success of many students in the university.

A study by Respondek et al. (2017:2) revealed that two factors are frequently mentioned as indicating the academic success of undergraduate students: intention to quit out and academic success. Higher education engagement is often an elective and students must maintain enrollments to stay on track. A prior study also defined academic achievement based on course grades or grade point average as academic success (GPA) and retention (defined by the length of time students remain enrolled at an institution) (Respondek et al., 2017:2). Thus, the present study emphasizes University first-year students' educational or academic success and students remaining enrolled at the universities to predict academic achievement. Consequently, in this

research, academic performance or achievement is characterized as the result of students' learning being operationalized and conceived as academic success and the level of understanding that students achieved the intended educational objectives. It is also considered to be students' academic success or failure when they score good or bad grades. In this study, it is a mark in a course and test that indicates success. Academic performance or achievements can be described by how well a person performs on tests and exams (Islam & Tasnim, 2021:128). They showed that academic performances are mostly measured by cumulative grade point average (CGPA) (Islam & Tasnim, 2021:129; Ortega-Maldonado & Salanova, 2018: 390; Respondek et al., 2017:6). The present study used academic success as students' increased achievement that is an increased outcome or improved students' cumulative GPA.

A study in Saudi Arabia by Alonazi (2018:12) revealed that understanding first-year students' academic development and the factors influencing might aid in making future performance predictions for students for educational leaders and administrators. As Tsehay, Daniel, and Sewasew (2014:27) revealed that dropout rates and failure in academic are even somewhat high during the freshman programme, as college freshman year the most challenging for students. Even at highly selective schools and institutions, more than half of students leave college early before their second year. Although there hasn't been a thorough investigation into the number of university dropouts in Ethiopia, some of the research done in universities found the dropout rate to be between 10% and 15%, with the biggest losses happening in the first year of study primarily due to challenges adjusting to campus life (Tsehay et al., 2014:27). Concerning the previous academic achievement, some studies confirm that students having a higher entry test scores also succeed better academic success at universities (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001:21).

Regarding self-efficacy, literature has offered conflicting findings concerning the extent to which students' self-efficacy beliefs influence academic accomplishment. Wilcox and Nordstokke (2019:106), Nasir and Iqbal (2019:34 & 39), Herrera, Ordonez, and Perez (2017: 2), Álvarez-Huerta, Larrea, Muela, and Vitoria (2019:565), Fitz-Gerald (2017:3) and Pajares (1996:21) argued that a critical factor in determining how much students will exert effort in their academic pursuits and how long they will persist in their belief about their ability in the programme which will imply academic failure or success. On the other hand, Cassidy and Eachus (2000:307) and Zeegers (2004:35) argued that academic success is not necessarily predicted by academic self-efficacy. Zeegers pointed out that the adoption of deep and strategic learning methodologies is

connected to self-efficacy. The previous studies raised the debatable issues of how the learners' self-efficacy contributes to academic failure, the current study assessed the relatedness and the effect of self-efficacy on academic success.

A South African study by Pillay and Ngcobo (2010:234) found that stress levels are a cause for concern, particularly in light of ways they affect first-year students' level of functioning and academic success, according to a study done to identify causes of support and stress among college students. The majority (92%) of the students interviewed in Pillay and Ngcobo's study (2010:234) said that stress was induced by a fear of failing. This reveals that there was an academic failure among first-year university students whether the cause is psychological or not (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:3; Omran & Saleh, 2019:2).

In Ethiopia, the academic successes of some of Jimma University's first-year students were not encouraging, and some faculties of Jimma University had a significant amount of first-semester academic failure (Aemero & Kinde, 2011:31; Fentaw, 2001:50). A study by Tamirie (1997:7) conducted on first-year students at Addis Ababa University stated that some students attribute their successes more to skill and effort than to luck. On the other hand, some students attribute their failures more to bad luck and challenging assignments. Studies in Portugal also showed that student' academic success increases with how well-adjusted they are to their environment (Lent, Taveira & Singley, 2009: 191). However, this study reveals that when senior and junior students are compared, it is clear that their degrees of adjustment differ significantly. Senior students tend to be better adjusted than junior students. Junior or first-year students appear to be struggling with their academic work and coping with the learning tasks and have experienced academic failure in the first year.

According to the findings of a descriptive analysis of individual components, the top five issues that threatened or challenged students' academic success at the Gondar University of Ethiopia were improper time management, negligence, stress, failure-related fear, and insufficient effort (Tsehay et al., 2014:27). As far as the researcher's knowledge is concerned, the challenges related to students' experiences within the institution and some psychological factors have not yet been assessed in-depth in Ethiopian universities context. Moreover, the literature globally shows that students who encounter adjustment issues must be identified and suitable intervention programmes must be designed for them. This is particularly true for first year students who may struggle to handle the responsibilities and difficulties that might lead to stress and tension in their

campus life. Counseling should be provided to students who are struggling academically and who have low adjustment levels (Habibah, Noordin & Mahyuddin, 2010:338).

According to Kuh, Gonyea, Kinzie and Nelson (2008: 555), grades and perseverance of first-year students between their first and second year of college are indicators of the positive relationship between academic results and student participation in educationally relevant activities. Consequently, concern for student engagement is reasonable for institutions to have. However, as Krause (2005: 8) argued that unless the most concerned and practical support is rendered toward students' engagement, students fail to engage since students are simply and superficially obtaining focused help in the form of peer support, academic course advising, or student support when the opportunities were available. The above idea reveals that involving and engaging students with having most concern of the conducive environment, which likely lead to better academic success, otherwise there was an indication of academic failure. In brief, studies conducted globally and locally revealed that first-year students' academic success is influenced by various factors. However, none of the above studies focused on assessing how first-year students' academic success is influenced by students' psychological factors and students' experiences within the institutional factors as far as the researcher's understanding is concerned. Moreover, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no in-depth study has been executed in Ethiopia focusing on factors affecting the success rate of first-year university students. To this end, the present study sought to assess the variables that influence first-year university students' academic success in light of Bandura's social cognitive, Vygotsky's social constructivism; Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration and Astin's theory of Student development with the focus on student involvement implementation as an interactive approach of instruction.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study's background found that worldwide, students face difficulties brought up by new learning and social experiences (Karwacinski, 2017:3; Maupa, 2020:3). For some, that experience will be exciting while for others, the experience won't be as joyful and can even be traumatic which will cause their tertiary education to stop sooner (Burton & Dowling, 2005: 68; Omran & Saleh, 2019:1; Trinh et al., 2020:222). Similarly, the background to the study revealed that a university's first year is a critical transition time for adjustment and a situation in which many unfamiliar challenges may be experienced by students for the first time (Alonazi, 2018:26; DeBerard, Julk & Spielmans, 2004:67; Tesfamariam, 2018:44).

The background to the study also revealed that the challenges faced by university first-year students are made worse to the point that some students decide they cannot handle the adjustment and quit during or after their first year of study for higher education (Trinh et al., 2020:223). The study's background also revealed that an Ethiopian studies by (Ayele, 2018: 1326; Ayele, 2011:118; Esmael, Ebrahim & Misganew, 2018:1) indicated that adjustment problems by first-year students were one of those crucial incidents that limited their capacity for academic accomplishment.

The background to the study further revealed that studies specifically conducted in Ethiopia by (Aemero & Kinde, 2011:31; Mary & Medhanit,2017:46; Tsehay et al., 2014:27) show that the dropout rate and failure in academics even comparatively higher or alarming during the first-year programme since it's believed that for students, the first year is the most challenging. It has also been noted that there is not much research done in this area to the knowledge of the researcher. In Ethiopia, for example, one study assessed the root factors affecting students at Bahir Dar Teachers' College and Bahir Dar Poly Technique Institute (currently the two colleges are merged and known as Bahir Dar University) academic failure, and accordingly, he said that one of the significant incidents that hindered their academic progress was an adjustment problem as cited in (Ayele, 2018: 1326; Ayele, 2011: 188). In light of these observations, the current study sought to investigate factors or problems that affect first-year university students' academic success regarding students' psychological variables and their experiences within the institutional factors using Bandura's social cognitive with a focus on self-efficacy, Vygotsky's social constructivism; Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration, and Astin's theory of Student development with a focus on student involvement.

1.3 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The study was guided by the following main research question:

What are the factors that affect first-year university students' academic success in Southern Ethiopian Universities?

1.3.1 Sub-research questions

The study was guided by the following sub-research questions:

1.3.1.1 What are the psychological factors that affect first-year university students to succeed in their academic studies?

- 1.3.1.2 To what extent does previous academic achievement determine first-year students' academic failure or success?
- 1.3.1.3 To what extent does students' experience with institutional factors affect students' academic success in their first-year of university?
- 1.3.1.4 Does gender difference influence academic success among first-year university students?
- 1.3.1.5 How do first-year university students cope with the different challenges they face to enhance their academic success?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study sought to:

- 1.4.1 Assess the psychological factors that affect first-year students' academic success in Southern Ethiopian Universities.
- 1.4.2 Determine the extent that the previous academic achievement can predict academic failure or success of first-year university students in Southern Ethiopian Universities.
- 1.4.3 Assess some of the students' experiences within the institutional factors that contribute to students' academic failure or success in Southern Ethiopian Universities.
- 1.4.4 Investigate whether there is a gender difference in predicting academic success among first-year university students or not in Southern Ethiopian Universities.
- 1.4.5 Establish how first-year students in Southern Ethiopian Universities cope with the different challenges to enhance their academic success.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that university students, university lecturers, policymakers, and researchers may benefit from the findings of the study as follows.

First, the study may come up with strategies to address the factors that negatively affect their ability to succeed in university. This study result may also provide relevant and up-to-date information pertaining to first-year students' academic failure. The lectures may use the information for the academic success of first-year students.

Further, policymakers may use the results from the study to develop policies that enhance the success of first-year students in academics.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories that frame this research are presented as Bandura's social cognitive theory with a focus on self-efficacy; Vygotsky's social constructivism; Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration and Astin's theory of Student development focusing on student involvement. The Bandura's social cognitive theory claims that students' self-efficacy beliefs have an impact on their college achievements by boosting their motivation and perseverance to complete difficult academic assignments; and by promoting the effective use of newly learned knowledge and abilities (Zajacova, Lynch & Espenshade, 2005:679). Besides, van Rooij, Jansen, and van de Grift (2018:752) established that academic self-efficacy affects achievement both directly and via adjustment. Underlining the students' academic success there is the assumption that academic self-efficacy plays a crucial part in the improvement of first-year students' academic success. The most critical factor for academic success is the students' self-efficacy and the most important arena is the university, in particular, the classroom, students-lecturers, students-students, and students-faculty interaction. In this arena, academic success attempts to address the issues involved in the meaningful practice and enhancement of students' academic self-efficacy by extending what is normally available in the classroom as a way of reducing students' low-confidence practices.

Bandura also presented the idea of "self-efficacy", which holds that any deliberate changes in behavior are the product of a person's belief in their capacity to exhibit those behaviors. Aydin (2017: 95) has also advocated the idea that a student's level of success might be increased by their capacity to manage their time and obligations. That is, every person has the power to improve, shape, or affect their own lives. Personal characteristics, often known as "psychosocial factors", have captured academics' attention in the interest of success. These underpinnings of academic success improvements are grounded on Bandura's self-efficacy theory and social cognitive theory and strengthened in the study by Aydin (2017: 95). According to the Shelton (2003:68) model, the way a student looks for and makes use of environmental supports depends on internal psychological processes. The theory suggests that environmental and person-related cognition influence psychological stress (Previn & Cervone, 2010:366). Strong emotions like those that result from strong fear, acute anxiety, or high levels of stress typically cause

individuals to perform worse (Feist & Feist, 2009: 491). The theory of Bandura's self-efficacy under social cognitive theory guided the study in assessing factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Ethiopian universities.

This study also employed the themes of academic and social integration that were highlighted in Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration. Academic integration, which is achieved by effective self-organization, participation in group projects, and seeking assistance when required, refers to getting interested in the course material. An active social life with classmates and involvement in student organizations are examples of social integration. Academic and social integration go hand in hand for successful integrations. In line with this, studies by Aydin (2017: 94) and Alipio (2020:8) also further strengthened the model of social and academic integration proposed by Tinto, which highlights the importance of interaction in the new college environment is decisive. Students that are more dedicated to their studies exhibit greater retention and success. So, this study employed Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration framework in assessing initiatives and students' experiences in the institutions for academic success and developed and used it with experienced and committed lecturers for first-year students and department heads, and other concerned bodies to understand how reforms of social and academic integration can impact on engagement in the new university environment for the academic success. In this instance, Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration and goal commitment enabled the researcher to establish first-year students' integration needs to be merged into academic and social components of university strategies and a model for universities to effectively prepare their first-year students for the improvement of academic success in the university.

The other theory employed in the present study is the constructivist theory which maintains that lecturers for first-year students need to offer different support services and learning opportunities that acknowledge and go beyond the low-performing student's current context and the perspective they are viewing things from their point of view. Hence, starting with first-year students where they are and encouraging and supporting learners to work inside the "zone of proximal growth" are the key components of excellent teaching as identified by (Vygotsky, 1978). Many research findings on student engagement focus on increasing student learning, either directly or indirectly. For instance, as to Coates (2005:26), engaging is crucial that the constructivist premise underpinning the idea of student engagement that first-year students how

they engage in activities with an educational goal affects their learning. Therefore, student engagement essentially focuses on how much first-year students are involved in various educational activities that are established by research to be likely to result in high-quality learning. The constructivist theory enabled the researcher to establish the intervention mechanisms and supports how the teaching and learning processes are facilitated and made conducive for first-year students so that the students better understand where the challenge is and learns each through cooperative learning and the guidance and help of their lecturers.

The present study further applied Astin's theory of student development with a focus on student involvement which guided students can learn and develop their performance when they become involved in the college environment or students become at the center of learning. According to Astin's theory of student development, student involvement is the effort first-year students put into their academic experience, which leads to academic success (van Rooij et al., 2017:752; Astin, 1985). Upcraft (1995:18) expanded on this theory that first-year students have a higher chance of succeeding in college if they are more actively involved both in quantity and quality. Student involvement can be encouraged by university staff in several ways: an activity fair that introduces students to various campus organizations at the start of the year and organizing freshman planning meetings with students and their advisors or coordinators are two successful strategies. This is the theory that addresses the involvement of all concerned personnel's efforts as the institution. Therefore, van Rooij et al. (2017:752) established that the common ground of Tinto's and Astin's theories focus on that when interacting with the new educational environment, students' personal qualities, such as personality, motivation, and study techniques, alter and may even be challenged. In this sense, the present study is informed by the establishment and the improvement of first-year students' academic success depending on successful interaction between a student and the academic features and requirements of the university environment, which can be summed up by the construct of academic adjustment.

1.7 ASSUMPTIONS

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1.7.1 There is a high failure rate among the first-year students.

1.7.2 The need to improve first-year academic success rate will always continue.

1.7.3 The participants were all willing to take part in the study.

1.8 LIMITATIONS

In the beginning, the researcher would have wished to conduct the study in a large number of Southern Universities in Ethiopia but time constraints and the shortage of budgets made it difficult and limited only to two Universities. Besides, the scope of this study is limited to two universities due to the soundness of the sampled site and participants to respond to the research questions as aligned with the objectives of the study. Thus, the results may not be generalized to all the Southern Universities in Ethiopia.

1.8.1 Overcoming the limitations

The study employed stratified random sampling to combine randomization and apply inferential statistics to generalize the results to Southern Universities of Ethiopia. Besides, the researcher involved and increased the participation of fresh men coordinators who were in the front line for first-year students' academic success. The researcher pilot-tested the research instruments for their trustworthiness, validity, and reliability before administrating them.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS

The objective of the study was to assess factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities. It was confined to only two Ethiopian government universities and further delimited to only first-year university students.

1.10. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.10.1 Academic achievement- It refers to the results of a set of standardized educational tests taken in high school or college. The term is more commonly used to denote academic achievement in curriculum disciplines (Alipio, 2020:13). In the current study, the students' weighted point averages in terms or semester was taken as their academic achievement.

1.10.2 Academic Challenges- In literature it is meant as demanding high achievement or a situation that challenges students to strive for excellence (St.Claier & Hacket, 2012:103). In this study, it refers to the potential inhibiting issues for the academic success.

- 1.10.3 Academic failure:** Academic failure is frequently seen as an individual behavior that is only present in the early stages of life (Ojo, 2011:407). In this study, it is used to describe individuals whose CGPA is less than or equal to 2.0 in the first year.
- 1.10.4 Academic performance-** Students' academic achievement is defined as the end result of their study process and academic endeavor while in university (Alipio, 2020:6; Yates, 2017:12). The present study chooses students' cumulative GPA as a scale to compute their academic success as well.
- 1.10.5 Academic success-** is the degree that a learner, educator or organization has accomplished their long- or short-term learning goals (Mushtaq, Hussain, Afzal & Gilani, 2019). In the current research academic success refers to the extent of students' enhanced academic achievement that is an enhanced outcome or improved GPA in an academic year.
- 1.10.6 Engagement-** In literature it refers to engagement in instructionally sound methods, both inside and outside the classroom, that produce a variety of quantifiable outcomes (Kuh et al., 2007; Kuh in Upcraft et al., 2005:87). In this study, it means the active involvement of students with commitment in those relevant institutional factors and with concerned bodies of the university.
- 1.10.7 First generation student-** is a college student whose parents have no college experience (McConnell 2000: 75). In this study, it refers to students who engaged in first-year entry for the first time at the university.
- 1.10.8 Persistence-** The comparison of any cohort's enrolment headcount on the cohort's first official census date is known as persistence. The objective is to count the number of students who stick with it from one term to the next and finish college as cited in (Noel-Levitz, 2008:4). In this study, it means students who elect not to fail or dropout, willing to continue to the sustainability for consecutive years.
- 1.10.9 Retention** – a number that represents the rate of student persistence in an institution's educational programme. This percentage represents first-time undergraduates from each state who are pursuing a bachelor's degree (or equivalent) in four-year colleges who are enrolled once more in the current fall. This figure represents the proportion of new degree-

or certificate-seeking students from all other institutions who had either successfully finished their programme or reapplied by the previous fall as cited in (Noel-Levitz, 2008: 3). In this study, it refers to students who enroll once more at the same university proceed to the further existence in the university.

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINES

1.11.1 Chapter 1: The problem and its context

This chapter focuses on the problem and its context. Areas that are discussed comprise the background to the study, statement of the problem, sub-research questions, objectives of the study, theoretical framework, assumptions, limitations, and definitions of terms.

1.11.2 Chapter 2: Review of related literature

The literature on assessing factors affecting academic success among first-year students in some Southern Universities is reviewed under psychological factors, previous academic achievement versus present academic success, students' experiences in institutional factors, the gender difference in academic success, and students' coping mechanisms. The current study is contrasted with identified literature gaps.

1.11.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology

The chapter presents research methodologies, the research paradigm, the research approach, the research design, sampling procedures, instrumentation, pilot testing, data analysis, and ethical issues.

1.11.4 Chapter 4: Data presentation, analysis and discussions

In this chapter, collected quantitative and qualitative data were presented, analyzed, and discussed.

1.11.5 Chapter 5: Summary, conclusions and recommendations

In this chapter, a summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations, and a model to improve first-year students' academic success were presented.

1.12 SUMMARY

This chapter contextualized the study providing the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, and research objectives. The significance, limitations, and delimitations of the study were also discussed followed by a description of the theoretical framework that informs the study. Finally, key terms are defined. The following chapter presents a review of related literature.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The present study sought to assess the factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia. The problem and its context were described in the chapter before. This chapter examined related literature on what various authorities have presented on the topic under investigation. The current chapter reviews related literature from around the world on the factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia regarding related theories or models in line with what the present study addressed. The following subheadings are used to organize the literature according to the research questions for the study; Psychological factors and first-year university students' academic success; previous academic achievement and first-year students' academic success; students' experiences with institutional factors and academic success; gender and academic success among the first-year university students. In addition, it focuses on first-year university students' coping strategies and academic success. The present study fills the gaps identified.

ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), internet, APA (American Psychological Association)-PsyInfo and Dissertations and Thesis were some of the main data bases used for literature search.

Following that, there are literature reviews on psychological factors and first-year university students' academic success.

2.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AND FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Studies by De Clercq, Galand, Hospe, and Frenay (2021:97), Chalapati, Leunga and Chalapati (2018:26) and Kassaw and Astatke (2017:55) revealed that during college or university, students endure a variety of pressures, particularly during a period of major change when they are exposed to numerous firsts and new experiences, such as a new way of life, new friends, new roommates, exposure to different cultures and new ways of thinking. Students' integration into or "intertwining" with the university community and its requirements defines the process of their transition into higher education (Krause, 2001:148). The assumption made by Adler, Raju,

Beveridge, Wang, Zhu and Zimmermann (2008:1281) indicated the necessity of adjusting to college, especially for first-year students' academic success. Poor academic success, low rates of graduating, and unsuccessful outcomes later in life are all correlated with poor college adjustment. Students may easily develop despair and anxiety if they do not feel equipped or ready to deal with the unfamiliar surroundings of a college campus. The frequency of mental illness among first-year university students is rising globally (De Clercq et al., 2021:98; Julia & Veni, 2012:245; Karwacinski, 2017:30). The current study intended to assess the degree of academic success among first-year students was influenced by psychological problem, specifically low self-efficacy during the transition period of first-year class.

Studies by Farruggia et al. (2018:310), Karwacinski (2017:25), Shell, Murphy and Burning (1989:91) established that self-efficacy is a generative mechanism by which individuals integrate and use their social, cognitive, and behavioral skills to the academic accomplishment of a given particular activity for the students. Furthermore, Noreen, Hasan, Batool, and Ali (2018:317), Freire, Ferradás, Regueiro, Rodríguez, Valle, and Núñez (2020:2) and Bandura (1986:391) defined self-efficacy beliefs are seen in the social cognitive model as people's opinions on their ability to organize and do the actions required to attain particular types of academic success. Self-efficacy is situational and domain-specific; thus, self-efficacy beliefs vary depending on the circumstance. Bandura further views perceived self-efficacy as not concerned with skills but rather with assessments of what one can accomplish using their set of skills. Studies by Richardson, Abraham, and Bond (2012: 366) and Talsma, Robertson, Thomas and Norris (2021:6) revealed that the most potently favorable mean correlations between self-efficacy in academics and academic success.

Similarly, an earlier study by Nākoa (2020:20) and Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davies, Langley and Carlstrom (2004: 270) showed that the best indicator of academic success was academic self-efficacy followed by achievement motivation. Studies conducted in Ethiopia, too confirmed that students' academic self-efficacy is a strong predictor of first-year first-semester GPA (Olani, 2009:1070). The different studies on self-efficacy conducted by Bandura and others have revealed that students' beliefs about their ability to perform a task have a big impact on their success (Adeyemo, 2007:200; De Freitas, 2012:110; van Rooij et al., 2018:752). If one's self-efficacy beliefs are not supported by the capacity to complete academic activities; students might not succeed academically if their low self-efficacy turns out to be true.

Low efficacy expectations among students may cause them to be less tenacious, put up less effort, and avoid academic responsibilities. As a result, this may result in poorer performance on examinations and assignments, strengthening the judgments of ineffectiveness (Krumrei-Mancuso, Newton, Kim & Wilcox, 2013:261). The present study tried to assess whether students' low self-efficacy is related to students' lower perception and effort of academic control in influencing academic success.

Regarding socio-cognitive theory, students continued to have a high level of self-efficacy and had the conviction that, despite the challenges they confronted, they achieve their goals through diligence and concentration (Berhanu, 2018:59; Doménech-Betoret, Abellán-Roselló & Gómez-Artiga, 2017:4; Griffin, 2006: 369). Similarly, studies by Morellia, Chirumboloa, Baioccoa, and Cattelino (2021:172), Alipio (2020:3), Fitz-Gerald (2017:22), Fenollar, Roman, and Cuestas (2007: 881), Zajacova et al. (2005:696) and Chowdhury and Shahabudd (2007:5) established that self-efficacy was the best indicator of academic achievement. Highly efficacious students had a propensity to feel as if they could handle academic pressure that resulted in less stress, improved health, and improved adjustment. Although self-efficacy had no direct impact on students' academic advancement, research findings indicated that there is a significant indirect impact via study techniques. In the United States of America, studies among first-year college students (Altman, 2017:39; Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2013:261), a Belgium study by De Clercq et al. (2021:111), Netherlands study by van der Zanden, Denessen, Cillessen and Meijer (2018:73) and an Ethiopian study by Kassaw and Astatke (2017:62) revealed that higher academic achievement was substantially correlated with higher levels of academic self-efficacy, through both direct and indirect academic expectations which were also strongly supported by other studies conducted among first-year university students.

However, studies in Turkey by Aydin (2017:103), in Nigeria by Kolo et al. (2017:1) and in the USA by Pajares (1996:568) warn against assuming that students' levels of self-efficacy may be ineffectual and does not result in a high rate of academic success in two conditions. He contends that while students may be assured and believe they are highly qualified and proficient in academic duties, this won't always be the case that benefits them if they lack motivation to succeed or achieve at university because they are less likely to put their knowledge to use. Second, even if students exhibit high levels of self-efficacy, their academic success will not improve if their universities do not have qualified instructors, appropriate tools, or other

resources. The studies above indicated that students having high self-efficacy without motivation and lack of institutional support did not lead to better academic success. The present study tried to assess how first-year students, lecturers, department heads', and freshmen coordinators' reactions and viewed students' self-efficacy influenced academic success during the delivery of teaching and learning instruction.

Studies done in one of the universities in Ethiopia confirm that self-efficacy in academics was one of the psychological predictors, and there was a link between it and university GPA, but it was often less than the association between prior academic measures and university GPA (Olani, 2009 :1068). Even though the above study was conducted in Ethiopia, it was a relatively long time ago, whereas the present study sought to assess what self-efficacy seems, and how students' self-efficacy influenced their academic success in recent years. According to some other studies, first-year academic success was unrelated to pre-college traits such as self-perception, mental health and aspirations (Zhou et al., 2014: 2). However, this study sought to assess how first-year students' academic success was associated with the Psychological concepts including perceived academic control and stress.

Although first-year students have more opportunities to exercise control, they sometimes work in stressful circumstances that make them feel "out of control" (Perry Stupnisky, Daniels & Haynes, 2008: 235). To the extent that Perceived Academic Control (PAC) predicts academic feelings, motivation, and performance and considering that the importance of college in freshmen students' life, it is likely that PAC also foretells students' mental health (Alipio, 2020:4; Aydin, 2017:98; Clark, 2018:11; De Clercq et al., 2021: 109 &112; Lehman, 2019:11; Perry et al., 2008:236).

Even though little focus has been given to academic control of perceptions, it is essential for the academic success of first-year students as it relates to students' psychological health (Joelle, Tara, Robert & Raymond, 2008:236; Respondek, Seufert, Stupnisky & Nett, 2017:3 & 9). In the above study, it was mentioned that the focus given for perceived academic control was much less even though it has a significant role in influencing first-year university students' academic success. The current study tried to assess how was perceived academic control emphasized and to what extent students' perceived academic control affected their responsible and autonomous habits and practices of first year students' academic success in Ethiopia, particularly in Southern Universities.

United States of American studies by (Hayes et al., 2019:76; Ruthig et al., 2008: 241 & 243; Stupnisky et al., 2018:1; Stupnisky et al., 2007:320) and a Spanish study by González et al. (2015:875) revealed that PAC anticipated decreased levels of sadness and stress, which would protect students from the demands of their first year and, indirectly, result in increased achievement and higher levels of involvement. Consequently, academic success was more common among students who had greater control over their environment than those who felt less in control of their circumstances. The above studies sought that perceived academic control played minimizing role in students stress and further enhanced academic success. The present study sought to assess how the role of students' perceived academic control influenced their stress which further students' experiences with institutional factors in influencing academic success. As opposed to that, a study in Germany by Respondek et al. (2019:16 & 998) revealed that the first-year baseline PAC's correlation with academic success was weaker than anticipated. The studies above were conducted in developed countries where students' perception of academic control issue is in advanced stages. The practice of perceived academic control expressed at German universities may not be generalized to Ethiopian Universities. The present study sought to assess whether Ethiopian universities' first-year students' perceived academic control influenced their success or not. The other psychological factor that still impacts academic achievement in the first year of university is stress and time management.

The definition of perceived academic stress is considered as academic assignments not being completed on time, anticipating being able to finish several jobs, and working under strict deadlines, having a burdensome workload of projects, and exams and having trouble working with lecturers /professors (Ragheb & McKinney, 1993:5). For instance, perceived stress predicted poor or less successful integration into the university in the Petersen, Louw and Dumont (2009)'s study since individuals who are under stressed out could find it challenging to handle the additional social, personal and scholastic obligations. Besides, when students lack the confidence that their social networks are there to assist them they may resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms like avoidance and denial (Fitz-Gerald, 2017: 7 &11).

According to some studies, due to multiple changes, disagreements, and frustrations, first-year college students experience more stress than senior students. According to research findings, first-year university students may experience increased levels of stress due to their dedication to their studies, monetary constraints, and a lack of time management skills (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:55;

Naz, Nawaz, Liaqat, Rasheed & Fatima, 2020:454; Okoro, 2018:45; Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020:107; Rayle & Chung, 2008:24). Studies also revealed that university students who experience more stress do worse academically (Mehfooz & Haider, 2017:4; Sommer, 2013:214; Wani, Nagar & Buhroo, 2018: 68). This suggests that students who are struggling to manage their academic obligations and tasks and who find them to be overwhelming are feeling higher levels of perceived stress, which harms their performance abilities and lowers their chances of succeeding academically at university.

Similarly, Akgun and Ciarrochi (2003:287) revealed that the relationship between stress and academic achievement is moderated by students' learned resourcefulness (LR). According to Akgun and Ciarrochi (2003:287), the definition of resourcefulness taught to the students was a collection of skills for regulating internal events, such as emotions, that may otherwise interfere with the smooth execution of target behavior. High levels of stresses had less of an impact or influence on students with high levels of learnt resourcefulness than those with low levels (resulting in lower academic success) (Akgun & Ciarrochi, 2003:287). Students with a high level of learnt resourcefulness are therefore; better equipped to handle the stress experienced at university when compared to students with less learned resourcefulness. As Gaudreau (2018:8) established that collaborative effort, effectively educating and training students in coping mechanisms (such as self-control, study and learning strategies, time management, etc.) seem advantageous to students, assisting them in managing and lowering their levels of stress. The current study tried to assess how lecturers teaching methods practiced among first-year students contributed to lower stress experience and further academic success with the consideration of interactive versus lecture-dominated methodology.

It has been established via numerous longitudinal studies of first-year college students that stress is linked to a less successful adjustment to college over time. Studies conducted by Neville, Heppner, Ji and Thye (2004: 611) found that academic stress adversely influenced student academic progress in their research of 260 black university first- to fourth-year undergraduate students with a predominately white university. It suggests that academic stress rather than conventional university entrance exams explain more variation in first-year students' academic success. A Canadian study by Chow (2007:486) examined twelve different variables, and stress was one of them to forecast the academic achievement of Canadian university students. The findings of a sample of 373 undergraduate students showed that stress due to academic, social,

and work requirements were both predictors of and negatively correlated with students' academic success. Lastly, the study by Hackett, Bets, Casa and Rocha-Singh (1992:534) analyzed the connection between perceived stress and academic success, in addition to the interaction between educational and psychological aspects. The semester and final grades of first and second-year students were found to be inversely associated with stress. Academic stress indicators showed the strongest inverse mean relationships with academic achievement (Omran & Saleh, 2019:2; Richardson et al., 2012: 366; Zajacova et al., 2005:679). However, studies by Mehfooz and Haider (2017:1) and Yikealo and Tareke (2018:2) revealed that stress leads to improved performance, and still the impact of stress on students' performance has remained relatively unexplored. Moreover, studies in South Africa by Sommer (2013:41), in Turkey by Aydin (2017:102), and in Canada by Ramey, Lawford, Chalmers and Lakman (2018:84) revealed that academic success and psychological stress did not significantly correlate.

The studies above were conducted relatively in developed countries where students' stress may not be a big concern since they have stress-minimizing advanced situations and could not be conclusive to the Ethiopian context. The current study sought to assess whether first-year students' academic success was influenced by various stressful situations in the Southern Ethiopian Universities' context. Besides, it assessed how insufficient psychosocial and academic supports and provisions influenced academic success.

The following section discusses previous academic achievement and first-year students' academic success.

2.2 PREVIOUS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Several studies (Alonazi, 2018:29 & 35; De Clercq et al., 2021:99; Karwacinski, 2017:22; van Herpen et al., 2017:54) established that it is crucial to identify any links between high school academic success and first-year university students' struggles with academic adjustment. Accordingly, Feldman and Newcomb (1994:90) propose that the specific background and personality features depend on the degree of difficulty and the nature of adjustments in the first several months of college. Academic success in high school, especially in the fourth year, reveals a lot about a student's upbringing and personality traits. Academic and non-academic elements have historically been the focus of research on characteristics that predict student performance in higher education (e.g., demographic, psychosocial, and cognitive factors) as proposed by (

Binder, Sandmann, Sures, Friege, Theyssen & Schmiemann, 2019:2; Grebennikov & Skaines, 2009:60).

Studies by Braxton and Lee (2005:112), Anderton (2017:185), Dorta-Guerra, Marrero, Abdul-Jalbar, Trujillo-Gonzalez and Torres (2019:1494) examined that student admission qualities directly affect the student's likelihood of persistence in college. According to Astin's (1993:7) inputs, the environment, and outputs (I-E-O) model, to better comprehend the effects of college on students (e.g., prior academic achievement), one must first evaluate the "inputs," or necessary characteristics of students upon enrollment in college. Studies confirmed that individuals frequently exhibit a high degree of constancy in their level of academic and extracurricular participation between high school and college (Astin & Lee, 2003: 669). Similarly, Astin and Osegurea (2005:258) and Isonio (1995:9) claimed that the history of one's academic achievement in the past is a good indicator of one's academic performance in the present. Additionally, previous research has shown that a student's high school GPA or matric scores are probably the most important predictor variables for their academic progress in college since it explains academic success varies more than any other factor combined (Sommer, 2013:460). For example, in the meta-analyses of Trapmann, Hell, Weig and Schuler (2007: 17), Robbins et al. (2004:270), and Burton and Ramist (2001:6), the correlation between prior academic success and academic achievement at university has a Pearson's mean effect size of, respectively, 0.51, 0.41, and 0.42 (students who performed well at high school are likely to perform well at university).

University performance is frequently measured for first-year students in terms of cognitive variables, such as ACT or SAT results and grade point averages from high school (Anderton, 2017:185; De Clercq et al., 2021:99; Lotkowski, Robbins & Noeth, 2004:396; Ribeiro, Rosário, Núñez, Gaeta & Fuentes, 2019:2; van der Zanden et al., 2018:58; Whannell, 2014:113). As findings indicated, psychosocial factors and prior academic achievement indicators together explained 17% of the variation in students' college GPA scores. The minority percent (4%) of the total was contributed solely by psychological factors, while the majority percent (13%) accounts for prior academic achievement. So, the study's findings proved that previous academic success was a reliable indicator of a disparity in college-level success (Hornberger, 2010:5). Studies conducted in Ethiopia also confirmed that students' prior academic records positively predict first-year first-semester academic GPA (Olani, 2009:1070). The current study assessed how previous academic achievement influenced first-year students' academic success. Moreover,

it assessed if academic participation in high school and anticipated academic engagement in university were positively correlated with high school academic readiness.

Students who consider their academic preparation as being high are more likely than those who perceive their academic preparation as being low to aim to graduate from their current institution (Mehfooz & Haider, 2017:1; Survey of Student Engagement Annual Report, 2007:26; Wani et al., 2018:68). Additionally, it was predicted that greater freshmen GPA and SAT scores would link positively with high school GPA (Alonazi, 2018:56; De Berard et al., 2004:68; De Clercq et al., 2021:105: 107; van der Zanden et al., 2018:73; van Rooij et al., 2018: 759 & 760).

Studies by Yigermal (2017:163) and Alonazi (2018:35) also revealed that student's university entrance exam result and better academic success before college predicts good academic success in college and have a positive effect on student's academic success (CGPA) after they joined into university. Similarly, higher university entry scores are associated with better academic success in university (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001:26). Moreover, research studies by Dorta-Guerra et al. (2019:1494) and McKenzie & Schweitzer (2001: 29 & 56) have found a significant link between high school academic performance and college success and better prior academic achievement is reflected in first-year college students' higher GPAs. That is, students who perform better academically in high school frequently continue to do better in college. The present study assessed how previous academic success and university entrance exam results influenced first-year students' academic success.

Numerous studies have been conducted around the globe and revealed that using students' prior academic records forecast the university's overall cumulative grade point average. For instance, they found that previous grades and first-semester university grades had a high and substantial positive association ($r= 0.653$), and there is a strong and positive association ($r= 0.265$) between previous grades and university scores (Abdullah & Mirza, 2019: 210). Besides, a study found that factors such as pre-university exam scores, gender, class attendance, teacher-student relationships, students' level of confidence, depression, and the number of credits earned all significantly affect the academic success (Islam & Tansim, 2021:129 & 130).

Furthermore, high school marks seemed to have a comparatively high relationship with college GPA as revealed in the prior findings in Ethiopia by (Zekarias, Aba-Milki & Mikre, 2015: 167). Bappah, Magaji and Usman (2021:558) also revealed that the majority of students that struggle

academically in higher institutions are those who did not meet the entrance requirements for high school but admitted in a poorly assessed way. That is, prior academic achievement is the most significant indicator of first-year academic performance (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020:5). Besides, Binder et al. (2019:2) asserted that the cognitive ones, in particular prior knowledge, appear to be the most potent.

On the other hand, studies by Musoba, Collazo and Placide (2013: 358), van der Zanden et al. (2018: 64), and Binder et al. (2019:14) found that pre-college characteristics, such as prior academic success, may be less relevant for Latino students. Notably, about two-thirds of students claim that their senior year of high school did not effectively prepare them for life in college. Besides, a study by Astin and Osegurea (2005:258) examined and concluded that after looking more closely at the characteristics of the students, higher high school GPAs, standardized test scores, and parents with four-year degrees were associated with increased likelihood of enrollment in highly selective colleges and institutions. The researchers concluded that student retention and academic progress are "very weakly related" to high school GPA and standardized test scores. Furthermore, Crisp (2005:147), Olani (2009:1057), van Rooij et al. (2018:758-759) and Sommer (2013:47) noted that no research exists that points to any substantive validity of SAT scores in predicting overall student adjustment to college, academic engagement in the classroom, retention rates, or graduation rates, and that the precise nature of the role [high school GPA and high school quartile] play in the persistence process remains unclear. The studies conducted above considered only the final year of high school preparation, while other studies focused on students who attended facilitated universities and came with well-educated family backgrounds where prior academic achievements may not be critically valued. The well-facilitated university conditions did not apply to the current study. So, the present study tried to assess the influence of overall prior high school academic achievement and entry score on first-year students' academic success and considered the Ethiopian, particularly Southern Universities scenario.

The following section discusses first-year students' experiences with institutional factors among first-year students' academic success.

2.3 FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Studies have demonstrated that every aspect of a student's university experience affects their likelihood of success (Chan-Hilton, 2019:5; van Schalkwyk, Schoem & Deventer, 2009:7). Alonazi (2018: 28 & 29) revealed that students interact with professors, other university employees, and their peer group to experience and learn about institutional principles and requirements. It has been shown that interactions between students and faculty and the utilization of intervention programmes and student support services positively affect academic success and adjustment to university life (Sommer & Dumont, 2011:388).

Moreover, studies by Morelli et al. (2021:172) and Krause and Coates (2008:2) established that students' active engagement in learning tasks influence engagement to some level. It is stated that institutions are accountable for establishing environments that enable learning and provide opportunities for learning. The literature revealed that academic, administrative, and support programmes should be woven into the curriculum as much as possible according to first-year education experiences (Kift & Nelson, 2005: 226). The underlying premise is that methods that are integrated into regular instruction to ensure that all students take part and profit from them might increase student engagement (Chalapati et al., 2018:33; Thomas, 2012:9). As studies confirmed institutional commitment, institutional standards, encouragement, feedback, and participation or engagement are all included in the institutional environment. For example, students' well experiences within the institution or environments that create surroundings that are encouraging and helpful can help to foster their development or success (Berhanu & Sabanci, 2020:1171; Paredes, 2009:17; Trinh et al., 2020:228), whereas less learning support and low students' experiences within the institution resulted in poor performance (Okoedion, Okolie & Udom, 2019:413).

The more students believe that the institutions they are attending fit with their goals and aspirations, the greater the likelihood the students will invest in behaviors and activities that will more fully integrate them into the institution (Bridges, Cambridge, Kuh & Leegwater, 2005: 30; Sakız, Özdaş, Göksu & Ekinci, 2021:8). Institutions must provide opportunities and support to engage students actively and frequently if they want them to stick with it and achieve (Bridges et al., 2005: 30). Institutions should keep up their efforts and commitment to creating and maintaining welcoming institutional environments. This involves giving students the academic

tools they require to succeed in university and fostering an inclusive campus community where students feel supported personally and academically. The institutional factors, especially those geared toward first-year programmes should be aware of the crucial function that concerned institutions' bodies play in mediating students' psychological wellbeing and their academic engagement (Cole & Korkmaz, 2013:567).

Furthermore, Karwacinski (2017:28) and Strydom and Mentz (2010:6) to student involvement stated that student behaviors and institutional factors contribute to the learning process. Studies by Strydom, Mentz and Kuh (2010:3) in South Africa, Olufemi, Adediran and Oyediran (2018:49 & 50) in Nigeria, and Amoozegar, Daud, Mahmud and Jalil (2017:652) in Malaysia also explain institutional circumstances pertain to the degree to which the institutions use successful educational strategies to persuade students to behave morally. According to research carried out in the US by Crede and Niehorster (2012:147), academic adjustment followed by institutional connection and social adjustment most significantly associated with academic success. Academic success in the above countries is influenced by students' engagement in the institution, thereby enhancing academic success due to favourable institutional conditions.

The current study also wanted to assess if students' engagement in the institution practiced in the United States of America and Malaysia is applied to contemporary Ethiopian universities' conditions and practices. Students who feel they can relate to the "institutional habits" or cultural traditions of their university feel represented and included by it, and as a result, they participate more in all facets of university life (Amoozegar et al., 2017: 648; Crede & Niehorster, 2012:147; Slåtten, Lien, Evenstad & Onshus, 2020:4). As studies clearly state there is a correlation among first-year students' prospects for personal growth, the formation of healthy interpersonal connections with others and how they feel autonomy and the meaning of life. First-year staff and instructors should keep checking, if programmes are giving students these crucial developmental chances (Cole & Korkmaz, 2013:567; Maymon, Hall & Harley, 2019:65; Slåtten et al., 2020:6).

Another psychosocial indicator of success in college is involvement in campus activities. The degree to which are students involved in the physical and mental effort they put into their academic experience (Astin, 1984: 297; Chan-Hilton, 2019:5). That is, the more students think about becoming involved and become involved (both in activities that relate to classroom learning and those that are co-curricular), the greater their integration into the campus

community. This entails putting effort into their studies, spending time on campus, being involved in student organizations, and associating with instructors and fellow students. According to the student involvement idea, participation in college life's social and academic facets increases student learning. Student involvement and engagement in educational institutions have long been a consideration for academic success (Maymon et al., 2019:65; Mohamedhosein & Crul, 2018:1704; Slåtten et al., 2020:4). Although Astin's involvement study tried to assess the nature of student involvement, there was no comparison made between men and women (Karwacinski, 2017:29). The above studies focused students' learning is enhanced based on the involvement and engagement of both students' academic and social integration which influenced academic success. The current study also wanted to assess whether students' successful involvement and engagement and institutions' well-facilitated experiences influenced first-year students' academic success in Ethiopian universities. As pointed out by Chism (2002:146), the success of students is greatly influenced by lecturers who should work in order to make the students feel welcomed by showing genuine interest in them, personalizing our interactions with them, and appreciating and incorporating their thoughts and experiences.

Studies by Lowe and Cook (2003: 75), Slåtten et al. (2020:7), Carmona-Halty Salanova, Liorens, and Schaufeli (2018:9), and Morelli et al. (2021:168) assert that institutions should implement "invasive, proactive tactics" of academic help early on in a student's first year to avoid emotions of bewilderment and failure that cause disengagement. Lowe and Cook (2003:75) also reveal that in the university to retain and engage newcomers, it is essential to underline that those who struggle academically are those who are more at risk of such disengagement (Larmar & Ingamells, 2010:211; Mohamedhosein & Crul, 2018:1703 & 1708; Ribeiro et al., 2019:2). Taking into account the student's capacity to adapt to a higher standard of excellence is part of academic integration (rigorous methods that were probably not used in high school environments). As studies confirmed, there is a growing body of research supporting the assertion that students' first-year cumulative GPA and academic-related skills are positively correlated. For example, if students experience of the institution with formal lecturers interactions which practice formal student peer interactions, which include study-related exchanges with classmates when working together on assignments in or outside of the classroom, and study-related exchanges with lecturers, which are often referred to as instruction, feedback, and discussions that occur in a classroom setting, it leads to academic success (Mohamedhosein & Crul, 2018:1703).

Lidy and Kahn (2006:124) state that social support facilitates the mobilization of interpersonal resources to help students cope with the stress of college adjustment. Similarly, in an earlier investigation by Halamandaris and Power (1997: 99), there is a significant association between social assistance and 123 first-year students' adjustment. The other study stressed those social skills affected students favorably and unfavorably. Academic achievement can affect a student's social skills, which also affect academic success (Alipio, 2020:4; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Recent studies have also shown that early encounters between students and lecturers result in fascinating "mentorship" behaviors that should be supported by institutional policies: Senior-junior students who engage with lecturers early on can reap higher rewards through mentorship by the end of college (Chalapati et al., 2018:36; Fuentes, Alvarado, Berdan & De Angelo, 2014: 302). Concerning student satisfaction with faculty, if students are satisfied with faculties involved in an active and meaningful mentorship, faculty involvement is an essential factor for students' success (Chalapati et al, 2018:30; Perry, 2010:25 &26). The current study tried to explore if students, lecturers, department heads, and fresh men coordinators agreed on students' social skills influence academic success.

According to a study by Hassan (2014:73), all college students are more prone to do better, be more content, stick with their studies, and graduate from the institution if a broad array of complimentary activities based on successful educational methods is used. Other programmes can be implemented that have proven beneficial in boosting student achievements, such as learning communities, first-year seminars, effective orientation, pertinent advising, additional instruction, etc. Studies by Respondek et al. (2017:3) and DeClercq et al. (2021:100) revealed that academic grades were favorably correlated with effective teaching, while perceptions of a demanding workload and unfair evaluation were adversely correlated. Numerous academics looked into particular strategies for encouraging engagement. The studies found that orientation procedures had a crucial role in assisting students in adjusting to academic life by facilitating social connections with faculty, staff, and peers and helping them get familiar with the campus and understand the requirements of academic study (Alonazi, 2018:28; Ndoeye, Clarke & Henderson, 2020:52; Zepke & Leach, 2010:172).

Even though transitional programmes like enabling, orientation and others can be very helpful, students' first-year experiences should be of excellent quality and will mostly depend on what occurs after they are on the course (Waters, 2003:295). While orientation and tutors are the

responsibility of many units within the University (Student Services, Faculties, and Schools), finding out whether academic staff thought that students received appropriate Faculty and School orientation and tutors was fascinating (since the Student Services unit has been promoting mentor or tutor programmes throughout the University), if they regarded interactions between students and lecturers, student mentoring, or tutoring, as an essential orientation strategy (Islam & Tasnim, 2021:129 &132; Khaliq, Hussain, Afzal & Gilani, 2018: 541). As studies showed the programme for faculty orientation is sufficient, according to 51% of respondents, while only 18% disagreed. A sizable portion (27%) was unsure of the program's suitability, though it is speculative whether this is because they are unaware of the programme or have doubts about its efficacy. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 denoting "extremely essential," respondents generally agreed that a big issue in the first-year experience is faculty orientation, giving it a mean value of 4.06 on the scale (Waters, 2003:295). Most respondents (76%) said their schools offer thorough discipline-focused orientation and the relevance of this factor was considerably higher (mean, 4.63). The percentage of respondents who said their schools offer a mentor programme for freshmen students was only 31%. Of all the support measures looked at, this one had the lowest perceived importance score (3.35) (Waters, 2003:296). The above literature raised and elaborated on the importance of orientation and the various ways how orientation is provided.

Concerning the first-year seminar, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005: 403) and Altman (2017:15) state that the majority of the research suggests taking part in the first-year seminar is statistically meaningful and favorable benefits on a student's smooth transition to college and their likelihood of continuing to the second year. However, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:403) still consider first-year seminars to have at the minimum positive, indirect effects on grades and joint academic and social integrations are related to retention, completion, and better grades (Burns, 2010:50; Okoedion, 2019:421). Concerning institutional experiences, the only person the students must see three or four times a semester is frequently their academic advisor (Ender, Winston & Miller, 1982: 6).

Braxton, Duster, and Pascarella (1988:266) and Altman (2017:8) included academic advising in a path model between initial goal/institutional commitment and academic/social integration. Their theoretical rationale for the causal placement of academic advising in the model was that academic counseling or advice involves making decisions that help the student to realize his or her educational possibilities with communication and the exchange of information with an

advisor". Academic advising is the process of personally communicating with an academic advisor, which can happen in a variety of ways. First, according to (McCabe, 2003:3), prescriptive academic advising is almost a clerical task. Advice on authority is what the advisor's job entails. Prescriptive counseling can be less suitable for ill-prepared students (vander Schee, 2007:51), who also points out that it does not encourage the creation of unique methods for solving problems that are necessary to improve low academic accomplishment. The advisor-student relationship is focused on the process in developmental academic advising, on the other hand, is primarily focused on the student's long-term objectives (vander Schee, 2007:50). In this instance, the student uses the advisor as a resource, and the advisor and the student collaborate to solve the problem (Kramer, 2000:84). Moreover, the relationship emphasizes academic proficiency, personal engagement, and discovering or affirming one's life purpose, all of which are connected to academic achievement (Ender & Wilkie, 2000:119).

The advisor is actively involved in the situation of students in the intrusive advising approach, which does not rely on the student visiting the advisor freely (Earl, 1988:12). Early warning systems that enable fast, action-oriented responses to specific academic challenges and a reliance on experienced professionals as advisors are its distinguishing features (Earl, 1988:12). Students who visited with their advisor more regularly expressed greater satisfaction with both the advising process and their institution selected outcomes in general (Survey of Student Engagement Annual Report, 2007:23). Studies by Karwacinski (2017:32) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005:404) also state academic counseling may affect students' decisions to persevere. The above literature reveals that various models of academic advising have different effects on students' academic results. Nora, Barlow, and Crisp (2005:136) also asserted that informal and formal contacts between students and their peers are part of the underlying process impacting students' transition to college, their academic success, and their decision to remain enrolled till graduation. In other studies, Braxton, Hirschy and McClendon (2004:74) stated that to enhance peer group connections, urge universities to establish "communities of learning".

On the other hand, Halamandaris and Power (1999: 675), and study in the USA by Paredes (2009:28), found that perceptions of social support were not associated with academic achievement since there is conflicting evidence that is, the impact of students' social skills on GPA and first-year retention showed conflicting findings. Besides, some studies revealed that the positive correlations between academic success and social support, academic integration, social

integration, and institutional integration were extremely low (Aydin, 2017:103; Olufemi et al., 2018:113; Richardson et al., 2012: 366). The above studies found that arguing against social support, academic integration, and institutional integration was related to students' GPAs. The result observed in the study area may not be generalized to the Ethiopian Universities context. The current research wanted to assess if social support and activities, which are students' group work, the students having a network with their peers and others influenced their GPA. The present study was conducted through mixed approaches in line with Astin's and Tinto's involvement models.

Furthermore, an American College Testing study (Lotkowski et al., 2004:396) revealed a moderate correlation exists between students' first-year GPA and their academic-related skills or abilities. Some findings also reported a weak link between students' academic abilities, students' weak study-related skills experience in the institution and first-year GPA (Paredes, 2008:28). First-year students' GPA from the above American country is not likely or moderately influenced by students' academic skills where their GPAs may be more influenced by advanced institutional conditions. These institutional conditions may not be applied to Ethiopian Universities. The present study sought to assess if students' academic-related skills influenced first-year students' academic success in Ethiopian, particularly Sothern Universities. In the section that follows, literature on gender and academic success among first-year university students is discussed.

2.4 GENDER AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Alonazi (2018: 55) revealed that the first year of college indicates significant gender differences exist in the actual experiences of students' academic success over time. Keup and Stolzenberg (2004:9) also analyzed the data from the First College Year surveys and reported a possible cause for concern to gender differences in students' academic engagement in the initial year of college, as women seem to be engaged in more productive academic behaviors than men. Besides, males reported earning lower grades, studying fewer hours per week, and lower rates of adjustment to college and developing effective study skills. This is also supported by Lawrence, Ashford and Dent (2006:278) who revealed that gender is a key determinant in academic success among undergraduate first-year students, with females vastly outperforming men in terms of level of achievement.

In one of the studies, a higher percentage of female freshmen now aspire to advanced degrees than their male peers; 54.5 percent of females indicate a desire to go beyond the bachelor's degree compared with only 45.6 percent of men (National Freshmen Attitudes Report, 2010:4). Other studies also found that female students performed better than male counterparts (Alonazi, 2018: 35; Christiana, 2014:172). Furthermore, Blaze (2019:7) and Grebennikov and Skaines (2009:60) noted that some factors, including gender that is, the finding that women exhibit higher academic achievement than men have high levels of consensus among researchers. In support of the above, DeFreitas (2012:114) found that females often have higher academic achievement in college. Academic achievement of university students showed a strong positive correlation with gender showing that female students' GPAs are higher than those of male students (Anderton, 2017:193 & 194; Kassaw & Astatke, 2017:60 & 62; Khan, Ashraf & Nadeem, 2020:208; Nasir, 2012:401; Yates, 2017:85). The considerable gender gap in academic accomplishment showed that in terms of academic achievement, female students performed better than their male counterparts. These findings were in line with other research findings, which showed the fact that female university students outperformed male student in their initial year of study (Nasir, 2012:404).

A study by Alonazi (2018:57) found that gender was a further factor that strongly influenced academic success with women performing better than men in higher education. Similarly, a study found that gender strongly influenced college GPA. According to the majority of research, women perform better than men in college (Alonazi, 2018, 31&35). Moreover, studies by Dorta-Guerra et al. (2019:1500) and Islam and Tansim (2021:129 & 130) revealed that gender significantly affects academic success. The current study assessed whether gender differences is significantly influenced students' academic success.

Research conducted in the Ethiopian colleges of first-year students concerning differences in adjustment problems, and gender has brought a statistically significant difference. This result matches previous studies which reported a substantial disparity between male and female students with adjustment disorders (Ayele, 2011: 201). Similarly, other studies conducted in Ethiopia also confirmed a gender disparity noted in one of the studies that showed that more of the variance in the university GPA was explained by predictor variables for females than males (Olani, 2009:1068). Another study in Ethiopia by Yigermal (2017:163) also revealed that gender has a positive sign and male students perform well than females. Similarly, a study by Kassaw

and Astatke (2017:55 & 62) showed that the first variable that can relate to and influence academic success is gender. Findings of the study revealed that there was a statistically significant gender gap in students' academic success. To put it simply, male students' mean CGPAs were greater than female students' mean. Moreover, a study by Catherine (2020: 27) revealed that it was evident that there was a statistically substantial variance between genders in academic success. There was a considerable gender gap in academic achievement, with male students scoring higher than female students. In the above literature, many studies reported that female students show better academic success than males in their freshman year of college or university in the international context. However, the present study assessed whether first-year female students fare better than male students academically in Ethiopian universities context. Regarding academic success differences between men and women, the study indicates motivation and academic achievement vary by gender (Turhan, 2020:222). Female students have increased expectations for academic success in college and place more value on an academically and socially supportive campus atmosphere. SAT and ACT scores were higher for males, but they anticipated more free time and socializing during their freshmen year of college (Survey of Student Engagement Annual Report, 2007:27). Although there are some gender disparities in undergraduate student participation, these are often minor, mixed, and started long before college. The main cause for concern is academic difficulties, where male college students consistently showed lower engagement. Further research is required to establish the potential effects of the variations showing gender-related engagement on student learning and success.

Institutions should identify areas in which male and female undergraduate students differ and devise strategies to enhance the quality of education for everyone (Survey of Student Engagement Annual Report, 2007:27). Since many studies have shown that female students experience particular issues and struggle more than their male counterparts to adapt to the university environment, it is crucial to help these students manage hurdles in their university lives (Kyalo & Chumba, 2011:277). Studies by DeBerard et al. (2004:71) revealed that gender was associated well with the overall GPA of first-year university students.

Even though most studies show that girls perform better than men, other researchers found absolutely no distinctions exist between genders in terms of their success and academic ability (Dorta-Guerra et al., 2019:1498 & 1500; Faisal & Haidar, 2011; Okoedion et al., 2018:419).

Studies conducted in the USA by Paredes (2009:105) also revealed that there is a lot of literature that refutes the notion that males and women are more prone to succeed academically. Moreover, a model of structural equations created by Ruban and McCoach (2005), which comprised 328 freshmen (51% female) revealed that gender has little impact in predicting first-year cumulative GPA for students (Paredes, 2009:24; Ramey et al., 2018:84). Though that no demographic moderators were found in the analysis, males reported their academic marks similar to females (Kuncel et al., 2005:73). Similarly, another study by Whannell (2014:111) shows that academic success did not significantly differ based on gender. Further, another study by Ishak, Jdaitawi, and Mustafa (2011:81) revealed that gender has just a small moderating effect on the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic adjustment. Similarly, a study by Chung Liang-Yi and Chang Rong-Chi (2017: 2310 & 2323) also found that even though gender was one of the elements examined for its impact on learning outcomes and differences, there were no appreciable disparities in learning accomplishments between genders. Furthermore, the results of a study in Nigeria by Yawa, Balarabe, and Mohammed (2021:662) showed that there are no discernible academic achievement differences between males and females. Similarly, in both the open-ended and multiple-choice assessments, female students did not have lower academic achievement than male students (Yawa et al., 2021: 659).

The studies mentioned above were mainly carried out in industrialized nations. The results may not be generalized to the Ethiopian Universities' context. The present study sought to assess if gender is an indicator of the difference in academic achievement among first-year students in Southern Ethiopian Universities. The following section discusses first-year university students coping strategies and academic success.

2.5 FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COPING MECHANISMS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

According to a study by Levy and Murray (2005: 129), retention rates and academic success can be equivalent to those of the general student population when students (with a low university entrance score) are given an appropriately supported transitional programme and environment. Kift (2008:5) also emphasizes that institutions must adapt to the shifting needs of students and accommodate their known and comprehensible diversity, which is manifest in significant measure in the modern massified sector. By using coping mechanisms effectively, individuals can resolve difficulties, ease emotional pain, and stay on course toward accomplishing their

goals (Brown, Morning & Watkins, 2005: 792; Fitz-Gerald, 2017:59; Freire et al., 2020:2; Khanam et al., 2017:4764; Okoro, 2018:24). Ineffective application could lead to subtly muted behavior or avoidance (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:3; Kashden et al., 2006: 1301; Okoedion et al., 2019:412). The above studies addressed that there are both effective and ineffective coping where every mechanism has its influence on students' academic success. The present study sought to assess which coping mechanisms dominantly practiced and how they influenced academic success among Ethiopian first-year students.

The individual's capacity to use effective coping mechanisms affects their overall performance, which in turn affects their degree of achievement (Brown, Morning & Watkins, 2005:797). Academic success is negatively impacted when coping is ineffective, and depending on the techniques used, coping strategies can either mitigate or exacerbate these negative consequences (Brown et al., 2005: 797; Fitz-Gerald (2017:5). Other studies also confirmed the previous study in that most students find that their time in college or university can be extremely stressful, but some students are better capable of coping stress than others. Many students who handle stress successfully possess effective coping skills. Earnest and Dwyer (2010: 3) stated that the ability to employ techniques that decrease and manage the stress reaction is how stress-coping skills are defined.

Gaudreau (2018:8) established that problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping are the two main coping strategies covered. For example, Lenz (2010: 69) identifies "individuals directly confronting and managing the origin of their stress" as problem-focused coping. Manuabuchi and Gladys (2017:13) and Garriott and Nisle (2017:437) also found that individuals prefer to confronting, controlling, or managing unpleasant tasks to reduce stress. In their studies, Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989:268) revealed that active coping is defined as the practice of making proactive attempts to reduce or avoid the stressor or lessen its effects. However, individuals who felt in charge of their time handled stress better and thought they were academically successful. The other form of coping mechanism is emotion-focused coping which is defined by Lenz (2010:69) as individuals in charge of their emotional stress response. In this regard, instead of focusing on the task, individuals handle the emotional component of stress. Besides, studies by Okoro, (2018:23 & 24), Okoedion et al. (2019:412), Alonazi (2018:62 and Yikealo and Tareke (2018:12) revealed that individuals or students practice an emotion-focused

coping approach, specifically, managing the emotional aspect of the stress through spiritual beliefs which results in better academic success.

Several studies (Abdullah et al., 2010:5; Fitz-Gerald, 2017:20-21 & 57-58; Garriott & Nisle, 2017:437; Okoedion et al., 2019:412) revealed that students that adopted proactive coping techniques rather than avoidant ones adjusted to college better, improving their academic success. The above studies further established student adjustment is improved by the coping strategies of deliberate problem solving and constructive reappraisal, whereas the coping mechanisms of confronted coping and social support improve academic success among first-year university students. The present study also assessed whether healthy coping mechanisms influenced first-year students' academic success positively.

A study by Gizir (2014:1304) shows that fresh students who are having trouble adjusting to university life tend to employ coping strategies meant to avoid confrontation, such as withdrawal or distance, behavioral or mental disengagement, and daydreaming or fantasizing. Despite being two distinct ideas, stress management techniques and academic self-efficacy complement one another. For instance, a study by Alduais, Samara, Al-Jalabneh, Alduais, Alfadda and Rasha (2022:13) showed that academic performance and students' perceived stress are inversely correlated with their coping mechanisms. Similarly, a study also confirmed that coping may influence more extensive patterns of involvement with the university and overall mental health (Rehr & Nguyen, 2022: 239).

Chronic stress can make those with low self-efficacy more susceptible, which further decreases students' academic success (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:18). Many first-year and even senior students devise their coping strategies, be it functional or dysfunctional, with stressful encounters instead of self-disclosure to advisor or counselor. For instance, a study by Abdullah et al. (2010:5& 10) revealed that their academic success adversely correlates with their escape-avoidance coping. The findings indicated above have demonstrated the critical function that coping plays in assisting students in achieving GPAs. Generally, studies have shown that coping is a crucial psychosocial indicator of college students' adjustment and academic achievement. The present study also tried to assess how the practice of coping mechanisms would bring a difference in students' academic success in first-year of university. Similarly, coping mechanisms were found to be powerful indicators of both undergraduates' academic success and general adjustment to university life (Abdullah et al., 2010:10). As a result, students are better able to adapt to

university life in terms of their health, both physical and psychological, academic success, emotional and social health, affiliation with a university and social and emotional well-being the more coping mechanisms they employ to deal with the demands and obstacles they encounter there. Furthermore, a study found that a student who uses problem-focused coping is one who actively seeks out solutions to problems or traumatic events by taking action while as a form of emotion-focused coping, students may utilize techniques including minimizing, making constructive comparisons, or attempting to find the positive in unpleasant circumstances (Goldman & Bel, 2022:77).

Briefly, a study in the USA by Henry et al. (2019: 9) revealed that "adaptive academic coping" is defined as a coping mechanism for students to maintain their well-being and advances them successfully toward the academic results they want, while "maladaptive academic coping" is defined as coping that endangers students' well-being and/or prevents them from achieving their academic goals. Besides, Garriott and Nisle (2017:437 & 438) also found that coping mechanisms include both personal psychological (such as a problem-solving orientation) and public resources (e.g., social networks).

Studies by Ayele (2011:188), Morgan, Burholt and other colleagues (2020:2 & 3), and Fisher (2009) indicate that dysfunctional coping strategies are negative coping mechanisms that could be detrimental to the health of the students and are connected to a low academic success rate. That is, as Pierceall and Keim, 2007 cited in Yikealo and Tareke (2018:3) revealed that alcoholism, illicit drug usage, and promiscuous sexual behavior are categorized as dysfunctional or a negative coping strategies. Such avoidant coping methods are dysfunctional and can lead to withdrawal, fatalistic attitudes, and avoidance of the problem. Similarly, dysfunctional coping strategies include behavioral disengagement such as lowering the effort needed to deal with the stressor, and self-distraction while doing activities to divert attention from the stressor such as daydreaming and escaping through sleep. The study by Ayele (2011:202) revealed that dysfunctional coping strategy is less prevalent among first-year students in college. In addition, the studies have underlined that the dysfunctional coping strategy is a significant direct predictor of adjustment problems, whereas help-seeking behavior is an indirect significant predictor of adjustment problems. The present study assessed whether students' group working coping practices among students influenced positively and enhanced their academic success.

The study by Ayele above focused on first-year students' practice of dysfunctional or functional coping resulted in decreased academic success. The present study also sought to assess whether first-year students' un-adaptive coping mechanisms resulted in low academic success in Ethiopian universities currently.

2.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the literature review was covered. The chapter has also presented literature on the variables that influence academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities informed by the theory of Bandura's social cognitive theory with a focus on self-efficacy, Vygotsky's social constructivism, Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration and Astin's theory of Student development with a focus on student involvement. The major factors, which included psychological factors, previous academic achievement, students' experiences with institutional factors, and gender, were reviewed. In addition, the chapter discussed first-year university students' coping strategies and academic success. The chapter presented related literature on factors for the improvement of academic success. Moreover, gaps to be filled in by the study were highlighted. Reviewed literature established that factors affecting different countries provide a variety of roles concerning academic success and this further positively influenced students' academic success. The research methodology will be covered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study sought to assess factors affecting academic achievement among first-year students in Southern Universities of Ethiopia to establish strategies for universities to improve first-year students' academic success. The previous chapter discussed the review of related literature. This chapter explores the research methodology used to integrate data on factors affecting academic achievement among first-year students in Southern Universities of Ethiopia. The chapter discusses the following issues: the paradigm, approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study was guided by the post-positivism paradigm. As addressed in Creswell (2009:7) post-positivism is used when it challenges the conventional belief in the absolute truth of knowledge and symbolizes the thought that followed positivism. In this sense, the study used post-positivism to assess lecturers, department heads, and deans' subjective perceptions concerning determinants of first-year students' academic achievement in Southern Ethiopian Universities. A study by Creswell (2007:19) found that the paradigms be described by their ontology (what is reality), epistemology (how one knows something), and methodology (how one goes about finding out).

The theoretical framework known as a paradigm is used to explain connections between or among constructs in order to explore phenomena that transcend beyond localized events (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020:339; Mertens, 2005: 2). This study applied the post-positivist paradigm as a lens so that the researcher can see how he feels that knowledge is “created” by those who are observers' products of their cultures, opinions as well as social and political situations in which they live. Thus, the present study assessed how academic success is influenced by components like the societal context of the university by employing qualitative data together with quantitative data in a concurrent triangulation of this research. The motivation for the use of concurrent triangulation of methods in a mixed-methods approach in this study is a researcher can combine qualitative and quantitative research designs concurrently or sequentially

to address specific research purposes comprehensively and rigorously. It is clear that universities, specifically Ethiopian universities are the natural environments where students' academic successes are influenced by several factors. Therefore, the university environment provided a fertile ground to assess factors concerning the impact on the academic success of the participants of first-year programmes. So, using the post-positivist paradigm in this study provided an opportunity for the researcher to assess pertinent issues relative to factors affecting academic success in Ethiopian Southern Universities in their natural settings which has an advantage to give direct and genuine observers' products of their cultures, opinions and feelings they have. The rigor of the paradigm also yields a high degree of confidence in the results that are based on the application of statistical conclusions (Halperin & Heath, 2020:692). Statistics were used by the researcher to define, clarify and predict the variables influencing first-year students' academic success in Southern Ethiopian Universities.

Post-positivists begin with the premise that any piece of research is impacted by numerous established theories in addition to and separate from the one being investigated (Cook & Campbell, 1979:24). Post-positivism positions that the study is affected by the value of the investigators, by the theory or hypotheses, or framework that the researcher uses and on their understanding of reality is constructed. In supporting this, O'Leary (2004:6) claims that post-positivists perceive the world as unclear, variable, and having numerous realities. In certain aspects, the constructivist and pragmatism paradigms are consistent with this concept of post-positivism. What is valid for one individual or cultural group may not be valid for another. From the above idea, it is possible to see when a certain group understands and perceives certain situations and realities but the other may not understand. In this regard, the paradigm enabled the researcher to assess and find out the realities, or truth perceived by lecturers, department heads and college deans about factors affecting academic success. Besides, the study assessed what college deans perceived but fresh men coordinators might not perceive. O'Leary (2004:6) also asserts that post-positivism is holistic, inductive, and characterized by qualitative results. Methodologically, most post-positivists' objectivity and subjectivity are achieved by triangulating across multiple fallible perspectives. In the same manner, Creswell (2007:20) suggests that post-positivist researchers tend to see analysis as a series of logically related steps and feel that there are various views from participants rather than a single reality. By employing methodological triangulation that is, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods

(mixed methods), the researcher gained in-depth data on factors affecting students' academic success from different stakeholders' perspectives and analyzed them in logically related steps.

In the current study, the post-positivist paradigm informed the researcher in aggregating data emanating from first-year students, lecturers for first-year students, department heads and college deans, and fresh men coordinators using mixed methods.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

In conducting studies, researchers can use mixed, quantitative, or qualitative methodologies (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020: 313; Kumar, 2020:5). The present study employed a combination of approaches (quantitative and qualitative). In mixed methods, the intent is to present and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data side by side or at a time; the researcher combines utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, Klassen, Clark & Smith, 2010:8). For example, the researcher gathered quantitative correlational data and qualitative individual interview data and combined the two to better understand how participants felt about responding to the study's questions. Thus, when a researcher combines quantitative and qualitative research methods, concepts, approaches, and strategies, or terminology into one research study, this kind of study is formally referred to as mixed-methods study (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:17). So, it is likely to see mixed research approaches use of quantitative and qualitative data that would be functional for arriving at one, full-fledged, strong and widely acceptable conclusions. This kind of research combines qualitative and quantitative research for its intended objective in order to grasp a study problem or subject more fully than either research approach could do on its own. One can get a better possibility of collecting data and arriving at a more likely convincing conclusion through a mixed approach than a single approach. Having this mixed research approach into consideration, this study searched a detailed and thorough in-depth understanding about factors affecting first-year students' academic success.

Since the assessment of the variables influencing first-year University students' academic success was the main objective of the current study, it gathered information through in-depth interviews of the concerned bodies qualitatively and assessed several first-year students' opinions in quantitative approaches. Taking the above idea into account, other studies confirm that a mixed-methods research technique entails collecting both textual and numerical data (e.g., from

interviews) to ensure that the final database includes data that is both quantitative and qualitative (Creswell, 2003:20).

A mixed-method approach encourages researchers to think about challenging challenges related to the breadth and depth of their research at all phases of the research process. As Brannen (1992:32) says with a single approach, the researcher is not compelled to consider these issues in the same way, but the use of a mixed approach can help make clear the phrasing of the research problem and the most practical techniques for addressing potential problems or components of potential difficulties may be hypothesized or examined. However, regardless of whether mixed approaches result in convergence or contradictions, they will all help the researcher in providing a "better explanation" of the study problem (Johnson et al., 2007: 115).

According to Gorard (2004:7), mixed-methods approach research is reinforced by the use of a range of approaches and has been described as an "essential ingredient in the progress of social sciences, including studies in education. The present study used mixed methods to assess whether the findings support each other or contradict variables that affect first-year students' academic success. Therefore, the present study attempted to obtain better, more comprehensive, and full-fledged information about factors affecting first-year students' academic success and preferred to rely on a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively and divergently collect the data at best than collect using a single method.

Numerous researchers have imagined the variety of potential advantages that correctly crafted mixed-method designs can benefit. Using multiple methods to examine the same event can increase the validity of the results. The main benefit of the mixed-methods approach is most frequently cited as the triangulation method. Combining the two approaches yields better instrumentation for all data gathering techniques and a clearer comprehension of the results for the researchers. In research, triangulation makes use of two approaches to obtain a more true reflection of what is happening (Todd, Nerlich, & McKeown, 2004:8). This concept of triangulation is related to the present study in a way that both qualitative data-gathered from deans, lecturers and department heads and quantitative data gathered from first-year students were combined for a more reliable and a true reflection of what is happening in this study.

A study by Denzin (1978: 14) explained that a convergence on the truth about a social phenomenon results from using mixed methods because when additional data sources,

investigators, and methodologies are used, the bias inherent in any one data source, investigators, and method will be wiped out. It helps in gaining understanding through analyzing subjective views of the study's participants by the researcher. In other words, the researcher examines and interprets the study population's subjective perceptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:102). This study used the mixed approach since it was possible to dig out different people subjective views and perceptions in line with the objectively measured opinions gathered quantitatively and arrived at a clear understanding of issues where complexity or ambiguity has appeared.

3.3.1 Qualitative approach

The qualitative method comprises interpretive, tangible actions that make the world visible and places the observer in the world. In addition, it turns the world into a collection of representations (conversations, images, observations, interviews, and narratives) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:3). It frequently entails in-depth interviews and seeing people in their natural social environments (Lichtman, 2017:6). The qualitative approach is an approach that generates results not obtained using statistical methods or quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:10). It is naturalism which understands social reality in its terms and natural settings. It is also an ethno methodology that understands social order via interaction concerns the inner reality of humans' postmodernism—different ways of constructing social reality (Bryman & Bell, 2007:402). In this approach, the investigator plays an essential role in the process because they collect data and analyze or interpret the observed occurrences. In the current research, the researcher considered the qualitative approach relevant as it enabled him to study the interactions of lecturers for first-year students, department heads, deans, and fresh men coordinators with academic achievement of freshmen occurring naturally in university during the delivery of instruction.

Qualitative research can be an effort to explain or interpret occurrences concerning the interpretations people make of them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 3). It is more problem-driven than method-driven, and the choice of qualitative research tools depends on the research topic being answered. According to Bryman (1988:46), qualitative researchers favor a method of studying the social environment that aims to explain and understand human culture and group behavior from the perspective of the subjects being studied. The subject (investigator) and the object are connected by this reflexivity (the investigated) (Banister et al., 1994:2), quantitative research had created a gap that would allow people to be studied similarly to rocks. The above idea is related to the current research in the sense that the data about factors affecting academic success were

collected from lecturers for first-year students, department heads, deans, and fresh men coordinators' opinions, experiences, from their points of view, their practices and exposures and understanding of their personal. Consequently, the researcher made an understanding of meaning considering the participants' meaning they brought.

The main advantages of qualitative methods are that they provide detailed, textured data, sometimes known as "thick description". (Geertz, 1973:6) stated that allowing study participants the ability to speak in their language about their own experiences may balance out the power differences between the researcher and the participant. They are also commonly utilized in understudied, under-theorized fields where exploratory work is required since they are valuable for exploring personal meanings and for inductively creating theory. Concerning the present study, the researcher obtained the qualitative data from lecturers', department heads', fresh men coordinators', and college deans' views and perceptions freely. Since qualitative research focuses on the process, provides local context, helps develop "depth" for quantitative data, generates hypotheses, and responds to different questions that were unanswered easily in the quantitative way. Therefore, the present study used this approach since it can provide complex textual descriptions of how lecturers, department heads, and deans reflect on students' experiences with the institutional factors, students' pre-university achievements, and students' psychological and coping mechanisms factors that influenced first-year students' academic success.

The discovery of previously undiscovered processes, the rationale behind why and how occurrences occur, and the extent of their impacts are all made possible by qualitative (mostly inductive) approaches (Pasick et al., 2009). So, since the present study employed a qualitative method to enquire about and respond to the why and how research questions of detailed information about academic success affecting factors from participants' feelings, the context they sense, and meanings they have in interviewing them in a natural situation. In short, a study like this used the qualitative method and explored and compared the subjective and contextual world of the population and observed how far the participants' views, opinions, and information were reliable, accurate, and related to what students' quantitative data. The next section presents the quantitative approach.

3.3.2 Quantitative Approach

According to Creswell (2009:16), the quantitative approach focuses on the data collected through instruments that measure the views or other variables, and then statistical techniques and hypothesis testing are used to analyze the data. The variables in the study and how they relate to one another, the participants, and the research site are all included in the design of the quantitative purpose statement. It also contains terminology used in quantitative research and testing relationships or theories deductively.

A quantitative goal statement starts by listing the independent, intervening, and dependent variables that are intended to be used in the study. It then specifies where the variables are measured or observed and how they are examined (Creswell, 2009:117; Rahman, 2020:105). The present study identified variables that had an impact on students' academic success in Southern Ethiopian Universities. The present study assessed the influence of independent variables such as previous academic achievement, psychological, students' experiences within the institution, and students' coping mechanisms on the dependent variable which is academic success.

Historically, educational research has adhered to a scientific "objective model" based on real data (Burns, 1997:3) which made quantitative techniques for gathering, analyzing as well as data reporting. In light of this, the advantages of quantitative approaches include improved measurement accuracy, which is connected to explicit theories of statistics and psychological measurement; the capacity for contrasts, both within and between studies and between participants; and the capacity through the use of experimental designs, to test causal hypotheses. However, the present study quantitatively assessed objective data from first-year students about factors that affected their academic success. Thus, the quantitative approach was used since it is an approach of inquiry frequently employed for deductive research where the objective is to gather descriptive information or examine relationships among variables. In this regard, this study attempted to assess the connection between the influencing factors of first-year students' academic success.

Quantitative research methods deal with the assortment and analyses of quantitative data obtained from formal instruments (DePoy & Gitlin, 2019:117; O'Leary, 2004:99). The objective is to produce and use mathematical concepts, hypotheses, and models of natural processes, and measuring is essential since it illustrates the relationship between information and observation.

So, based on quantitatively analyzed data, the present study developed strategies to enhance first-year students' academic success.

Quantitative research is characterized by a single reality that can be defined as causation between variables is examined, links between variables are described, and relationships between variables are examined and determined, when possible (Brink & Wood, 1998:305; Burns & Grove, 1997:27; 1999:192; Rahman, 2020:105). Therefore, this study measured and examined the connection between first-year students' psychological, previous academic, institutional experiences, gender, and coping with their academic success. The present study also used quantitative data to get the general context which represents the majority of representations and employed inferential statistics to determine the significant connection between dependent and independent variables of factors affecting academic success.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A method of investigation is called a research design which includes a plan, an outline, and a roadmap to help address a specific research issue (Geoffrey, 2019:10; Landy, Jia, Ding, Viganola, Tierney, Dreber & Ly, 2020:48). In a similar vein, research design, according to Cortés and Jamieson (2020:1215), refers to the steps followed by to carry out a study.

The present study employed a simultaneous mixed-methods design to assess factors affecting academic success among freshmen in Southern Ethiopian Universities. Clark and Ivankova (2016:120) define a concurrent mixed methods design as a design that incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methods aspects simultaneously or independently from each other to associate or the blending of quantitative and qualitative data to produce more thorough, comprehensive and validated methods. That is, it is at the point of analyzing/ interpreting that one now brings the different phases together and tries to synthesize. Bergman (2008:69) found two concurrent mixed-method designs: the concurrent embedded design and the concurrent triangulation design. In the beginning, triangulation in research is often associated with aiming to improve understanding by confirming findings from one method regarding other methods (Romm & Ngulube, 2015: 160). Concurrent triangulation is a single-stage design where both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered, evaluated, and combined in parallel to gain a deeper understanding or to compare the various outcomes. When researchers want to improve a

study using only one approach by integrating a subordinate data set out of the other approach, they employ a concurrent embedded design (Clark & Ivankova, 2016:120).

The researcher of the current study specifically used a simultaneous triangulation design because it enabled him to address the questions and concepts in both the quantitative and the qualitative ways to arrive at one comprehensive conclusion. The researcher then combined and substantiated two distinct data sets in a triangulation design. The researcher gathered the qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously time or side by side from first year students, lecturers for first-year students, department heads, college deans, and freshmen coordinators to make detailed data and to get a full picture of students' academic success affecting factors. The design finally gave a complete picture of academic achievement of first-year students. Therefore, employing the quantitative and qualitative research designs are more strict and rigorous that generates more accurate and internally consistent data, reproducible results, and a claim of higher objectivity to enhance first-year students' academic success.

The concurrent design has limitations as it requires the researcher to have two types, quantitative and qualitative research skills. For instance, they still, recognize some inconsistency, do not need to seek coherence (Newbury, 2011), and allow people to write into stories and to consider their ideas for action (Collins, 2000). To resolve this weakness, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:80) advise that the researcher train or enhance research assistants' skills quantitatively and qualitatively. The researcher of the present study engaged and trained proficient research assistants' combines quantitative and qualitative research methodologies for the design to yield valid results.

Therefore, the researcher's overarching method is the research design blueprint for finding responses to the study's guiding research questions. According to Burns and Grove (2001:223), a study's design aids researchers to organize and carry out the research in a manner that will assist them to acquire the desired outcomes, raising the likelihood that they will learn anything that might be relevant to the actual world. To determine the research design, the characteristics of the following basic research question nature is taken into account.

3.5 POPULATION

The complete group of elements from which we seek to conclude is referred to as a population (Chireshe, 2006: 113; Cooper & Schindler, 2014: 338; Creswell, 2009: 22; Saunders et al., 2009:

212). The study's intended audience or population comprised every first-year students approximately 3304 (registrars' data). The requirements for eligibility outline the qualities that members of the population must have to be included in the study (Polit & Hungler, 1999:278).

The target population for this study comprised lecturers for first-year students, department heads, college deans, freshmen coordinators and all the first-year students studying in government universities of Southern Ethiopia, particularly in two universities. The next section presents the sample and the sampling technique.

3.6 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The sample comprised 826 first-year students, 14 lecturers for first-year students, 7 department heads, and 7 college deans or freshmen coordinators.

Samples are a component of populations (Saunders et al., 2009: 212). Probability sampling is frequently referred to as "random sampling" or "chance sampling" which was used in the quantitative approach. Every object in the universe has an equal probability of being included in the sample under this sampling method. As evidence of the superiority of random sampling over purposeful sampling, we can measure estimate errors or the significance of findings obtained from a random sample. Results from random sampling or probability can be guaranteed in terms of probability (Kothari, 2004:60). In this study, first purposeful samples were used to determine first-year university students, and then employed the probability sampling techniques as follows.

Concerning the specific type of research we are performing, different population strata will be considered relevant (Hodder & Stoughton, 1994:39). In arguing for the above idea, the present study primarily considered the streams or colleges or institutions and sex as strata, and then the researcher took the representative sample through using stratified sampling to include in proportion to each of the unique nature of streams or institutes and gender of study. In literature, it is asserted that if the items selected from each stratum are based on a simple random sampling of the entire process, the procedure is known as stratified random sampling (Kothari, 2004:16). Briefly, the present study included fair representation from each natural, social science and education streams and sex strata by stratified sampling and then the representing sample was selected from their corresponding stream in which each member of the target population has an equal probability of being chosen based on basic random sampling technique. Based on this, for the quantitative phase, the researcher employed first purposive to first-year students and then probability sampling schemes to randomly select the sampling units that were representative of

the population that participated in first-year programme. Stratified random sampling was used to choose the first-year students from each stream and sex as well as two universities. Twenty-five percent out of 3304 first-year students were selected randomly as the larger the sample, the greater its chance of being representative (Cohen et al., 2011:154; Van Zyl, 2014:101). Thus, the number of first-year students was 826. Below is a summary of the biographical variables of first-year students.

Table 3.1: Biographical data of the students (N=826)

Respondents	Biographical Variable	Variable Description	Frequencies
Students	Gender	Female	338(41%)
		Male	488(59%)
		Total	826(100%)
	Age	16-18 years	10(1.2%)
		19-21 years	668(80.9)
		>/=22 years	148(17.9%)
		Total	826(100%)
	Religion	Protestant	197(23.8%)
		Orthodox	495(59.9%)
		Catholic	16(1.9%)
		Muslim	98(11.9%)
		Others	20(2.4%)
		Total	826(100%)

Table 3.1 above illustrates the total number of respondents (826) who participated in the study. The data indicated that males were the majority (N=488, 59%), and females were 41% (N=338) of the total population. It is evident that even though the population is mainly composed of male students, females were proportionally represented. According to the respondents' frequency distribution by age, the majority of them (N=668, 80.9%) were of the age group of 19 to 21 years. Additionally, this age group was the second-youngest. Participants who were older than 22 years constituted 17.9% of the sample, while 1.2% of the sample belonged to the 16 to 18-

year-old group. Table 3.1 also indicated that the largest group (N=495, 59.9%) of the respondents were orthodox Christians followed by 23.8% protestants, 11.9% of them were Muslim, and only 1.9% of them were catholic religious followers. The remaining 2.4% of the sample respondents were followers of different religions.

Table 3.1 above reveals that even though there are more male students (59%) than female students (41%) who took part in the present study, the number of females participating in the study represents the total female population. Besides, first-year students were fairly represented in the study through the use of purposive and then probability sampling from their corresponding strata. For the study's qualitative part, the interviewees' sample was determined purposively based on their relevance and decisiveness and in expecting they would provide in-depth information for the study. Barbour (2008:52) states that purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose interviews based on traits they believe might contain some influence on their opinions and encounters with a challenge being studied. In a qualitative study, participants must be sampled as having experience and their interaction with freshmen students. The lecturers for first-year students from two universities were considered based on whether they taught courses or not. Among the lecturers who delivered the course, some of them were sampled considering their experience and ability to provide information. Department heads were selected by having courses delivered and organized under their departments for first-year students. College deans were also selected considering the monitoring role they played for first-year students. Freshmen coordinators were conveniently selected due to their frontline and direct responsibility.

The researcher used stratified purposive sampling for the qualitative aspect to select the lecturers for first-year students, department heads, and college deans or freshmen coordinators. Within the qualitative strand, to create relatively homogeneous groups, the researcher stratified a sampling frame, that is, lecturers, department heads, and college deans or freshmen coordinators as well as natural, social sciences, and education streams.

Table 3.2: Distribution of the selected cases and their strata for the qualitative phase

Name of university & their strata	Number of lecturers for first year students		Number of department heads		Number of college deans or freshmen coordinators	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
X University						
Natural science stream	2	1	1	1	1	
Social science stream	1	1	1		1	1
Education stream	1					
Y university						
Natural science stream	3	1	1	1	2	
Social science stream	2	2	1	1	1	1
Education stream						

Table 3.2 presents the sampling scheme of the qualitative strand, which helped the researcher to achieve a fair representation of the sample, which is the standard rule for purposive sampling.

3.7 INSTRUMENTATION

Informed by the post-positivist paradigm, the research instruments employed in the present study were a questionnaire and in-depth interviews.

3.7.1 Questionnaire

The definition of a questionnaire is a method of gathering data from respondents regarding attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and feelings (Polit & Hungler, 1997:466). According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:39), questionnaires are used to collect enormous volumes of data quickly, identify links between data, and highlight relationships between easily quantifiable data in particular, and can be used repeatedly to measure differences between people.

The closed-structured items of the questionnaire were developed from the literature search and research questions of the study. These only allowed the respondents to provide responses that

fitted into pre-determined categories. The questionnaire items addressed issues about psychological factors, previous academic achievement, and students' experiences within the institutional factors, gender differences, and academic success as well as students' coping mechanisms. Eight hundred twenty-six first-year students filled out the same questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire took the form of a Likert scale (Chireshe, 2020:353). In this study's quantitative phase, the Likert scale was appropriate since it can be used to measure a variety of phenomena, for example, views, experiences, reactions, and perceptions. The participants have the right to support or oppose given statements on a 5-point Likert scale, that is, 1= strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= Not sure; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree. The Likert scale enabled the researcher to calculate the degrees of association among first-year students' responses relative to factors affecting their academic success.

In this study, questionnaires were used to elicit students' views, experiences, reactions, and attitudes or their experiences. The questionnaire items were prepared based on the literature review. Table 3.3 below presents the questionnaire items designed based on the literature.

Table 3.3: A grid that displays samples of questionnaire items the authors found in their literature analysis.

ITEMS	AUTHOR(S)
Issues related to psychological factors influencing academic success	Sander and Sanders (2003: 15), Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein (1983:394-395), (Friedlander et al., 2007:259), (Green et al., 2003:81), Green et al. (2003:82), (Brown & Stoffel, 2011:242 & 243), (Brown & Stoffel, 2001:780), (Brown, 2011:332), (Pierce, 2003:109), Pierce(2008:109), (AOTA, 2008:639.640) and (Lowe & Cook 2003:53)
Students' experiences within institutional factors: Hours spend on academic or campus facilities and extra-curricular Activities	Vandamme et al. (2007), (Kantanis, 2000:4). Nel et al. (2009:980), (AOTA, 2008:645), (Durmer & Dinges, 2005:120; Trockel et al. (2000:125) and (Lowe & Cook, 2003:71).
Entrance score and prior achievement	Nghe et al. (2007), Jadric et al. and Mannan (2007), Veitch (2004)
Missed classes and gender related issues	Vandamme et al. (2007), (Dayıoglu&Türüt-Asık, 2004:19), (Jayanthi et al.,2014:753:754),Kassaw and Astatke (2017:60& 62), Rameyet al. (2018:82 & 84) and Okoedionet al.(2018:419)
Social integration(Quality and quantity of student's relationships	Mannan(2007), (Kantanis, 2000:4), (Kantanis, 2000:3; Nel et al . 2009:983; (Tinto, 2012:27) and (AOTA 2008:645).
Interaction with faculty	Mannan(2007), (Nimon 2007:28; (Sandars & Morrison 2007:86)
Extracurricular involvements	Mannan(2007), AOTA 2008:633), (Nimon, 2007:28; (Sandars & Morrison 2007:86), (AOTA 2008:638).
coping strategies problem-focused coping	Lenz (2010: 69), (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992). Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub (1989: 268), (Brown & Stoffel, 2011:275), (George et al., 2008:711; Kantanis 2000:3).
Emotion-focused coping	Lenz (2010 :69), (AOTA, 2008:632; Pierce, 2003:81,98-107), Pierce (2003:98)

Table 3.3 presents examples of issues addressed by the literature search

In order to comprehensively identify the elements influencing the academic success of first-year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia, categories of questions were developed. The following are the broad categories in the questionnaire:

Introduction: The introduction section of the questionnaire provides the objectives of the study and clarifies a consideration of ethics regarding the study. Participants were made aware that their participation would be voluntary, completely anonymous, and that confidentiality and respect for their privacy were assured. Additionally, it gave potential volunteers the assurance that they may stop participating in the study whenever they wanted.

Section A: This subsection asks for the students' biographic information about the participants.

Section B of the questionnaire consists of items focusing on the psychological factors that affect academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia, particularly Hawassa and Dilla Universities.

Section C of the questionnaire comprises items focusing on previous students' academic achievement and current academic success

Section D of the questionnaire comprises items focusing on the students' experiences with institutional factors affecting students' academic success in the first year of University.

Section E comprises gender differences and academic success

Section F: In this section, the questions comprise items focusing on the coping strategies to enhance their academic success. See Appendix

3.7.2 In-depth interview

According to Kothari (2004:17), in-depth interview, to get responses to a series of predetermined questions, the investigator follows a precise procedure and performs in-person interviews.

In-depth interviews are especially useful in answering questions such as what stakeholders know about the project (Patton, 1990). The in-depth interviewer uses this technique to determine that he/she doesn't stick to a set script. To ensure consistency throughout the interview, interviewers are trained to only slightly stray from the language of the inquiries. In the current research, in-depth interview was employed to capture the opinions of lecturers for first-year students, department heads, deans, and fresh men coordinators directly from them. It is a highly desired

approach to gathering qualitative data. This allowed the researcher to discuss the experience's significance from the respondents' point of view. The in-depth interview was used to collect lecturers', deans', department heads', and deep views, perceptions, insights, and experiences.

Lichtman (2017:241) revealed that the in-depth interview items are not biased towards what a researcher wants but rather those in which they try to investigate thorough understandings of interviewees in an unbiased way. Therefore, in this study, the question items mainly focused on psychological, previous academic achievement, students' experiences within institutional factors, gender, and coping-related. Accordingly, the interviewees provided their own free opinion. The interview items were prepared for lecturers for first-year students, department heads and college/institute/faculty deans, and fresh men coordinators. Moreover, the interview was used to dig out the in-depth understanding of the instructors, department head, and faculty deans to cross-check with the students' responses given in the questionnaire; and draw a better picture of the problems that happened, the impact of several variables on academic success and the solution made during the support given for the first year students. The interview guide had Section A on demographic data and then, Sections B to F. The interview guide had open-ended questions in it that were used to solicit data for the qualitative strand to answer five research questions (see Appendix).

SECTION A: Demographic data

SECTION B: Questions on the psychological factors affecting academic success among first-year students

SECTION C: Questions on the students' previous academic achievement factors affecting academic success among first-year students

SECTION D: Questions on the student's experiences within institutional factors affecting academic success among first-year students

SECTION E: Questions on the students' gender and academic success in affecting academic success among first-year students

SECTION F: Questions on the students' coping mechanisms factors in affecting academic success among first-year students

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative research quality indicators indeed rely on the approach and purpose of the study. Since the data used in qualitative research appear both from researchers' and some key concepts and the participants' own words have an impact on the technical soundness of a qualitative research design. In this essence, Creswell (2007:178) argues that the four techniques of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability can be used to determine if qualitative research is trustworthy.

3.8.1 Credibility

Among the strategies of qualitative research, credibility is called "truth-value", which refers to the degree of confidence in the findings are true, especially that the context is correctly understood (Ulin, Robison & Tolley, 2005:25). According to Mertens (2015:267), to determine credibility, the researcher should spend enough time in the field to avoid conclusions that are erroneous based on limited exposure to the phenomenon. To increase credibility, the researcher involved member looking into the results. That is, receiving comments from the participants themselves on the information, topics, interpretations, and findings. Bergman (2008:106) asserts that members checking, which entails asking respondents and other social scene participants to verify the accuracy of themes, clarifications, and conclusions, is a particularly effective method of assessing the reliability of interpretation. In the present study, the investigator achieved this by summarizing what was said during interviews and asking if the notes accurately reflected the participant's position by member checking. The current research conducted peer debriefing. Peer lecturers who attend doctoral study in the department of psychology and senior language lecturers served as peer examiners.

3.8.2 Transferability

Another strategy that establishes the trustworthiness of qualitative research is transferability. Magwa and Magwa (2015:94) describe the concept of "transferability" as a parallel one that enables readers to conclude parallels and contrasts between the research setting and their own. In the present study, transferability was made sure by describing, and clarifying the approaches, settings and presumptions used in the research of the study. To give the reader enough details to assess if the findings apply to other situations, the researcher provided a complete and thorough explanation of the setting under study. According to Cohen et al. (2011:201), the pilot testing verified the data's trustworthiness, checking on credibility, transferability, applicability, and

conformability. The in-depth interview guides were pilot-tested with respondents who had similar characteristics but were not part of the main study at the nearby university. This assisted the researcher in checking the clarity of items and instructions of items and eliminates ambiguities in wording and meaning. The respondents were allowed to comment and the comments were taken into account and modifications were made to some items before conducting the main study.

3.8.3 Conformability

As post positivists' view supports, the researcher sought to confirm that the information and its interpretation are not fabrications or creations of the researchers' imagination. In the present study, the researcher employed a confirmation by cross-checking and tracing back data to their sources whether it is their response or not, and then reached conclusions. According to Mertens (2015:353), the researcher should constantly use the resources and knowledge of people within the research setting to make sure people with important information or representing important points of view are included. To protect the reliability of the data, the researcher was careful to ask the respondents only for data about which they have first-hand knowledge and that they can provide freely and openly rather than influencing their thought themselves.

3.8.4 Dependability

The other trustworthiness indicator for the qualitative research approach is dependability. According to Ulin et al. (2005:26), dependability is defined as how consistently and carefully the research technique is conducted while adhering to the rules and guidelines of qualitative methodology. This refers to the degree to which the procedures give similar findings under constant conditions. In this research, the investigator undertook the research in a careful emphasis and used member checks to see the results plausibility by bringing back facts and speculative interpretations from the participants whether it is theirs or not. The section that follows presents the validity and reliability of the quantitative data.

3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

For an instrument to be used in research, reliability, and validity need to be established (Babbie, 2009:146).

3.9.1 Validity

The appropriateness, utility, and significance of any conclusions drawn from the results produced by a measurement tool are referred to as content validity (Burns & Grove, 2005:399). In other words, the amount in which the instrument question items accurately reflect the true intent behind the ideas included in the discussion is referred to as the validity of data collection instruments (Babbie, 2009:146). Accordingly, it suggests that the researcher should be worried about how closely the measurement instrument and the items it includes reflect the content domain the researcher is trying to measure (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2002:314). Through rigorous sampling, adequate apparatus, and suitable statistical processing of the data, the validity of this study was enhanced. The researcher also used Criterion Jury validation, in which a research specialist reviewed the instruments and provided feedback, to guarantee the validity of the instruments. The questionnaire was further presented to senior lecturers in educational psychology at Dilla University to examine the correspondence between the questionnaire's items and the study's goals.

3.9.2 Reliability

The accuracy, precision, and consistency with which an instrument measures the desired property are all examples of reliability (Burns & Grove 2005:374, 749; LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 2002: 499; Polit & Beck 2004:416). That is, when used by different researchers, the same instrument will yield the same outcomes in comparable circumstances (De Vos et al, 2005:163). To put it another way, the accuracy of data collection tools depends on the capacity to apply a reliable measurement device to many populations in various contexts and produce consistent results (Babbie, 2009:143). The researcher developed the questionnaire in cooperation with the supervisor and made corrections to ensure the validity of this study that was not clear. In a pilot study, the researcher also pre-tested the questionnaire with the department heads, college deans, and university lecturers who did not take part in the main research. In the current research, the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed to establish the standardization of the instrument by pilot testing (Babbie, 2009:146). As a result, the instrument has a reliability of 0.88 coefficients. The following section presents the data collection procedure.

3.10 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Data are collected in the following two stages: Pilot and Main studies.

3.10.1 Pilot study

Before administrating the pilot instrument in the selected sections, a short orientation was given to the research assistants on how to conduct the pilot questionnaire survey. A pilot study was carried out because it is a crucial part of any survey investigation. Pilot research is a scaled-down version of a larger study (sometimes referred to as a "feasibility" study), as well as the preliminary testing of a particular research instrument, such as a questionnaire or interview schedule (Burns & Grove, 2009: 42).

3.10.1.1 Piloting the questionnaire

Questionnaires need to be piloted before the use of the actual study. As Cohen et al. (2011:639) suggest a questionnaire be pre-tested via a pilot study to boost validity and reliability. In this research, the students' questionnaires were pilot-tested. In the present study, the investigator pre-tested that questionnaire along with 20 first-year students who attended a nearby university and revised the confusing items which need revision before the actual study. A reliability coefficient was calculated making use of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The statistical significance of the correlation coefficient ought to be 0.5 or above if reliability is to be ensured (Cohen et al., 2007:146). Finally, data for the pilot study was secured using trained data collectors.

From the above idea, it is possible to infer that in the pilot study, especially in pre-testing the questionnaire; by providing an opportunity for the respondent to submit remarks, insightful feedback was received. Respondents may be motivated by instructions in the direction of trouble spots like ambiguous questions or potential answers that aren't listed for specific inquiries.

3.10.1.2 Piloting interviews

Piloting interviews are useful for performing qualitative research since it draws attention to the way the main study was improvised (Dikko, 2016:522). In the current study, the interview piloting allowed the researcher to test the questions and gain some interviewing experience. Then, the pilot study was conducted by 5 lecturers for year students, 2 department heads, and 2 college deans who were not part of the main study to highlight ambiguities and difficult and unnecessary questions and to modify them. Riet and Durrheim (2006:94) also consider the idea that pilot studies are early analyses of modest samples that aid in locating potential design issues,

particularly with the research equipment. The information that questionnaire and interviewing technique will be improved using the information from the pilot project (Neuman, 2006:312). De Vos et al. (2012:206) pointed out that the pilot research provided support for this allowing the researcher to update the procedures and necessary tools prior to doing the real study is undertaken, helping to discover any potential flaws with the proposed study, in other terms, it is used to assess the relevance and feasibility of the instruments designed to gather data for the study. The comments were then used to make modifications to the interview questions before presenting the interview items to the participants in the main study.

3.10.2. Data collection procedure: Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted with a model (sample) that exhibited the sample's characteristics in the main study. The researcher asked for permission from the hosting University which has the authority to grant permission for researchers to conduct studies. Consequently, the researcher collected pilot study data in having permission to research in universities (see Appendices for permission granted). Next is the discussion on the method used to acquire data for the main research.

3.11 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE OF THE MAIN STUDY

The researcher visited two government universities in the Southern Region of Ethiopia during the start of the time as the planned or scheduled period. The researcher made prior contact with a variety of concerned students, lecturers, department heads and fresh men coordinators, and others within the university and scheduled appointments to deploy the instrument in classrooms and during student activities. Before administrating the final data collection instruments in the selected sections, a short orientation or training was given to the research assistants on how to conduct the questionnaire survey and conduct interview questions. Respondents were given a model example to follow while the questionnaire was being administered so they could complete it quickly and easily. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were done with all selected lecturers' for first year students, college deans, department heads, and fresh men coordinators to collect qualitative data with the aim to understand, observe, and interact with people in their natural setting of Hawassa and Dilla Universities. Finally, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected with all categories of participants at Universities. Furthermore, trained data gatherers were used to secure the study's data. Next is a discussion on data analysis.

3.12 DATA ANALYSIS

Burns and Grove (2009:695) define the process of analysis of data as one used to lessen, organize, and interpret data. Data analysis, then, is the systematic collection, organization, and data synthesis based on research as well as the evaluation of scientific hypotheses (De Vos et al., 2012:716).

3.12.1 Coding of the quantitative data

Quantitative data was structured, organized, and framed to suit analysis and inferences. According to Bryman and Cramer (2004:20), coding became a process of designating the questionnaire which codes an answer denoted. Coding was such that the list of categories was mutually exclusive so that a code only applied to one category. The researcher devised a coding frame that pinpointed the allocation of numbers. Each respondent served as an analytical unit; therefore, a distinct serial code was given to each unit of analysis that represented the individual respondent's score for each variable. Data gathered from the questionnaire were compiled and coded to enable the researchers to employ statistical analysis. Based on that, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to present the data using SPSS (the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Preliminary descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were employed depending on the nature of the data and research questions.

Moreover, inferential statistics such as chi-square and ratio pertinent to the current study were carried out to determine the extent to which the independent factors were significantly associated with students' academic success or not.

3.12.2 Coding of the qualitative data

The qualitative data should be coded before it was presented and analyzed. A word or a single symbol-containing word or phrase assigns a summative, noticeable, essential, or emotive quality to a place. In qualitative research, a code is most typically used to describe language-based or visual data. In the present study, the coding of qualitative data from interviews was guided by research questions and coded those data which have similar themes or meanings in one chunk, group, or concept. Coding began by reading through the qualitative data, identifying chunks of text that convey similar meanings, grouping these chunks of text, and then assigning them to categories (Creswell, 2014:198). Coding began by reading through the qualitative data, identifying chunks of text that convey similar meanings, grouping these chunks of text together, and then assigning them to categories (Creswell, 2014:198). Then, the categories framed the concepts were used to label the analysis which led to a series of themes and subthemes

accessible to an analysis of data (Brown, 2014:84). Finally, the qualitative data were thematically analyzed.

3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

First of all, ethical standards were followed to guarantee the rights and the state of first-year students' health, lecturers for freshmen students, department heads, deans, and freshmen coordinators in Southern Ethiopian Universities, particularly Dilla and Hawassa universities' participants who participated in their research respected and safeguarded and that they were not harmed or injured in any manner throughout the research process or thereafter. Research ethics deals with carrying out, reporting and publishing with care, competence, responsibility, honesty, and ethics. The subsequent ethical concerns were addressed in the present study:

3. 13.1 Permission

The investigator first sought UNISA ethical approval to secure the approval of the research participants (see Appendix I, for Ethical Clearance Certificate). Then, it was asked for permission to conduct the research at the two universities, too. Further, permission to carry out this study was also sought from the Registrars of the universities to be involved in the study.

3. 13. 2 Informed consent

Respondents must voluntarily participate to provide informed consent (Chireshe, 2006:101). The participants of the present study were informed about what is expected from them and what is not done and the researcher and they had consent by filling in an informed consent form. Participants were informed of the study's objectives and the intended use of the data they were requested to provide. Participation in the study was on a volunteer basis. In other terms, participants were free to leave the study whenever without incurring any penalties.

3. 13.3 Confidentiality

"Each person had the right to privacy and the choice of how and where their opinions and actions were shared" (Strydom 2011:119). It was agreed that disclosing the respondents' research information for not the research purpose or outside the intended purpose is forbidden (Hodder & Stoughton, 1994:396). In supporting this view, studies confirm disclosure of a respondent's personal information to third parties for reasons other than research is unethical (Kumar, 2011: 221). The researcher was going to make sure that once the data was gathered, its source couldn't

be determined. The investigator was going to ensure that individual details about informants would be kept private.

3. 13.4 Anonymity

The informants' names were coded anonymously by figures and other mechanisms. Besides, in the qualitative data, real names were not used for anonymity.

3. 13.5 Harm to participant

According to some study reports, it is agreed that the emotional well-being throughout the investigation, and consideration of the participants was made (Strydom, 2011:115). In the present study, both during and after the study, there were no negative or detrimental effects on the participant, the environment, or anyone near them.

3.14 SUMMARY

The study's research methodology was covered in the chapter. The emphasis has been placed on the study paradigm and research design. This chapter has also discussed aspects such as sampling and sampling technique, instrumentation used in this study, data collection procedures, implications for ethics and data analysis. The subject of the following chapter is data presentation, analysis, and discussions.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed at assessing factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Ethiopian Universities. The research methodology was covered in the preceding chapter. This chapter discusses the data from the empirical study and gives analyses. The sub-questions that helped with data gathering also influenced how the data was presented, analyzed, and discussed. The research findings are covered in the following sections, which are based on the research questions listed in Chapter 1: Psychological variables influencing first-year students' academic success in universities, previous academic achievement versus first-year academic success, institutional factors towards first-year performance, and gender difference versus first-year academic success, and coping mechanisms versus academic success. First, data gathered from student questionnaires are displayed and analyzed, then complemented by data from lecturers, department heads, and college deans or fresh men coordinators' interviews. First, tables provide a summary of the information from the students' questionnaires. The results are examined in light of the existing literature. Secondly, data from lecturers', department heads' and college deans' or fresh men coordinators' interviews result are presented and analyzed. The following section displays and examines the biographical of interviewees.

4.1 BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ANALYSIS

Table 4.1 illustrates the respondents' biographical information

Table-4.1: Biographical variables of interview participants (N=28)

Respondents	Biographical variable	Variable description	Frequencies
Lecturers	Gender	Female	5(35.71%)
		Male	9(64.28%)
		Total	14(100%)
	Age	20-30years	6(42.85%)
		31-40years	5(35.71%)
		41-50years	2(14.28%)
		50+years	1(7.14%)
		Total	14(100%)
	Teaching experiences	1 term	4(28.57%)
		2 terms	7(50%)
		3 terms	2(14.28%)
		4 terms	1(7.14%)
		Total	14(100%)
Department heads	Gender	Female	3(42.85%)
		Male	4((57.14%)
		Total	7(100%)
	Age	20-30years	2(28.57%)
		31-40years	4(57.14%)
		41-50years	1(14.28%)
		50+years	
		Total	7(100%)
	Teaching experiences	1 term	2(28.57%)
		2 terms	2(28.57%)
		3 terms	2(28.57%)
		4 terms	1(14.28%)
		Total	7(100%)
Deans and coordinators	Gender	Female	2(28.57%)
		Male	5(71.42%)
		Total	7(100%)
	Age	20-30years	2(28.57%)
		31-40years	4(57.14%)
		41-50years	1(14.28%)
		50+years	
		Total	7(100%)
	Teaching experiences	1 term	1(14.28%)
		2 terms	3(42.85%)
		3 terms	3(42.85%)
		4 terms	
		Total	7(100%)

The biographical data of in-depth interview participants above in Table 4.1 reveals that the majority of the lecturers were males (64.28%) while the number of females was (35.7%) and a large number of them belong 20-30 years old and yet half of them had two terms teaching experiences among first-year students. Regarding the departmental heads' biographical data, though males outweigh their female counterparts, females were nearly equal to males. Besides, the majority of the department heads were found between 31-40 years of age level and still, the majority of them had almost two and more terms experiences of teaching and coordinating and they know their students well. Furthermore, concerning deans' and coordinators' biographical data in the above table, still, the majority were males and most of their age was between 31-40 years and a large number of them had more than one-year of coordination and teaching experience among first-year students.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION-1. WHAT ARE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

The first research the question posed in Chapter 1 was assessing the psychological factors contributing to first-year university students' failure to succeed in their academics at Southern Universities of Ethiopia. To answer this query, data were gathered from the student questionnaires and lecturers', department heads' and college deans', and freshmen coordinators' interviews. Research data from student questionnaires are given and examined first.

4.2.1 Results on self-efficacy factors in predicting academic success

4.2.1.1 Students' response

Table 4.2: The influence of self-efficacy on students' academic success (N=826)

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not-sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
Ability to study independently among first year students in the university can lead to academic success	41 5%	137 16.60%	111 13.4%	364 44.1%	173 20.90%	826 10%	3.0	Chi-Square = 391.543 df=36 P=0.000 X-square Crit = 63.69
The low level of confidence among first year students negatively affects their academic success.	62 7.50%	99 12.00%	102 12.30%	287 34.70%	276 33.40%	826 10%	3.5	
First year student's confidence in managing academic work load in the university results in better grade.	49 5.90%	120 14.50%	130 15.70%	346 41.9%	181 21.90%	826 10%	3.1	
A first year student's ability to work hard confidently leads to attain good grades in the university.	39 4.70%	76 9.20%	101 12.20%	323 39.10%	287 34.70%	826 10%	5.3	
First year students' ability to engage in profitable academic debate with peers positively affects their academic success.	50 6.10%	152 18.40%	239 28.90%	294 35.60%	91 11.00%	826 10%	1.9	
The ability to produce the best work under examination conditions among first year students lead to academic success in the university.	38 4.60%	93 11.30%	134 16.20%	392 47.50%	169 20.50%	826 10%	4.3	
Ability to confidently ask lecturers questions about the teaching material during a lecture positively affects first year students' result.	57 6.90%	127 15.40%	154 18.60%	340 41.20%	148 17.90%	826 10%	2.7	
The ability to produce coursework at the required standard among first year students in the university leads to better grade.	58 7.00%	131 15.90%	161 19.50%	356 43.10%	120 14.50%	826 10%	2.5	
The ability of first year students to remain adequately motivated throughout the year leads to better results in the university.	61 7.40%	121 14.6%	182 22%	313 37.9%	149 18.00%	826 10%	2.5	
First year students' ability to ask for help if they don't understand can positively affect their academic success.	70 8.50%	127 15.40%	149 18.00%	310 37.50%	170 20.60%	826 10%	2.4	
Summary	525 6.36%	1183 14.32%	1463 17.71%	3325 40.25%	1764 21.36%	8260 100%		

Table 4.2 above demonstrates that most of the students (61.61%) agreed that self-efficacy influences first-year students' academic success. This shows how students' better self-efficacy would result in better outcome while lower self-efficacy they have leads to lower result.

Likewise, the estimated chi-square test result ($\chi^2_{\alpha=0.01,36} = 391.543, p < 0.001$) was statistically significant at a 1% level. Therefore, additionally, there is research that suggests students agreed that self-efficacy influences first-year students' academic success.

The ratio in the table above also showed that students positively rated their agreement in the ways that self-efficacy influences their academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities.

The following paragraph displays and analyzes information gathered from lecturers, department heads, and college deans or freshmen coordinators' interviews of the Southern Ethiopia Universities.

4.2.1.2 Lecturers', Department heads' and College deans' and Fresh man coordinators' responses

Lecturers, Department heads, and College deans/Freshman coordinators' responses showed mixed perceptions towards how academic self-efficacy affects present academic success among first-year students.

4.2.1.2.1 Lecturers' responses

The majority of lecturers revealed that first-year students did not have good self-efficacy which predicted students' performance led to poor. That means, students who had lower confidence and capability of performing their tasks have shown less performance and most of the lecturers agreed that self-efficacy greatly affects first-year academic success. Lecturers also added that students' low self-efficacy was reflected among most students in having a low level of confidence, low ability to produce the best work, and incapability of studying independently and managing academic work that resulted in low performance. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“Many students were unable to do their tasks responsibly and did not reflect their ability in overcoming their tasks and they were found in copying and cheating and worrying about the failure” (lecturer3).

“Students showed low self-confidence and belief of managing their task and capability of doing their tasks independently and their perception to score better grade was low” (lecturer 1).

“When I provided my lecture, the majority of the students did not believe that they were capable of managing the heavy workload independently and proceeding to the next year” (lecturer 2).

“Many students were seen as with the fear and downing of them that they would be unable to persist due to the difficultness and were in fear of failing to succeed” (lecturer 5).

“Students were showing low self-confidence and weak ability to do academic tasks, they were not committed to controlling their academics and scored lower grades and even dismissed as well at end of the first semester” (lecturer 4).

“On average nearly half number of students in my class did not believe that they can challenge the difficult situation and get better results and even felt the fear of failing to continue the next semester” (lecturer 6).

“Some students showed a lack of believing them as they can do confidently and ask lecturer questions and were less likely controlling their tasks and expecting weak perception on positive result” (lecturer 7).

“Students were observed having a poor background and were not ready to confront the challenge of the new courses and the situation they encountered rather they were thinking of dismissal” (lecturer 10).

“A large number of students did not trust themselves that they can do by their own instead they prefer to depend on hard workers and cheat tests and examinations from others” (lecturer 8).

On the contrary, some of the lecturers for first-year students mentioned a few first-year students were confident and capable of doing their tasks and even challenge lecturers with questions; they were applying a commitment to control their academics and had scored better results. The subsequent verbal quotations reflect the preceding idea:

“I observed very few students who had a strong feeling of ability and confidence in what they do simultaneously they had enhanced perception on controlling academics and even performed better as well” (lecturer 11).

“I found students with highly efficacious of doing their activities and responsible for tasks and had high positive outcome expectation and did better grades” (Lecturer 12).

However, regarding having self-efficacy and its contribution to academic success among first-year students, some lecturers argued against being highly efficacious does not mean necessarily lead to higher grades. Instead, they mentioned having self-efficacy alone is not enough but academic success demands students' controlling perceptions of academics with commitment, hardworking, effort, and other responsibility taking in their academics. The verbal quotes that follow support what was just said:

“I found very few students who were highly efficacious and asking questions confidently but they were not committed to controlling their academics technically and they failed to score better results” (Lecturer 13).

“A few students were found being able to do their tasks intelligently and with the feeling of better feeling of controlling perceptions on activities independently” (Lecturer 14).

“I observed that some students who had confidence as well as strong perception over their academic control in expecting better result and did as well” (Lecturer 9).

4.2.1.2.2 Departmental heads' responses

Results from the departmental heads reveal that students had various reflections on their self-efficacy which predicted their academic success.

The department heads showed different views concerning first-year students' academic self-efficacy in predicting academic success. However, the majority of the department heads said that students were not able to do academic tasks with confidence and an overcoming belief, so they were not expecting better results and were not certain even about scoring passing marks. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“Most students did not show they can do their tasks independently and feel confident of getting better grades rather they were worried about whether to pass or not” (D. Head 1).

“Students could not work hard confidently which was reflected in letting other students do their assignments and project works and were uncertain of passing or failing” (D. Head 4).

“Most students' ability to ask for help for not understanding was low and stressed of failing except very few students” (D. Head 2).

“Most of the students were in fear of challenging the difficult situation and showing lowered perception on their academic control and fearing for dismissal as well” (D. Head 3).

“Students in first-year seemed they were working, attending classes, doing assignments but in exam, most of them preferred to copy and cheat from others work and become terrified which led to poor performance” (D. Head 5).

On the other hand, some department heads had different views. They believed that some students were working hard, confident of doing their tasks independently, and committed to controlling their academics in expecting better outcomes. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“I observed that most students were hard workers, study hard and were confident, had a belief of performing the course independently and expect they can score better grade” (D. Head 6).

“I observed very few students who were confident and able to do tasks independently and actively but they did not combine their confidence with exerting their own effort on controlling their tasks which led to lower result” (D. Head 7).

4.2.1.2 .3 Deans’ and Coordinators’ responses

Results from the college deans/fresh men coordinators indicate that students in the first-year were showing some sort of confidence and autonomy in changing their outcome. The college deans/fresh men coordinators showed different understandings of first-year students’ academic self-efficacy. Some college deans/coordinators observed students had good self-efficacy. However, the majority of the college deans/fresh men coordinators said that students could not do academic tasks with confidence and an overcoming belief and even expecting better outcomes by bringing reasons such as time shortage, course load, and other reasons. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“Almost an average number of students did not believe they can manage their tasks since they mentioned various factors such as time shortage, the newness of environment, course volume and other problems made them be overwhelmed” (Coordinator 1).

“Many students were found having low confidence and frustration and so this affected their result negatively” (Dean 1).

“I did not hide that few students have good confidence but many of them did not believe that they are capable of doing tasks independently and were uncertain of sustain of persisting instead of getting better result” (Dean 2).

“Students were seen as worrying and overstressed due to lack of self-confidence and then tried to cheat from others as if it were normal and formal task, so this resulted in poor performance” (Coordinator 2).

Freshmen coordinators and deans expressed first year students still showed great dependency syndrome on some other high achievers especially on doing assignments and copying examinations from better performers. The coordinators viewed students as having poor self-efficacy has an impact their results negatively. The following verbal quotes confirm the above:

“Students were found that they were unable to manage the frequent provision of assignments, overload and difficultness of the courses in depth and volume which pushed them into copying from others performance though they did not score better” (Coordinator 3).

“Students showed poor confidence, capability, independence in class follow up and asking questions and responding, doing academic tasks independently, so they showed fear about the dismissal and even dismissed in the first semester” (Dean 3).

In the following section, findings on how the perceived academic control influences academic success among first-year university students in Southern Ethiopia are presented and analyzed.

4.2.2 Results on perceived academic control in predicting academic success

The following sub-section presents and analyzes students' and lecturers', department heads, and college deans/fresh man coordinators' responses regarding the influence of the perception of academic control among first-year university students' academic success. This section first presents and analyses students' questionnaire responses to the influence regarding first-year students' perceptions of their academic control in university students' academic success.

4.2.2.1. Students' responses

Table 4.3: The influence of perceived academic control on students' academic success (N=826)

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not-sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
Having academic control over student's work results in better academic success in the university.	60 7.30%	142 17.20%	229 27.70%	317 38.40%	78 9.40%	826 14%	2.0	$\chi^2_3 = 124.126^a$ <i>Df=24</i> <i>P=0.000</i> <i>X-square Crit =42,98</i>
Students having academic responsibility & autonomy over work lead to academic success in first-year of university.	47 5.70%	132 16%	184 22.30%	339 41%	124 15%	826 14%	2.6	
First year students' feeling in controlling over academic outcomes in the university results in academic success.	52 6.30%	181 21.90%	221 26.80%	291 35.20%	81 9.80%	826 14%	1.6	
Students' perception of the university in the first-year as low-control environment may lead to academic failure.	64 7.70%	155 18.80%	233 28.20%	274 33.20%	100 12.10%	826 14%	1.7	
First year students' exertion of more effort to their courses leads to better work in the university stay.	62 7.50%	139 16.80%	199 24.10%	283 34.30%	143 17.30%	826 14%	2.1	
First year student's lack of confidence on controlling over work experience negatively affects their results.	79 9.60%	134 16.20%	143 17.30%	302 36.6%	168 20.30%	826 14%	2.2	
Student's decreased opportunity to exert control over their tasks may make them feel "out of control in their first year performance.	56 6.80%	172 20.80%	210 25.40%	292 35.40%	96 11.6%	826 14%	1.7	
Summary	420 7.26%	1055 18.25%	1419 24.54%	2098 36.30%	790 13.66%	5782 100%		

Table 4.3 above showed that a majority of students (49.95%) agreed that perceived academic control influences success among first-year students. In other words, students showed their agreement on how having better perceived academic control can influence their academic results positively; whereas lower perceived academic control they have influenced their results negatively.

The estimated chi-square test result ($\chi^2_{\alpha=0.01,24} = 124.126, p < 0.01$) was statistically significant at a 1% level. This also confirmed that students agreed that there is an association between the perceived academic control they have and their academic success. Therefore, it can be concluded that perceived academic control influenced academic achievement among freshmen in Southern Universities.

The respondents also showed more agreement or strong agreement to some statements such as students having academic responsibility & autonomy over work leads to academic success while lack of confidence in controlling work experience negatively affects their results in their first-year of university.

The following sub-section also presents and analyses lecturers', department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' responses regarding the influence of perceived academic control among first-year university students' academic success.

4.2.2.2. Lecturers', Departments heads and College deans/Fresh man coordinators' responses

4.2.2.2.1 Lecturers' response

The lecturers showed mixed views about first-year students' perceived academic control. The majority of instructors for first-year students expressed that students did not have strong perceived academic control which predicted their academic success. That means students by having lower perception, responsibility, and commitment to academic control and expecting lower outcomes showed less performance. Lecturers also added that students' low responsibility, and low exertion of effort on academic control were reflected among most students in having a lack of confidence in controlling work experience, feeling over academic outcomes was less which predicted lower grades and even dismissed in the first semester of first-year. On the

contrary, lecturers view perceived academic control as the most decisive psychological factor in determining academic success since it was observed among students who had high perceived academic control and did better. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above:

“Students were attending the classes regularly, but they were not committed in a way that they are responsible to controlling the academic situation and less likely expecting to score better results and did a lower performance as well” (Lecturer 1).

“Many fresh students were not in a commitment and did not have strong expectations about positive outcomes. I observed that the existence of low controlling capacity and expectation led to lowered confidence and further to weak performance, too” (Lecturer 4).

“Among the first-year students who had weak perceptions of controlling academics, they were not confident of doing their tasks in responsibility that led to fear of dismissal and uncertainty to succeed” (Lecturer 2).

“I observed students showed decreased opportunity to exert control over their tasks and were less capable when they were engaged in their corresponding courses and showing the fear of failure” (Lecturer 3).

Results from in-depth interviews with other lecturers also revealed that first-year students lacked strong perceived academic control which means they showed weak autonomy, and confidence, and exerted less effort was observed which resulted in an adverse effect on academic success. The verbal quotes that follow confirm aforementioned:

“First-year students’ lack of confidence in academic control of their work resulted in enhanced uncertainty of the outcomes” (Lecturer 5).

“Still, most students’ autonomy over their learning was poor and positive outcome expectation was uncertain and showed the failed belief of they can do since I watched them when they lack the confidence to do assignments, quizzes, even tests in dependently” (Lecturer 7).

“I did not see that most students were exerting more effort to their courses to expect better outcome but a few who exert their effort over their tasks did better positive result” (Lecturer 6).

On the other hand, some of the lecturers for first-year students expressed that many fresh students were committed, initiated, and motivated to work hard and responsibly did assignments and projects expecting better scores. The following quotes clarify the above:

“I strongly believe that students who were well prepared and felt in controlling over academic outcomes scored better achievements and this further enhanced their level of confidence as well and predicted better grade further” (Lecturer 8).

“I found having good preparation and the perception of academic control increased their confidence among students that helped them work hard and further expect better results and scored better grades as well” (Lecturer 9).

“Students who had better confidence in doing tasks and belief in academic controlling of their tasks simultaneously showed their better belief of they can manage the difficult situation and their expectation and the capability belief led to better academic outcome” (Lecturer 10).

In brief, many lecturers who taught first-year students agreed that most of the students had low commitment, initiation, competence, and confidence. This resulted in high stress and poor performance. The low perception of academic control resulted in low participation in class work: asking oral and written questions, and doing group assignments and project works independently. As a result, very few high achievers did the whole group assignment and projects and students with less confidence become the members of the group and did not contribute their share. However, some of the interviewees agreed that a few students who had better achievements so far and showed their commitment and taking responsibility were competing to do well in the first-year. They had strong beliefs that they can work hard and even showed less stress. This better perception of academic control led them to attend classes regularly, ask questions, respond to what they were asked, study courses individually and in a group, and score better grades.

4.2.2.2.2 Departmental heads’ responses

Results from the departmental heads reveal that most students in the first year were showing a kind of less perception of academic control and responsibility which predicted poor academic success though those students who had high perceived academic control did better. The quotes that follow support aforementioned:

“I briefly say most students seem to attend and watch the class but in practice, students were not in a genuine commitment and high controlling belief of managing their learning which further enhanced them be overwhelmed by stress which predicted negative outcome” (D. Head 1).

“I observed that students had less confidence and motivation towards controlling their difficult situation and simultaneously I saw their responsibility, commitment, and

autonomy to challenge the challenge was very limited and did not perform as well''(D. Head 3).

“I observed that several students were not performing the given tasks and project works, tests, and examinations. They practiced weak commitment and showed low controlling capacity over their learning and did lower grades, too’’ (D. Head 2).

In contrast, there were a few department heads who witnessed that fresh students had the commitment, took responsibility, and were eager to attend the lectures and work tasks. The verbal quotes that follow confirm what was just said:

“I saw most students followed class, paid attention and committed to their learning at the same time they were capable of doing tasks and believe they can control, so did their assignments independently, even worked hard and scored good grades’’(D. Head 4).

“I observed the commitment of capable students even concerned about not missing classes and responsibly doing assignments and spending time in studying about the tests and examinations and did their exam as well’’(D. Head 5).

“I found highly performing students who were enhanced by their perceived academic control, then I aware of them that they were believing their ability that they can do and scored better’’ (D. Head 6).

4.2.2.2.3 Deans’ and Coordinators’ responses

According to many college deans’ and coordinators’ views, first-year students’ perceived academic control was poor since many of them were not confidently and independently controlling their academic and social engagement expecting that they would not get better outcomes, however, some students had a better perceived academic control and performed well. The following verbal quotes confirm the above:

“Most of the time fresh students were seen as busy as they were attending the class, but in real senses it was not in a confidence of doing tasks expecting that they can score better grades’’(Dean 1).

“Some students came to university with having not knowing what to do, and even they did not know how they were committed to academics and strength of overcoming the difficult situation which further pushed them to believe they are unable of overcoming these situations on their own’’(Coordinator 1)

“Many students’ poor back ground knowledge and academic preparedness left them unable to manage the university courses resulting to lower performance, so I observed a huge gap in taking responsibility and commitment of doing their assignments, quizzes, tests, and examination as well’’(Dean 2).

“Students were observed doing things in a shallow or superficial way in letting assignments others do and prefer to cheat from others, too that led them to poor performance” (Coordinator 2).

“Moreover, the other college dean underlined the above idea by saying most of those students who enrolled in the university came with low preparedness in their background and this weakness was reflected in their less likely to perform their tasks and expressing dependency syndrome on others which threatened their self-efficacy as well” (Dean 3).

“On the other hand, I observed better prepared and responsible students, they showed confidence on controlling the learning, so they expressed they can do and perceiving there would be positive outcome” (Coordinator 3).

“A few students were experiencing the increased perception of managing and controlling their courses in expecting enhanced grade have a confidence and prior capability to do tasks in responsibility” (Dean 4).

The next section displays and analyzes students, lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshmen coordinators’ responses regarding the impact of academic stress on first-year university students’ academic success.

4.2.3 Results on stress in predicting academic success

The next subsection displays and examines students’ responses to the influence of academic stress on freshmen students’ academic success.

4.2.3.1 Students’ responses

Table 4.4: The influence of stress on first year students' academic success (N=826)

Items	strongly disagree	disagree	not-sure	Agree	strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
Student's work overload stress among first-year students results in poor academic performance.	2 0.20%	159 19.20%	320 38.70%	345 41.80%	0 0%	826 11.1%	2.1	
Students' feeling "stressed" and nervous about situations negatively affect their academic performance in the first-year.	31 3.80%	170 20.60%	169 20.50%	262 31.70%	194 23.50%	826 11.1%	2.3	
Students being upset about things happened unexpectedly during first year leads to poor performance.	49 5.90%	147 17.80%	233 28.20%	275 33.30%	122 14.80%	826 11.1%	2.0	
Being stressed and angered about uncontrollable things among first year students negatively affects their performance.	50 6.10%	163 19.70%	207 25.10%	267 32.30%	139 16.80%	826 11.1%	1.9	$\chi^2 =$ 361.527 ^a
Student's feelings of difficulties due to inability to overcome their lesson among first year students lead to poor result.	31 3.80%	162 19.60%	209 25.30%	302 36.60%	122 14.80%	826 11.1%	2.2	Df=32 P=0.000
Stress due to inability to cope with all the things during first year negatively affects academic success.	33 4.00%	161 19.50%	223 27%	299 36.20%	110 13.30%	826 11.1%	2.1	X-square Crit =50.89
Inability to control important things encountered by first-year students' results in academic failure.	50 6.10%	163 19.70%	275 33.3%	251 30.40%	87 10.50%	826 11.1%	1.6	
Lack of good quality sleep among first- year students negatively affect their academic performance.	57 6.90%	181 21.90%	212 25.7%	262 31.70%	114 13.80%	826 11.1%	1.6	
Generally, dissatisfaction with teaching and learning process among first-year students results in poor academic performance.	51 6.20%	160 19.40%	206 24.9%	244 29.50%	165 20%	826 11.1%	1.9	
Summary	354 4.76%	1466 19.72%	2054 27.63%	2507 33.72%	1053 14.16%	7434 100%		

The results in Table 4.4 shows that most of the students (47.88%) showed their agreement in that perceived stress among first-year students can influence their academic success. That means, the higher the students are nervous and getting more stressed the lower their academic success would be brought while the less the students stressed and nervous the better they can do their academic tasks

As can be seen from Table 4.4, the results of the Pearson chi-square test $\chi^2(32, n = 826) = 361.527, P < 0.01$ were statistically significant at a 1% level. This indicated that students agreed that there is an influence of stress on academic achievement among first-year students.

The computed ratio in Table 4.4 indicates that students generally agreed that students' feeling stressed and nervous about issues negatively affects academic success among first-year students.

The respondents also agreed or strongly agreed with some statements such as students feeling "stressed" and nervous about situations that negatively affect their academic success in the first-year followed by students' feelings of difficulty due to the inability to overcome their lessons among first-year students leading to poor results than the others.

The following sub-section presents and analyses lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' responses regarding the influence of academic stress among first-year university students on their academic success.

4.2.3.2 Lecturers', Departments heads' and College deans/Fresh man coordinators' responses

Lecturers, Department heads, and College deans/Freshman coordinators' responses showed mixed feelings toward how perceived stress affects present academic success among first-year students.

4.2.3.2.1 Lecturers' responses

Lecturers who taught freshmen students revealed that students had varying degrees of stress. Majority of students were stressed about fear of failing, difficulty, and overload of courses, and low belief in controlling their tasks which led to lower academic success among fresh students.

However, some students had normal levels of stress that made them work hard and score better. The following verbal quotes illustrate the findings:

“Many students experienced tense, fear of failing, hopelessness, anxiety, the terror of course difficulty, and stress of shortage of time resulted in poor performance” (Lecturer 12).

“Though very informal advice was given, many students were worried about succeeding and fear of failure. However, nearly half of the students were dismissed in the first semester” (Lecturer 1).

“Students were highly stressed of newness and variety of courses while showing lowered perception on academic control and then they worried about poor outcome which resulted in low result” (Lecturer 3).

“Students were overwhelmed by course overload, the newness of the environment, and fear of being dismissed. As a result, they were highly stressed and consistently showed weak academic performance” (Lecturer 2).

“While I was teaching during first-year class, I observed some students were highly tensed and even got themselves fainted and showing decreased belief of academic control and were exposed to lower grades” (Lecturer 4).

Results from in-depth interviews with lecturers also revealed that students showed heightened stress, instability, and confusion in difficult situations which led to dismissal and lower academic success. The following in-depth interviews of the lecturer’s verbal quotes confirm this finding:

“Students were mentioning less support from the university together with seasonal endemic disease occurrence and political instability in the universities made them stressed, so they were under fear of dismissal and dismissed as well” (Lecturer 9).

“Students seemed they could not cope with it and were surrounded by fears, instability, and tension. Even though brief psychological support was given, many students were dismissed before the second semester” (Lecturer 6).

“Many students who were terrified and shocked said that they were in fear of the course difficulty, assignments’ overload, and expected they would score lower grades” (Lecturer 5).

“There was a stressful situation in the university which cannot be handled by first-year students as appropriately and genuinely supporting as possible which then still led to poor results” (Lecturer 7).

“Students said the poor teaching method and variety of uncontrollable things happened made them extremely stressed regardless of limited support given” (Lecturer 8).

On the other hand, lecturers did not hide that some students had reasonable stress that made them work hard to score better outcomes. The following verbal quotes confirm the above:

“Some students have appropriate stress with high expectation of academic control which encouraged them to predict better grades” (Lecturer 10).

“I found that there were a few students who had reasonable stress and were working hard and had better beliefs of controlling their academics which helped them predicted better grades” (Lecturer 11).

4.2.3.2.2 Departmental heads' response

The majority of department heads stated that students were very nervous about academic and university situations. The students had low beliefs in managing their tasks, high stress about whether they would succeed, fear of assignment overload, and tight exam schedules. These situations negatively affected their performance. On the other hand, a few department heads mentioned that some students had optimal levels of stress that helped them to score better grades. The following quotes illustrate the findings mentioned above:

“Students were under the nervous and angered situation and they were not in strong belief of managing academic tasks and then were thinking of lower achievement and did poor, too though insufficient advice and support was given and not working well” (D. Head 4).

“I disclosed that students were overwhelmed by fear and tension of passing or failing and showed visible stress which led them to poor academic success” (D. Head 1).

“Students were busy for nothing and worried about what will happen to the academic result and weak perception on academic control as well and predicting of dismissal and even some dismissed” (D. Head 2).

“Most students claimed that they were overloaded by many courses, several assignments, too tighten with exam schedules, newness, and difficulty of courses which left them to uncontrollable stress and were in a feeling of expecting lower grades” (D. Head 3).

Very few departmental heads reported that the average number of students had optimal stress that helped them to work hard and engage in activities with responsibility and controlling perception over their academics confidently. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding.

“Almost an average number of students had better stress feeling and they were usually working with hard and strong perception on academic control to score good result” (D. Head 5).

“As I observed especially the currently enrolled students were doing activities in a responsible, controlling perception over academics and independent way but lowered stress existed that make them strong to score better” (D. Head 6).

4.2.3.2.3 Deans' and coordinators' response

The college deans and freshman coordinators interviews indicated different observations which mean most of them said that many students were very stressed about the dismissal, confused about uncontrollable things, course overload, and newness, and lowered perception of academic control which pushed them to fear being dismissed. On the other hand, a few college deans and freshman coordinators disclosed that a small number of students were appropriately stressed and were found in improved performance. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“Nearly large numbers of first-year students were too busy of fearing dismissal and lower grades and showing tension which let them in poor performance but some orientation and advice were given” (Coordinator 1).

“Although most of the students seemed under normal stress of doing tasks, their result was not as they did. Even though very brief orientation and advice were given, finally, many of them were dismissed” (Dean 1).

“Students frequently became anxious, tensed beyond the normal, getting themselves unstable and even becoming fainted and confused about an uncontrollable situation, so they were under exaggerated fear and lastly let them dismissed and they recommend the support of counselors as formally as possible” (Coordinator 2).

“However, some college deans revealed that some students have better stress levels and tried to manage their course overload and other unpredictable conditions and scored better results” (Dean 2).

“Students were showing great perception of perceived academic control and were working in group, pair and individually to resist and to better score” (Coordinator 3).

The next section presents and analyses the views of students, lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' responses regarding how the previous academic success of students affects present academic success among first-year university students in Southern Universities of Ethiopia.

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION-2 RESULTS ON: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES PREVIOUS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AFFECT FIRST YEAR STUDENTS' ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

The second sub-research question addressed in Chapter 1 emphasized on assessing previous versus present academic success relation among first-year university students academic success in Southern Universities. Data for addressing this sub-research question were gathered from students' questionnaires and lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' interviews.

The following section presents and analyses students' questionnaire response first.

4.3.1 Students' response

Table 4.5: The influence of previous achievement on present students' academic success (N=826)

Items	strongly disagree	disagree	not-sure	agree	strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
One's high school academic performance predicts his/her first-year academic performance in a university.	145 17.6%	135 16.3%	98 11.9%	347 42.0%	101 12.2%	826 12.5%	2.1	$\chi^2 = 519.91.^a$ <i>Df=28</i> <i>P=0.000</i> <i>X-square Crit =48.28</i>
Students' better prior academic achievement is motivation for their first-year success in university.	67 8.1%	112 13.6%	98 11.9%	399 48.3%	150 18.2%	826 12.5%	2.3	
High school grade-point average predicts first year students' success in the university.	140 16.9%	250 30.3%	129 15.6%	235 28.5%	72 8.7%	826 12.5%	2.0	
Students' high high-school GPA is positively correlated with freshman GPA.	142 17.2%	208 25.2%	141 17.1%	253 30.6%	82 9.9%	826 12.5%	1.9	
Good academic preparation in high school is positively related to first-year university engagement.	133 16.1%	83 10.0%	105 12.7%	335 40.6%	170 20.6%	826 12.5%	2.2	
High school GPA is weakly related to first-year retention and university success.	151 18.3%	218 26.4%	175 21.2%	202 24.5%	80 9.7%	826 12.5%	2.1	
High school performance of students did not adequately prepare university life.	172 20.8%	251 30.4%	140 16.9%	173 20.9%	90 10.9%	826 12.5%	1.6	
Students' prior academic performance in high school is seen as inaccurate predictor of university academic success.	132 16.0%	196 23.7%	187 22.6%	243 29.4%	68 8.2%	826 12.5%	0.95	
Summary	1082 16.4%	1453 22.0%	1073 16.2%	2187 33.1%	813 12.3%	6608 100.0%		

The results in Table 4.5 above showed that most of the students (45.40%) agreed that previous academic achievement influenced first-year academic success. That means, the higher the performance and their lower entrance examination results in high school the better the performance among first-year in the university. On the contrary, low preparation and entrance exam results resulted in lower performance.

As can be seen from Table 4.5 above, the results of the Chi-square test $\chi^2(28, n = 826) = 519.91, P < 0.01$ were statistically significant at a 1% level. This also confirms that students' previous academic success influenced present academic achievement among freshmen. Moreover, the ratio in the table above confirmed that students rated their agreement in such a way that prior academic achievement influenced the present academic achievement among freshmen at southern universities. The respondents also showed their agreement or strong agreement to some statements than others.

The following section presents and analyzes data on lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' interview responses regarding previous performance versus present academic success among first-year university students academic performance in Southern Universities.

4.3.2 Results from Lecturers, departments heads and college deans/fresh man coordinators

4.3.2.1 Lecturers' response

Lecturers addressed mixed perceptions towards how previous performance affected the present academic success among first-year students. Many of them showed that there was a significant connection between previous versus present academic success among first-year university students. However, a few of them viewed that there was no substantial connection between the previous versus present academic success among first-year university students.

Besides, lecturers said that those students who have well academic preparedness performed and scored better results while students who had low previous preparedness and entry score did weakly among first-year. The next verbal quotes support the above finding:

“I identified fresh students’ previous academic achievement was low which led them to poor performance and there are connections” (Lecturer 1).

“It was found that the lower the entrance score they had, the lower grades they scored and the lower expectation of outcome they had” (Lecturer 3).

“Those students who performed poorly previously in pre-university achieved low results in the first-year” (Lecturer 2).

“Moreover, one of the interviewees underlined that I observed those who did not well prepare academically during high and preparatory school, they showed worse performance in first-year” (Lecturer 4).

Lecturers also indicated that students who had high entrance examination scores, good background, and prior better performance resulted in higher academic success in the first year and there is a connection between prior performance and present achievement. On the contrary, some lecturers stressed that previous performance whether it was better or worse alone did not guarantee success in the first year, but what is most important is performing with commitment and controlling perception. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above finding:

“I believed that previous performance is the base and foundation for the later or university performance and I found that students who had good performance in the past had a better perception of controlling their academics which increased their perceived academic control, then led to better grades” (Lecturer 7).

“The performances of students with good background were reflected in raising questions and responding to them and these students were likely to score better results in quizzes” (Lecturer 5).

“I found that many students who scored high scores in entrance examination actively participated in tasks such as assignments, quizzes, projects, experiments predicted better outcomes” (Lecturer 6).

On the contrary, some lecturers emphasized that prior performance whether it was better or worse alone did not guarantee overall success, but what is most essential is performing with commitment and controlling perception in the first year. The quotes that follow support the aforementioned:

“I found students who performed well previously but scored low grades in the first year which I identified that students’ commitment and perception to control on academics was weak in the first year” (Lecturer 8).

“I found average and even lower performers in their background but students with increased commitment and better control perception of performance scored well in the first year, I think commitment and perception of controlling academic in the first year are detrimental” (Lecturer 9).

“I observed that previous achievement alone has no strong connection with the first year performance and it did not guarantee university results since contradicting scores were seen from the previous performance” (Lecturer 10).

“Unless the first year commitment and capability of the learner and the university learning teaching environment is facilitated, I identified students who performed better in early years failed to succeed in the first year” (Lecturer 11).

“I shared that in principle high school well preparedness and the first year better performance is boldly related positively, but in reality, it needs the first year hard working” (Lecturer 12).

4.3.2.2 Departmental heads’ response

According to the majority of department heads’ interviewed, the previous achievement towards first year’s performance contribution has been observed on two sides. That means, most department heads said performance in the past and the present are strongly correlated which means they underlined the better the prior achievement, the higher achievement in the first year and vice versa. On the contrary, the earlier performance is not very decisive to bring similar scores in the first year rather taking responsibility and having the belief in controlling their academic has still due value. The next quotes illustrate what was said above:

“I believe that the appropriate and genuine performance and well preparedness of the learner exist in prior background resulted in scoring better in first year” (D. Head 1).

“As long as students’ previous score bases their ability, they scored better in the first year and this was observed in the first year first and second semester result among first-year students” (D. Head 2).

“The high entrance score in the entrance exam resulted in the higher score in the first year provided that the learner’s commitment and hardworking together with all the concerned bodies of university support is concerned” (D. Head 3).

“ On the contrary, I stressed if the previous performance was done copying from others, so it did not directly contribute in the first year performance and this was what happened among fresh students ” (D. Head 4).

“I argue against that what so ever positive connection exists between previous and present performance, it demands students’ hard working and controlling perception and commitment in the first year” (D. Head 5).

“The university is new in its course complexity, nature, and depth and so on, then it demands the new, special skill, commitment and competence, so the better past performance does not directly relate with the present result” (D. Head 6).

4.3.2.3 Deans’ and coordinators’ response

The interviewees emphasized there is a connection between past and present performance, but some still denied that what positively performed past is not necessarily found in the first year since the first year by nature demands students’ effort and commitment to get better outcomes. The following quotations support what was previously expressed:

“Prior academic success and the first year of university performance have a significant correlation. This is what has been observed” (Coordinator 1).

“My observation reveals that most of the students in the first year showed dependence syndrome on the few hard-working high achievers ” (Dean 1).

“It was observed that there were students who preferred to join and work in group work with those high achievers expecting that they would get better marks which informed me the weak preparation led to weak performance in the first year” (Dean 2).

“I identified that many students having weak preparation in the prior achievement still lacks confidence tried to depend on others performance” (Coordinator 2).

On the contrary, some deans argue against the above idea that even though there is a connection between prior and present performance, the very essential is enhancing students’ commitment and responsibility among first-year students for the betterment of their performance since those who were responsible and committed did well. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“There is somehow connection but what is most essential is the learner’s commitment, fulfilling the necessary input and facilities and using teaching methods suitable and simple for learners in the university” (Dean 3).

“I found learners better performed in the first year in having the committed work and expectation of getting better result though they did not have good performance so far in the high school” (Coordinator 3).

“The entrance score does not matter significantly since the scores would be either on their own or copied from other students. Unless it is supported by present effort there is no strong connection with the present the first year score” (Dean 4).

The following sub-section presents and analyses students’ and lecturers’, department heads, and college deans/fresh man coordinators’ responses on institutional factors towards academic success among first year university.

4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION-3 RESULTS ON: TO WHAT EXTENT DO FIRST YEAR STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES WITH INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS AFFECT THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS?

The third sub-research question stated in Chapter 1 emphasized on assessing institutional factors’ contribution towards academic success among first year Southern Universities.

4.4.1 The influence of students’ experiences with in the Institutional factors or experiences on academic success

To address this sub-research question, data were gathered from both students’ questionnaires and lecturers’, department heads, and college deans/fresh man coordinators’ interviews. The next section presents and analyses students’ questionnaire responses primarily.

4.4.1.1 Students' responses

Table 4.6: The influence of students' experiences with in institutional factors on students' academic success (N=826)

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not-sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
Inadequacy of learning support among first year university students leads to academic failure.	112 13.60%	153 18.5%	157 19.0%	269 32.60%	135 16.3%	826 9.1%	1.5	$\chi^2 =$ 568.165^a <i>Df=40</i> <i>P=0.000</i> $\chi^2_{crit} =$ 63.69
Teaching methods employed by lecturers of first year students in the university does not affect student's performance.	233 28.20%	267 32.3%	140 16.9%	125 15.10%	61 7.4%	826 9.1%	0.4	
First year students' academic performance is negatively affected by accommodating large number of students in a class.	105 12.70%	220 26.6%	203 24.6%	204 24.70%	94 11.4%	826 9.1%	0.9	
Student's first year academic performances are negatively affected by inefficient administration in the university.	73 8.80%	182 22%	197 23.8%	239 28.90%	135 16.3%	826 9.1%	1.5	
First year university students academic performances are negatively affected by irrelevant continuous assessment.	67 8.10%	182 22%	161 19.5%	252 30.50%	164 19.9%	826 9.1%	1.7	
One's academic performance in first year is negatively affected by inadequacy of facilities (stationary, photocopier, and printing) in the university.	72 8.70%	189 22.9%	168 20.3%	253 30.60%	144 17.4%	826 9.1%	1.5	
Inadequate/wrong course information provided by lecturers negatively affects first year students' academic performances.	72 8.70%	141 17.1%	146 17.7%	263 31.80%	204 24.7%	826 9.1%	2.2	
Lack of vast relevant books in library during first year negatively affects students' academic performances.	80 9.70%	162 19.6%	148 17.9%	234 28.30%	202 24.5%	826 9.1%	1.8	
Lecturer's use of inconsistent and unfair type of assessment negatively affects first year students' academic performances.	101 12.20%	140 16.9%	147 17.8%	251 30.40%	187 22.6%	826 9.1%	1.8	
University students' academic performances during first year are negatively affected by uninteresting class environment.	89 10.80%	158 19.1%	169 20.50%	275 33.30%	135 16.3%	826 9.1%	1.7	
The lecturers' use of poor teaching methods among first year students negatively affects academic performances.	79 9.60%	149 18.0%	148 17.90%	227 27.50%	223 27%	826 9.1%	2.0	
Summary	1083 11.92%	1943 21.38%	1784 19.63%	2592 28.53%	1684 18.53%	9086 100%		

The result in Table 4.6 above revealed that a large number of students (47.06%) agreed on how institutional factors affect academic success among freshmen students in the university. It means when institutional factors or inputs are fulfilled, it affects academic success among first-year students positively while institutional inputs are deficient; it negatively influences first-year students' achievement in the university. Similarly, the results of the Chi-square test, $\chi^2(40, n = 826) = 568.165, P < 0.01$ was statistically significant at a 1% level. This also confirmed that institutional factors influenced academic success among first-year students in the university.

The ratio in the above table indicated that students rated their agreement in a way that institutional factors affect academic success among first-year students in southern universities. The respondents also agreed and strongly agreed with some statements than others.

The following section presents and analyses data on lecturers', department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' interview responses regarding institutional factors' contribution' to academic success among first-year university students in Southern Universities.

4.4.1.2 Lecturers', Department heads' and College deans/Fresh mans' coordinators in-depth interview

4.4.1.2.1 Lecturers' response

Lecturers showed different feelings and understandings towards how institutional factors affect present academic success among first-year students. Most of them indicated that there is a strong correlation between institutional factors towards academic achievement.

Lecturers also revealed that fulfilling the institutional factors such as facilities, experiences, resources, infrastructures and inputs increased first-year students' academic success, while deficiency in institutional experiences and inputs hindered students' performance. Here, lecturers underlined having these institutional factors fulfilled and operationalized in a way to be used, the better the performance and vice versa. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above:

“Many university inputs, facilities, and experiences were not sufficient, that means classes were not interesting with their resources which results in academic failure” (Lecturer 1).

“Lecturers usually deliver their course through lecture dominated method and it played its role in students' performance negatively” (Lecturer 3).

“Universities lack sufficient modern boards, projectors, and electric city facilities. In addition, the administration is inefficient and these negatively influenced students’ performance” (Lecturer 2).

“University facilities, electric systems, library, classroom conditions are quite good, in fact it does not mean facilities and resources are fulfilled as per the required level, so it could affect students’ first-year performance negatively to some extent” (Lecturer 4).

Findings from lecturers’ interviews also stressed that students were exposed to limited teaching modalities, inadequate administrative and academic support, insufficient learning facilities, and lecturers’ commitment. These in turn resulted in negative effects on academic success. The next verbal quotes clarify what was said above:

“I still observed teaching modalities which were lecturers dominant and students depend on it rather than being creative. Moreover, there are student-related factors together with the university low supporting environment that has negatively contributed to fresh students’ performance” (Lecturer 5).

“Less lecturers’ commitment to supporting learners’ academic works further hindered their performance” (Lecturer 8).

“Less appropriate academic support from lecturers and administration made first-year students’ problems aggravated and resulted in lower results” (Lecturer 6).

“Deficiency and shortage of teaching-learning facilities led to students’ poor academic performance” (Lecturer 7).

On the contrary side, some lecturers indicated that some students better performed by investing their effort and commitment at most in integrating themselves socially and academically though problems exist in the institution. The quotes that follow support the aforementioned finding:

“However, I believed that yet institutionally fit or conducive environment enhances students’ learning and help for better performance, but in the first-year this did not exist in practice which led to poor performance” (Lecturer 9).

“Students who were involved and engaged in academic tasks and the social network did in a better way, then they benefited a lot in their performance and even scored better results” (Lecturer 10).

“Students who were governed by good time management, proper and regular attendance has enhanced their perceived academic control and benefited a lot in their academics” (Lecturer 11).

4.4.1.2.2 Departmental heads’ response

The majority of departmental heads revealed that students suffered from the shortage of university inputs, facilities, and infrastructures, insufficiency of library books and course-related references and

absence of special attention strategies which decreased their perception of academic control. Moreover, weak administration and political instability in the country and the university specifically, left first-year learners in danger which led to poor performance though there were still a few good works trials. On the other hand, very few department heads mentioned that institutional experiences were not major problems or concerns among first-year students, but it is students' academic problems. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above:

“It was observed that overloaded assignments, quizzes, tests and tight class schedule further resulted in poor performance among first-year students” (D. Head 2).

“The social networking among students like with whom and how and when to relate and get the relevant and necessary facilities were not available, so students were suffering and then exposed to dismissal at large compared to seniors” (D. Head 6).

“The infrastructures and facilities were insufficient, the orientation and advising of first-year students were not structured very well and even absent in most cases, so because of this first year learners were suffering in academics” (D. Head 3).

“Strategies of supporting and special attention programme targeting for fresh students is still very low which made first-year students discouraged of what is happening and further affected their result negatively” (D. Head 4).

“I observed students under the first year programme demand a number of supports such as academic like advising, orientation, mentoring, how to study, and soon, but it did not exist in practice which still influenced performance negatively” (D. Head 5).

In arguing against the above idea, some departmental heads mentioned that the university experiences and inputs are not big challenges, but the problems are from both students and universities that make it difficult for students' performance. The following verbal quotes confirm the above:

“However, university infrastructure, class size, facilities, and other inputs are not our concern rather they were comfortable and students were not threatened in this regard and did not affect performance negatively” (D. Head 7).

“Students' academic performance was not heavily affected by facilities and inputs of the institution, but students were not appropriately advised and counseled which led to low grades” (D. Head 1).

4.4.1.2.3 Deans' and coordinators' response

Many college deans and freshman coordinators revealed that first-year students were challenged by universities' facilities and infrastructures problem and teachers' inappropriate delivery of courses. Besides, the teaching method is more dogmatic due to time shortage and lecturers' professional support

was less, so students' performance was affected negatively at large though some respondents raised problems regarding institutional factors that were not the concern for predicting the performance. The following verbal quotes confirm the above finding:

“Facilities, inputs, and resources and experiences in the university were present to some extent but these experiences were still seen as a problem for students' performance” (Dean 1).

“Most of the students' background was poor and then many students failed to succeed though the environment provision was relatively similar for all” (Dean 2).

“University experiences such as weak lecturers course delivery skill and insufficient preparedness together with the shortage of relevant modules let fresh students confused and led to poor result” (Coordinator 1).

“Insufficiency of classrooms in some cases and having a lot of students in one class as well as lack of appropriate care and follow up made the first year learners performance low and many of them were dismissed at early of the semester” (Dean 3).

“I observed that most students were in danger to pass or fail due to both hindering experiences of university and student related-problems such as students' low prior preparedness” (Coordinator 2).

“Teacher-related weaknesses such as teacher dominant teaching, weak assessment mechanisms, loose academic and social contact of the student to teacher, student to student and student to administration and others made first-year students fail to succeed” (Coordinator 3).

On the contrary, some deans addressed that institutions' problems are now not great enough but it is students' preparation that greatly affects their success negatively. The quotes below support what was just said:

“However, I observed that institution-related problems were not critical, but it was students weakness regarding preparation ahead, and lack of commitment in the university lowered their score” (Dean 4).

First-year students were not well prepared in advance, so they failed to control their academic activity and showed less effort exertion” (Coordinator 4).

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION-4 RESULTS ON: TO WHAT EXTENT DOES GENDER INFLUENCE ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS?

The fourth sub-research question addressed in Chapter 1 emphasized on assessing Gender differences and academic success among first-year Southern Universities.

To address this sub-research question, data were gathered from students' questionnaires and lecturers', department heads, and college deans'/freshman coordinators' interviews.

The next section displays and analyses students' questionnaire response first.

4.5.1 Students' response

Table 4.7: The Influences of gender on academic success among first year students (N=826)

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not-sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
Girls perform academically better in university first-year programme than boys.	161 19.50%	225 27.20%	248 30%	111 13.40%	81 9.80%	826 12.5%	0.5	$\chi^2 = 213.004^a$ <i>Df</i> =28 <i>P</i> =0.000 $\chi^2_{Crit} = 48.28$
Boys outperform girls in science during first year university stay.	82 9.90%	196 23.70%	293 35.50%	181 21.90%	74 9%	826 12.5%	0.9	
Girls are more academically responsible than boys in the first-year performance.	171 20.70%	200 24.20%	173 20.90%	195 23.60%	87 10.50%	826 12.5%	0.8	
Gender difference makes a difference in first-year cumulative GPA.	133 16.10%	181 21.90%	185 22.40%	178 21.50%	149 18%	826 12.5%	1.0	
Girls outperform their counterparts at all levels of education system in the first year.	110 13.30%	221 26.80%	224 27.10%	161 19.50%	110 13.30%	826 12.5%	0.8	
In first year university performance girls score higher GPA than boys.	145 17.60%	232 28.10%	263 31.80%	97 11.70%	89 10.80%	826 12.5%	0.5	
Girls have overall better memory in academics than boys in first year university performance.	158 19.10%	198 24.00%	252 30.50%	139 16.80%	79 9.60%	826 12.5%	0.6	
Boys better perform in visual-spatial abilities than girls in the first year of university.	112 13.60%	178 21.50%	245 29.70%	181 21.90%	110 13.30%	826 12.5%	1.0	
Summary	1072 16.22%	1631 24.68%	1883 28.50%	1243 18.81%	779 11.79%	6608 100%		

The results in Table 4.7 above revealed that the lowest number of students (30.6%) showed their agreement that gender difference makes difference in academic success among first-year students while the largest number (40.82%) students showed that gender difference did not make difference in academic achievement among freshmen students. This indicates that the majority of students agreed that there was no gender difference in the resulting difference among first-year students' academic success.

Similarly, the results of the Chi-square test, $\chi^2(4, n = 826) = 213.004^a, P < 0.01$ was statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.01$ levels, this implies that most students agreed that there is no influence of gender difference on academic success among first-year students. The ratio in the table above also indicated that students confirmed their agreement in such a way that gender difference does not influence academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities.

This section presents and analyses data on lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' responses regarding gender difference on academic differences among first-year students in Southern Universities.

4.5.2 Results from lecturers, departments heads and college deans/fresh man coordinators

4.5.2.1 Lecturers' response

The majority of lecturers showed almost similar observations toward how gender differences among students' affects present academic success among first-year students. The majority of them indicated that there is no a clear distinction between men's and women's academic success during the first year even though some of the interviewees said that there were gender differences existed. The following verbal quotes confirm the above:

“On average there is nothing notable differences between males and females in academic achievement” (Lecturer 1).

“There was no big difference in most of the courses though females were better performers in language and social science and males were better performers in hard science or natural science” (Lecturer 2).

“Both females and males were better in natural science in social science and languages studies” (Lecturer 3).

In the same way, lecturers' findings also identified male and female students had nearly similar performance and almost there were no differences existed, as a result, there was no academic

success difference due to gender difference. The following verbal quotes illustrate the above finding:

“Previously, males outperformed better than females due to cultural and political influences but now this difference is not the problem of these days” (Lecturer 4).

“Males and females perform nearly in similar trend even in natural and social science and language courses, too” (Lecturer 5).

“As a lecturer, I found that there was no clear difference in between males and females academic achievement among first-year students even in specific nature of subjects” (Lecturer 6).

“On the contrary, I sometimes found males outperformed better than females on average” (Lecturer 7).

“It was found that females performed better than their male counterparts” (Lecturer 8).

4.5.2.2 Departmental heads' response

The majority of departmental heads stressed that gender differences among students does not affect present academic achievement among freshmen students. The majority of them indicated that nothing exists visible difference between both sexes of academic success in first year; however, a few of them said there was a difference in academic success due to gender differences. The following quotes verbatim support what was just said:

“As I observed males and females performed relatively in a similar status with their proportion of students who were enrolled in the university” (D. Head 1).

“I revealed that there was no bold difference between all of the courses even in both natural and social science and language courses” (D. Head 2).

“I agreed that the academic difference between males and females was not visible and both relatively performed in a similar way” (D. Head 3).

“There was a slight difference but not at large in between both males and females regarding various courses and natural and social science as well” (D. Head 5).

“On the contrary, males outperformed better than female counterparts in majority of courses including both natural and social science and overall better memory in academics” (D. Head 6).

“Females outperformed better than male counterparts in languages and social courses too” (D. Head 7).

4.5.2.3 Deans' and coordinators' response

The majority of deans and coordinators stated that gender difference was not an influencing variable in bringing differences in students' present academic achievement among freshmen. The majority of them indicated that there are no observed differences between males and females in academic success among first-year students; however, a few of them said there was a difference in academic success due to gender difference. The quotes that follow support the aforementioned:

“On average, I observed that there was no difference between males and females in academic performance of first-year students” (Coordinator1).

“I observed females similarly performed, scored and proceed to the next year as male counterparts in all the courses and visual-spatial ability on average” (Dean1).

“There were some females who performed very poor, in fact, it is true to males who did similarly in performance” (Dean2).

“I also found that females were not advantageous previously because of cultural and political influence and less performed to male counterparts but this is not the case in the current situation, so academic performance is the same for everyone, that is both in males and females” (Dean3).

“On average males and females better performed if the barriers that make either male or female discouraging factor is removed and what happened in the first year was this one” (Coordinator2).

“Even though it is difficult to distinguish as the difference exists as very great since both males and females did tasks and scored results relatively in a similar manner, it seems males are keen to score better results and join the department they need in the first choice” (Coordinator3).

On the other hand, some college coordinators and deans state that there is a gender difference among first-year academic difference. The quotes that follow provide evidence of the aforementioned:

“However, I revealed that males outperformed females on in working hard in assignment and exam work, active in classroom instruction(questioning and answering)” (Dean4).

“I found that male and female students appear to have different academic success” (Coordinator4).

4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 5: RESULTS ON: WHAT COPING MECHANISMS MAY BE USED BY FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY?

The fifth and last research question stated in Chapter 1 emphasized on assessing how coping mechanisms influence academic success among first-year students Southern Universities.

Data to address this sub-question were collected from both students' questionnaires and lecturers', department heads, and college deans/fresh man coordinators' interviews.

The next section presents and analyses students' questionnaire responses first.

4.6.1 Students' response

Table 4.8: The influence of coping mechanisms affect academic success among first year students (N=826)

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not-sure	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Ratio	Chi-square
Practicing meditation and prayer improve students' deep understanding and make them succeed.	109 13.20%	130 15.70%	219 26.50%	175 21.20%	193 23.40%	826 9.1%	1.5	$\chi^2 =$ 2106.018 ^a Df=40 P=0.000 $\chi^2_{crit} =$ 63.69
Having appropriate sleep is better mechanism to cope up academic challenges.	98 11.90%	164 19.90%	186 22.50%	213 25.80%	165 20%	826 9.1%	1.4	
Listening to music / watching TV. make students relax and frees of them from stressed situation.	86 10.40%	145 17.60%	159 19.20%	284 34.40%	152 18.40%	826 9.1%	1.9	
Talking to parents/ family members/friends is a means of getting support about students for scoring better grades.	69 8.40%	158 19.10%	186 22.50%	212 25.70%	201 24.3%	826 9.1%	1.8	
Doing exercise or yoga is helpful for making students solve stressed situations and score better result.	71 8.60%	141 17.10%	219 26.50%	243 29.40%	152 18.40%	826 9.1%	1.9	
Having hobby/interest is better way to succeed academically.	68 8.20%	136 16.50%	178 21.50%	204 24.70%	240 29.10%	826 9.1%	2.2	
Smoking is a means of coping up difficult conditions which lead to students' academic failure.	191 23.10%	138 16.70%	147 17.80%	146 17.70%	204 24.70%	826 9.1%	1.1	
Taking alcohol brings relief of uncontrollable situation and makes students work hard.	346 41.90%	160 19.40%	151 18.30%	105 12.70%	64 7.70%	826 9.1%	0.3	
Using drugs(chewing chat, and others) is helpful to study hard and succeed.	409 49.50%	139 16.80%	155 18.80%	82 9.90%	41 5%	826 9.1%	0.2	
Managing time well is advisable for academic success.	42 5.1%	118 14.3%	133 16.1%	167 20.2%	366 44.3%	826 9.1%	3.3	
Designing an action plan and solving the problem can make academic success.	53 6.40%	91 11.00%	126 15.30%	162 19.60%	394 47.7%	826 9.1%	3.9	
Summary	1542 16.97%	1520 16.73%	1859 20.46%	1993 21.93%	2172 23.90%	9086 100%		

The results in Table 4.8 above showed that majority of (45.83%) of students agreed that coping mechanisms affect academic success among first-year students. To put it in another way, the majority of respondents showed their agreement that students' use of the type of coping mechanisms which is adaptive and appropriate will result in better performance while the use of not adaptable and inappropriate coping would lead to poor academic success. The results of the Chi-square test, $\chi^2(40, n = 826) = 2106.018a, P < 0.01$ was at a statistically significant level of $\alpha = 0.01$ level, this also confirms that students' coping mechanisms have a significant contribution to academic success among first-year students.

The ratio in the table above revealed that students confirmed their agreement in such a way that coping mechanisms affect academic success among first-year students in southern universities. The respondents also agreed and strongly agreed with some items than others.

This section presents and analyses data on lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators' responses regarding how coping mechanisms influence first-year students of academic success in Southern Universities.

4.6.2 Results from lecturers, departments heads and college deans/freshman coordinators

Qualitative results on coping mechanisms used among first-year students from lecturers, department heads, and college deans/freshman coordinators in-depth interview

4.6.2.1 Lecturers' response

The majority of lecturers showed their observations on how coping mechanisms affect present academic success among first-year students. Lecturers indicated that there were students who had likely negative or un-adaptive coping mechanisms which influenced their academic success negatively though they believed that there were students who used appropriate coping mechanisms were available. However, some of the lecturers said it was observed that students were using positive coping mechanisms which helped them perform better. The quotes below support what was just said:

“ I know that students were my course takers, many students did not use the problem solving and positive coping mechanisms that means students were using chewing chat, letting their responsibility of doing the project and pair works others do” (Lecturer 1).

“As I observed students were prone to cheating the works of hard workers instead of studying, still had dependent syndrome which affected their performance negatively” (Lecturer 3).

“Students usually felt less interested in studying rather they were practicing dependency syndrome on high achievers to cope up their challenges which left them with poor outcomes” (Lecturer 2).

Likewise, findings of lecturers also showed students were utilizing maladaptive coping mechanisms such as copying, cheating, letting other student do their assignments and projects which resulted in poor performance among first year students. The quotes that follow support the finding above:

“I observed many students were exposed to copying in doing assignments and taking examinations in order to be not dismissed and score better result” (Lecturer 4).

“Many students were not stable and I found them losing confidence which pushed to depend on others performance in doing their tasks, assignments, tests, quizzes and examination” (Lecturer 5).

“On the other hand, I found a number of students were using pleasant coping mechanisms such as studying and setting plan for reading and finally got better grades” (Lecturer 6).

“A few students were seen working assignments, project works, engaged in hard working, and even planned and scheduled study was observed and did very well” (Lecturer 8).

“I found that many fresh students were reading, studying individually, in pairs, groups being in the classroom, library, and open spaces and scored better” (Lecturer 7).

4.6.2.2 Departmental heads' response

Most department heads reported their views on how coping mechanisms can affect academic success among first-year students. A large number of them revealed many students' coping mechanisms were negative or inappropriate which affected their academic success negatively. On the contrary, department heads stated some students commonly in using positive coping mechanisms which contributed to enhanced success. The next verbal quotes illustrate the above:

“I found that many students did not believe in structured and organized studying and as a result got lower results” (Head 1).

“I observed that many students cheat and copy from others work during assignment, quizzes, tests, and examination” (Head 2).

“I found that a large number of students were caught cheating, depending on others, copying what others did, then scored poor results” (Head 3).

“Students’ adaptive coping was more reflected but when examination comes and they run after hard worker students, took cheating as habitual and formal work” (Head 4).

“However, some students were attending classes, working assignments, studying their courses and even tried to schedule how to study expecting to succeed” (Head 5).

“Very few students still prefer to work hard, asking unclear and ambiguous questions for me and teachers, programmed and planned in studying and examination, so they were adaptively coping and scored well” (D. Head 6).

4.6.2.3 Deans’ and Coordinators’ response

Most deans and coordinators raised their views nature of coping mechanisms would influence academic success either positively or negatively among first-year students. That means, they stressed that it was observed that when students practiced positive coping mechanisms, their performance would be affected by the improved results while among students who were utilizing negative coping mechanisms, their result was affected negatively. The verbal evidence below supports the finding above:

“I revealed that most fresh students were busy for nothing , work assignments together carelessly, and even did not conscious to update information” (Coordinator 1).

“I observed many first-year students were not capable of doing tasks by their own and preferred to cheat and copy and even they were captured in cheating during examination” (Dean1).

“As I saw most of the time students passed over taking their responsibility to others as they were not concerned for their task” (Dean2).

“Many students trusted depending on others and took cheating as usual and formal task and did not concern about studying and hardworking” (Coordinator 2).

“Still, I disclosed that most students’ background seems very poor and low preparedness in their achievement since I observed they tried to do in competence” (Coordinator 3).

“Most students’ emotion was reflected in more instability, fear, tension and low confidence which pushed them to see who they were and then un adaptive coping like cheating was the frequently occurring behavior” (Dean3).

On the other hand, students who were utilizing positive coping mechanisms such as committed in studying, scheduled and planned to studying, taking responsibility to do projects, assignments, tests, and exams resulted in better performance. The following verbal quotes confirm the above:

“On the contrary, some students were experiencing individual and group study, did projects and assignments carefully and in concern and scored better results” (Coordinator4).

“Students were observed being engaged in both individual and group work and cooperative learning to succeed and they did as well” (Dean 4).

4.7 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study aimed to assess factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia. This section discusses the results of the current study under the following subheadings derived from the sub-research questions outlined in Chapter 1: Psychological factors affecting the academic success of first-year universities, previous academic achievement predicting first-year performance, students' experiences in the institutional factors predicting first-year performance, Gender difference predicting academic success in first-year and how coping mechanisms affect the academic success of first-year students. The findings of this study are discussed in connection to the existing national and international literature. The next subheading discusses the psychological factors affecting the academic success of first-year university students.

4.7.1 The influence of psychological factors affecting academic success of first year students

The discussion addresses the following sub-research question: What are the psychological factors affecting the academic success of first-year students in Southern Ethiopian Universities? It emerged from this study that students were affected by several psychological factors (De Clercq et al., 2021:98; Karwacinski, 2017:30). Among the psychological component, self-efficacy is going to be discussed in the following subsection.

4.7.1.1 The influence of self-efficacy on academic success among first-year students

The study revealed that students believed their ability to do tasks influenced their academic success. This finding implied that self-efficacy among students influenced their academic success. The finding that self-efficacy influenced students' performance concurs with the previous Pakistan study by Noreen et al. (2018:317), an Ethiopian study conducted by Kassaw and Astatke (2017:56) and Freire et al.(2020:2), which revealed that students' belief and ability to do tasks determined how to control their challenging situation to score better success. This result suggests that one of the most capabilities that affect students' first-year performance is students' strong belief that they can do their tasks confidently. The research's finding further corroborates with prior research, for instance, in South Africa by Sommer (2013:225) and in the

Netherlands by van Rooij et al. (2018:752), which revealed that students who have a positive attitude or impression of their skills and who are confident in their abilities do better academically and achieve higher academic ratings.

The present study found that most lecturers for first-year students, department heads, deans, and students agreed that first-year students experiencing high confidence managed their academic workload and were more able to do their tasks. As a result, they did not experience much stress and were more adept at overcoming the challenges of adjusting to college. The study further revealed that when first-year students are engaged in believing strong thoughts and actions they can, they independently and sufficiently performed their tasks. The current finding that first-year students possessing strong thoughts along with their actions performed well concur with the social cognitive theory of Bandura's self-efficacy, which guided the present study, it states that students' strong thought with behavioral action is essential to succeed which further reflects the most distinctly human basic quality of agency is the ability to reflect on oneself and the appropriateness of one's ideas and acts (Bandura, 2006:165; Farruggia et al., 2018:310; Karwacinski, 2017:25). The finding that first-year students who engaged in high self-efficacious beliefs performed well also concurs with an earlier Ethiopian study by Berhanu (2018:59), Kolo et al. (2017:4) and Nākoa (2020:20) which revealed that students in college who have strong academic self-efficacy exhibit better academic success and higher persistence in attending to academic assignments.

The study found that first-year students' self-efficacy influenced their academic success and their GPA positively. In contrast, some studies in America (Festa-Dreher, 2012:29; Jackson, 2012:63), in Turkey by Aydin (2017:103), in the Netherlands by van Rooij et al. (2018:759) and in Nigeria by Kolo et al. (2017:1) which indicated that self-efficacy on academic achievement was not strongly correlated with university GPA. The potential explanation for the contradiction between the results of earlier research and this study that self-efficacy influenced the academic success and GPA positively could be that, the present study students who had low self-efficacy may have viewed that their low self-efficacy may reduce academic success. It might also be possible that students lacking their self-efficacy improving exposures in the university affected their success negatively. However, it may be argued that students may obtain good grades despite having low efficacy. On the other hand, regarding the previous study students in

America, Turkey, the Netherlands and other developed countries' learners' academic success could be considered based on students' academic involvement in the institution, which was more significant to performance than self-efficacy.

The study also found that students confidently working hard with the capability of learning expected the outcome positively and scored better as well. That is first-year students who believed in their confidence ascribed better scores for their ability and motivation to perform. The finding that students confidently working hard with the capability of learning performed well confirms the social-cognitive theory, which guided this study, which states that students that do well report having more confidence in themselves and placing more emphasis on their education. The present finding that students' attributed better scores for their higher confidence and capability also corresponds with studies in the Netherlands by Olani (2009:1059); in the USA by Robbins et al. (2004: 270) and in Australia by (Broadbent, 2016:44; McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001:30; Usher & Pajares, 2008:751) which found that students with higher levels of perceived academic self-efficacy had higher university GPAs and stuck with their majors longer than those with lower levels. Similarly, an American study by Wilcox and Nordstokke (2019:107), a South African study by Mbath (2015:31), Landis et al. (2007:129), Berhanu (2018:59), Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017:4), Morellia et al. (2021:172), Alipio, (2020:3) and Fitz-Gerald (2017:22) all revealed that high levels of academic motivation and self-efficacy can direct students' efforts in the direction of academic success. The current study further found that first-year students who believed in confidence expected their positive outcomes because of their ability and produced the best work under examination conditions. This implies that, if students have the strong belief that they can do the task confidently and independently they have strong expectations to score better and even persist in upcoming years.

The present study further revealed that first-year students' high self-efficacy with higher responsibility influenced their results positively. The finding that students' higher self-efficacy with higher responsibility led to positive results confirmed studies in Ethiopia by Tenaw (2013:12) and in Egypt by Abd-Elmotaleb and Saha (2013:124), which found that at the college level, students must be more self-motivated and accountable for their education and yet students' high self-efficacy with higher responsibility performed better academically. Similarly, an American study by Chemers et al. (2001:57: 60) found that students with high levels of academic

self-efficacy should perceive themselves as better able to handle the demands of the circumstance and should, as a result, view the first year of college as a challenge rather than a risk.

The study also revealed that first-year students' self-efficacy significantly and positively predicted the expectation of academic success. The finding that students' self-efficacy and academic success are significantly correlated also concurs with studies in Australia (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001:23), Belgium (De Clercq et al., 2021:109 &111), America (Chemers et al., 2001:61 & 62; Altman, 2017:39), in the Netherlands (van der Zanden et al., 2018:73), in Ethiopia (Kassaw & Astatke, 2017:62) and Talsma et al. (2021:6) which found a significantly substantial positive association between self-efficacy, or the anticipation of academic success, and low withdrawal rates. The current study also found that lecturers, department heads, deans, and students agreed that when first-year students' beliefs are supported by their possible outcome expectations, they are better motivated to do in a way that they believe their results become positive. The finding that students' self-efficacy with their possible outcome expectations practiced in a better motivation predicted increased outcome corroborates with another study in the USA by (Schunk, 1991:2; Altman, 2017:39), a Belgium study by De Clercq et al. (2021:111), in the Netherlands by van der Zanden et al. (2018:73) and Kassaw and Astatke (2017:62) established that individuals are not motivated to act in ways that they feel would have negative outcomes, proving that outcome expectations or views regarding the likely outcomes of activities are crucial. The perceived value of outcomes refers to how much people desire certain outcomes relative to others.

On the contrary, it came out of the current study that first-year students' low self-efficacious beliefs revealed higher stress which resulted in less performance. In the current study, first-year students who felt less confident or inefficacious and incapable of doing their tasks were likely to predict lesser outcomes. The finding that students' low self-efficacy resulted in weak academic success concurs with a Malaysian study by Bandura (1986:395) which revealed that students who felt inadequate, avoided tough jobs, relaxed their effort, and gave up easily when faced with challenges, dwelled on their flaws, lowered their goals, and experienced high levels of worry and tension leading to poor performance. The present finding that students having low confidence led to lower achievement agrees with Bandura's self-efficacy belief utilizing the social-cognitive

theory as a foundation, which guided this study, which pointed out that low achieving students state less confidence in themselves, further they would be exposed to lower performance. In general, the findings of the present study make it very evident that first-year students' low self-efficacy affected their success negatively. Thus, it implies that students' self-efficacy enhancing practices should be facilitated by attractive institutional experiences; lecturers' and other stakeholders' commitment, and intervention mechanisms so that students develop higher confidence, and their performance increases. The next section discusses to what extent first-year students perceived academic control on academic success.

4.7.1.2 The influence of perceived academic control on academic success among first-year students

The present study found that first-year students' perceived academic control influenced enhancing the positive perception of their academics which managed and controlled the academic challenges. The current finding that students' perceived academic control is influential in managing academic challenges confirms a German study by Respondek et al. (2017:3) which revealed that perceived academic control (PAC) has a significant impact on undergraduate students during the difficult transition from secondary school to university (Alipio, 2020:4; Aydin, 2017:98; Clark, 2018:11; De Clercq et al., 2021: 109 & 112). That is, when students enter the university they not only possess higher academic demands, yet they also take part in more autonomy, less academic structure, higher pressure to perform well, different social settings, and role or responsibility adaptation. Similarly, an earlier American study by Ruthing (2008: 235 & 244) and a Canadian study by Perry et al. (2005:423) revealed that the big role of perceived academic control especially for fresh students is minimizing the challenge and resulting in better success. For example, strong academic management may be enough to protect students' health from the pressures of freshman year, even if they start college with low optimism and little to no social support. A previous American study by Stupnisky et al. (2018:1) also found that even after accounting for high school academic accomplishment, it was found that perceived academic control had a higher effect on students' GPAs. In general, the findings of this study make it very evident that first-year students' perceived academic control is critically necessary to succeed.

The study also found that first-year students' stronger feeling of control over their academic outcomes showed greater capability, confidence, and motivation which led to success. The recent

study also found that students with stronger feelings of control perceptions over academics experienced higher autonomy and better motivation for positive outcome expectations. The finding that students' greater controlling perception together with enhanced motivation over academics led to positive outcome expectation concurs with a German study by Respondek et al. (2019:16) and a Spanish study by González et al. (2015:870) which revealed that perceived academic control goes beyond students' sense of control (agent-ends relation, such as the expectation of success), their perceptions of their abilities (agents means relation, such as self-efficacy), and their perceived causes (means-end relation, e.g., attribution). The current finding that first-year students with high academic control perception increased their better motivation for positive outcome expectation predicted better achievement is consistent with the social cognitive theory, which informed this study, which deals with students who place a high significance on expectations and view motivation as an essential element of academic success. According to the theory, students' motivation rises along with the amount of anticipation for academic work, and they subsequently purposefully and voluntarily commit to obtaining the intended goals.

The study also revealed that those first-year students who understood and experienced the university environment performed better. The current study found that students, who perceived they influence their academic environment, enhanced their confidence, thereby decreasing their stress led to good performance. The finding that students' greater control feeling over their academic environment lowered their stress resulted in success corresponds with American studies (Hayes et al., 2019:76; Ruthig et al., 2008: 241 & 243; Stupnisky et al., 2018:1; Stupnisky et al., 2007:320) and a Spanish study by González et al. (2015:875) which revealed that lower levels of despair and stress were predicted by PAC, which would protect students from the demands of their first year of college and also, indirectly, result in higher achievement and higher levels of engagement. Therefore, academic success was more common among students who felt they had more control over their environments, whereas failure was more likely for those who felt powerless.

The current study established that first-year students' perceived academic control predicted a strong and positive correlation to academic success. This study further revealed that perceived academic control not only strongly predicts academic success but also it increased the prediction

power of prior academic achievement, institutional, coping, and psychological factors on academic success. The finding that the joint association of perceived academic control with other factors enhanced the prediction of students' performance concurs with American studies (Ruthig et al., 2007:172; Ruthig et al., 2008:237; Stupnisky et al., 2012:81) and a German study by Respondek et al. (2017:9) which found that first-year students' success in college for an academic year was positively correlated with their perception of academic control (PAC). The above current finding that perceived academic control predicts academic success not only in single but also in combination with other independent factors also concurs with social cognitive theory, which guided this study, which states that if the behavior of students is affected by the perceived academic control, specifically by the internal sphere of influence, the more likely persist to execute their effort. As a result, students' perceived academic control predicted academic success better in a single and combined effect than with other independent variables.

The current study further revealed that the first-year students' extent to which they perceive exerting more effort to their courses influenced their academic success positively. The finding that students' degree to perceive that they control their success by exerting more effort in their courses affected their success well is consistent with a Turkish study by Aydin (2017:98) and an American study by Clark (2018:11) which found that students' performance might also be affected by how much they believe they influence their academic accomplishment. Similarly, studies in Belgium by De Clercq et al. (2021:109), in German by Perry et al. (2001: 777), in the USA by Wigfield and Eccles (2000: 68), and in Portugal by Lent (2004:495) assumed that students' perceptions of their academic control reflected their views on the various causes and effects of their academic success as well as their belief in their own personal possession of those causes and effects, such as intelligence, physical stamina, effort expenditure, task strategies and value, social skills, and educational experience.

Moreover, first-year students' extent or degree of self-confidence and sense of control of their courses to get higher grades also concurs with studies in Brazil (Mamede et al., 2015:62; Ribeiro, 2000:11) and a German study by Respondek et al. (2017: 9 & 12) which established that high personal control beliefs among students were a strong predictor of academic success. The present finding that first-year students' extent of perceiving their success in controlling behavior determined their outcome confirms the SCT theory, which informed this study, which states that

the students' behavior has an impact on their performance. According to the theory, "Students are more likely to stick with a work until it is finished if they believe they have control over how it will turn out" Lehman (2019:11). As a result, when students attribute their achievement to effort, they may feel more in control of their academic performance, which will increase their chances of success.

However, the results of the current study showed that students who had lower perceived academic control performed their academic success poorly. This implies that first-year students' lack of confidence in controlling work experience negatively affected their results. The present finding that students with low perceived academic control performed lower than students with high control corroborates with studies in America (Ruthig et al., 2007:172; Ruthig et al., 2008:237; Stupnisky et al., 2012:81) and in Germany by Respondek et al. (2017:9) which found that in their first year of college, high-control students performed better than low-control students. The present research further showed that low-confident students who encountered difficult challenges need an increased perception of control in the university than their prior high school situation. The finding that students with low self-efficacy demand more perception over academic control in university than in high school is also in line with an American study by Stupnisky et al. (2007:307) which found that several responsibilities that teachers and principals once oversaw for high school students are no longer enforced in colleges or university. As a result, students would be exposed to activities like scheduling, monitoring class attendance, asking about late or missing assignments, and seeking out struggling students to provide one-on-one instruction making college students can feel out of control. This adds to the emphasis on success-failure, increased academic competition, pressure to perform well, and more frequent failure.

It emerged from the study that there is a positive correlation exists between first-year students' perceived academic control and their university GPA; however, a study in Germany by Respondek et al. (2019:998) reveals that there was an unexpectedly weaker correlation between the first-year baseline PAC and university grades. The potential explanation for the contradiction between the findings from the prior study and the recent study is that there is positive correlation exists between first-year students' perceived academic control and their institution's GPA. The current first-year students might have less experience in perceived academic control of their

tasks in taking responsibility and it negatively affected their present performance. However, students' perception of academic control may have not significantly influenced their performance in the prior study.

This study further found a strong relationship between students' first-year perceived academic control and their educational adjustment and the outcome. Low achievement occurred among first-year students due to less attention given to enhancing students' perception of academic control. The finding indicated that though there was a strong need for perceived academic control for first-year students to enhance their low outcomes, little attention paid is consistent with American studies (Ruthig et al., 2008:236; Stupnisky et al., 2007:309) which revealed that academic control perceptions are crucial for the academic achievement of first-year students, but little research has been done on how PAC affects students' psychological wellbeing. For instance, academic locus of control and self-esteem of first-year college students were both positively connected with college adjustment; however, there was a far larger connection between locus of control and college adjustment, and perceived control is a better predictor of different academic outcomes than self-esteem. The next section presents discussions on the influence of first-year students' perceived stress on academic success.

4.7.1.3 The influence of perceived stress among first year students' academic success

The present study established that there was an increased first-year students' stress which influenced their performance negatively. The finding that students' increased stress led to negative outcomes is consistent with studies by (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:6 & 7; Lal, 2014:123; Omran & Saleh, 2019:3; Sanders et al., 2002:75) which found that academic stress is mental due to some anticipated frustration from academic failure or even not knowing that such failure may occur. Similarly, an Australian study by Akgun and Ciarroci (2003:287), and an American study by Ruthig et al. (2008:234) and Omran and Saleh (2019:2) also revealed that academic stress infuses students' lives and has a severe impact on both their physical and mental health as well as their performance. Consequently, stress and depression are two prevalent symptoms of poor psychological health that can impair college performance.

The study also revealed that first-year students' heightened stress exposed them to poorly coping with their academic challenges which negatively influenced their academic success. That is, the

study revealed that students were overwhelmed by tense circumstances and felt nervous about the uncontrollability of the situation. In addition, the present study further found that the students' low self-efficacy beliefs together with their weak controlling perception of academics let them perceive the situation as a threat. The current finding that the heightened stress among first-year students along with their low coping mechanisms led to low performance supports with American studies (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:7 &11; Van Yperen et al., 2008:338) which found that there is little research on how first-year college students deal with pressures, though everyone learns different strategies for doing so. Consequently, individuals who feel they fall short of their academic expectations regularly are acting in an unhelpful or negative way.

Moreover, the present finding that first-year students' heightened stresses due to low self-efficacy beliefs made them perceive the academic situation as a threat also corresponds with Lazarus' cognitive model of stress, which guided this study, which notes that students' self-efficacy and other personal attitudes are critical in assessing environmental demands. That is, a person with poor self-efficacy views is more likely to evaluate the requests as a danger whether they are categorized as either a challenge or a threat. Thus, evidence supports the theory's assertion that self-efficacy and perceived stress have a substantial negative relationship in an American study by Zajacova et al. (2005:680), a Pakistan study by Mehfooz and Haider (2017:4) and Hompson (2002:204).

The current study found that the academic success of first-year students is significantly negatively predicted by stress. However, a Canadian study by Ramey et al. (2018:82& 84) and a Turkish study by Aydin (2017:102) reveal that academic progress among students was significantly predicted positively by stress. The possible explanation for the contradiction between the finding from earlier research and the current study that students' stress influenced their academic success negatively could be current first-year students may have been equipped with stress management skills which resulted in them managing stress and seeing stress as not affecting their academic success.

The present study further established that the heavy workload of academic pressure during the first year resulted in lower performance. This implies that the study established that course overload, exams, and assignments, fear of failure, self-perception and judgment of one's own

health-prepared were appraised as stressors for first year at the university because of their unprepared expectations about the university situations. The finding that the heavy workload among first-year students in university influenced their performance negatively confirms studies in Taiwan (Yang, 2004:290), South Africa (Sommer, 2013:214 & 215), Pakistan (Naz et al., 2020:454), Australia (Pascoe et al., 2020:107) and in Philippines (Alipio, 2020:3). Similarly, American studies (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:55; Okoro, 2018:45) also revealed that first-generation college students believed that anticipated college experiences would be comparable to high school. However, they soon realized that college was more difficult and demanded more work outside of the classroom, so many of the participants had to adjust to an increase in workload, form new study habits and continue to be held to the same high standards by both their parents and themselves.

The current study also established that first-year students who entered university with a fear of failing to succeed in their academics experienced more stress that influenced their success negatively. The finding that first-year students' fear of failure heightened their stress level, which further led to poor performance agrees with a Pakistan study by Mehfooz and Haider (2017:1), a Nigerian study by Wani et al. (2018:68), an Australian study by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001:23) and a Canadian study by Chow (2010:484) all revealed that the poor academic accomplishment is linked to a higher level of stress.

On the other hand, the present study found that first-year students with appropriate stress and increased self-efficacy performed better. That is, first year students with higher self-efficacy and better control capacity appraised the academic situation as a challenge and coped well. The above finding that students with appropriate stress and higher self-efficacy beliefs evaluated their situation as a challenge and coped better concurs with an American study by Zajacova et al.(2005:680) which found that persons who believe in their abilities are more inclined to view the expectations as difficult. The finding that students having appropriate stress and confidence managed the academic situation as a challenge and coped effectively also corresponds with Lazarus' cognitive model, which informed this study, which points that if a task is viewed as a challenge rather than a threat, it depends on how confident a student is in their ability to handle a certain issue. When a task is viewed as a challenge, one is more likely to choose an efficient coping method and stick with task management. In general, the results of the current study

indicate that first-year students with an overwhelming heightened stressful situation influenced their performance negatively. Next is a discussion on the influence of first-year students' previous academic achievement on their present academic success.

4.7.2 The influence of first-year students' previous academic achievement on their present academic success

The discussion addresses sub-research question 2: To what extent does previous academic achievement affect first-year students' academic success?

The present study revealed that first-year students' previous academic achievement affected their academic success positively. The finding that students' prior well performance predicted their better performance in the university is consistent with studies in Australia (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001:22; Valadas et al., 2016:9), in the Netherlands (Olani, 2009:1067; van der Zanden et al., 2018:73) and in Belgium (De Clercq et al., 2021:105: 107) which found out that students who fared well in high school also performed better in university. In addition, a Saud Arabian study by Alonazi (2018:56) also revealed that students who perform better academically in high school typically continue to perform well in college. Similarly, an Australian study by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001: 26 & 29) further established that students who had excellent academic achievement upon entering a university were more likely to maintain it there. The present study further found that students with better high school performances and GPAs performed well during their first year of university. The finding that students' high previous achievement and their GPA influenced their present success well corroborates with a South African study by Mbatha (2015:13) and an Irish study by Cunningham (2013:22) which revealed that higher education institutions frequently consider high school GPA and standardized test scores as indicators of students' future success. Likewise, earlier studies in the Netherlands (Olani, 2009: 1058, 1064 & 1068; van Rooij et al., 2018: 759 & 760), Australia (McKenzie & Schweitzer, 2001:5 & 18), in Germany (Binder et al., 2019:2) and America (Norvilitis & Reid, 2012:1) also found that secondary school grades explain the largest part of the variance in their university GPA.

The current study also established that high school performance, specifically high school good performance is the foundation for the university programme. The present study's finding that

prior high school good performance is seen as a foundation for the better achievement in the university confirms with an Australian study by Anderton (2017:185), Spanish study by Dorta-Guerra et al. (2019:1494) and an American study by Cone and Owens (1991:1211) which found that achievement in high school has frequently been used as a standard for university performance, and it has been noted that university first year students with poor study habits will likely experience extreme anxiety in their new academic environment, further reducing their chances of succeeding academically (Alonazi, 2018:29 & 35; Binder et al., 2019:2; De Clercq et al., 2021:99; van Herpen et al., 2017:54; Karwacinski, 2017:22). The current research further established that previous academic excellence predicting the university performance is statistically significant; and yet the prediction power of previous academic success increases when the perceived academic control is used in combination with it.

On the other hand, the research revealed that many first-year students with prior low preparation revealed enhanced stress and performed poorly. The current study also found that the students' poor academic background and the weak perception of their academic control negatively influenced their present success. The finding that students' prior low performance and enhanced stress led to negative results is consistent with a study in Canada by Chow (2010:484), in Pakistan by Mehfooz and Haider (2017:1), in Nigeria by Wani et al. (2018:68) and in Australia by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001:23) which revealed that the previous poor academic achievement is associated with a higher level of stress which further brought to low result in the present success. The study further revealed that though low-performing students' support and interventions were weak, a few poorly performing students improved their progress due to some lecturers' support and guidance. This result implies that the lecturers' help and interventions have a strong value in improving low achievers' performance based on their previous knowledge. The finding that the lecturers' support and guidance help low-performing students to improve their performance corresponds with the constructivist theory, which influenced this study, which posits that the learner's prior knowledge should be taken into consideration when understanding both content and skills. Teachers and lecturers should use accurate knowledge to discover learning gaps and inadequacies in students' prior information that may not effectively support new knowledge since students' existing knowledge can either aid or impede learning as in an Israeli study by Alt (2016:377).

The present finding revealed that first-year students' prior academic achievement predicted the university students' success (Alonazi, 2018:56; De Clercq et al., 2021:105 &107; van der Zanden et al., 2018:73; van Rooij et al., 2018: 759 & 760). In contrast, a study in American by Festa-Dreher (2012:29), Australian by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001:4), and the Ethiopian study by Zekarias et al. (2015:167) indicated high school and college GPA prediction is not significantly influenced by SAT, ACT, or high school performance. The possible explanation could be students with poor prior university academic achievement might have not been supported by their corresponding advisors or lecturers, so students' academic success was negatively influenced, whereas students in the prior studies might have been independent and study skills practitioners who can do well even if their previous achievement is worse or not. Succeeding is a discussion on the influence of institutional factors affecting first-year students' academic achievement.

4.7.3 The influence of students' experiences with the institution in predicting first-year students' academic success

The discussion addresses the following sub-research question 3: To what extent do students' experiences within institutional factors affect their academic success?

The current research found that students' first-year satisfaction with the university environment had a favorable impact on their academic success. The study further revealed that it is in the situation where students feel, and think about their institutions having adequate resources, and their active involvement in the institution resulted in positive outcomes. The above finding that not only the institution's availability of resources but also students' involvement in a motivated or satisfied way influenced their success positively concurs with the study by Astin's (1984:522) involvement theory, which informed this study, which notes that the notion of student interest in particular areas is similar to a more prevalent notion in the psychology of motivation which implies more than just a physical availability of resources and psychological state as well. However, in contrast to the more abstract psychological construct of motivation, involvement denotes the behavioral manifestation of that condition and is more agreeable to direct observation and evaluation. Similarly, studies by Chavous (2005: 239) and Astin (2014:523) established that institutional climate has been conceptualized as a psychologically significant illustration of the setting of the institution (Chan-Hilton, 2019:5).

The study also revealed that the supportive, conducive, and committed institutions which involve students' committed experience influenced first-year students' academic success positively. The present study further established that when campuses were committed to students' success, then students performed better and their perception of academic controlling became increased. The present finding that the institutions' supportiveness and their commitment enhanced students' outcome expectations confirmed a study in America by Fursman (2012:4) which revealed that if students feel that their institution is dedicated to their success, it can be determined by the supportive campus climate. Similarly, an Ethiopian study by Tiruneh and Petros (2014:163) also found that the university provides an engaging, inspiring and encouraging environment which plays a significant influence in improving a student's academic attitude and, as a result, indirectly contributes to good and higher academic accomplishment. A study in Turkey by Sakız et al. (2021:8) also revealed that students who receive great instruction and a supportive psychosocial environment seem to have positive attitudes toward their school and their studies, to develop the necessary academic abilities, and do well on assignments. The finding that the institutions' committed experience engaging students' active involvement and quality integration led to positive results also agrees with Astin's Involvement theory, which guided the present study, which indicates that when students actively participate in the college experience, they learn and grow which was further confirmed as the likelihood that a student will succeed in college increases with involvement, both in terms of quantity and quality (Upcraft, 1995:18).

The current study further found that first-year students' engagement and commitments supported by competent lecturers, conducive classrooms, and facilities in the institution resulted in a good performance. The present finding further revealed that lecturers' competence aspects such as lecturers' better knowledge, motivation, and communication skills, involving students' better integration led to students' success. The finding that the conducive institution's facilities and lecturers' competency and behavior influenced students' performance successfully corresponds with studies in Ethiopia by Berhanu and Sabanci (2020:1171), in America by Amelink (2005:36), in Vietnam by Trinh et al. (2020:228) and Morellia et al. (2021:172) which found that teachers' motivation, knowledge of the subject topic, the capacity to communicate effectively, emotional stability, the ability to form a strong rapport with others and interest in the position positively influencing students' academic achievement. Further, earlier Nigerian studies (Chen et

al., 2012:370; Santos, 2012:193; Stassen, 2003:346; Osaikhiuwu, 2014:171), Philippines study by Alipio (2020:4), Alonazi (2018: 28 & 29) and (Ndoye et al., 2020:52) also established that the more involvement in academically relevant activities (for instance, the degree to which students enjoy studying, talking with professors outside of class, and engaging with other students), students who were raised in circumstances that supported them intellectually and socially reported making a simple transition to college. The current finding that first-year students' engagement and commitment is supported by the conduciveness of institutional facilities that influenced their achievement well fits with Tinto's academic and social integration model, which guided this study, which states that the prevalence of students' participation in the new college atmosphere is essential. In addition, an earlier study by Tinto (1975:103) also found who students that are more dedicated to their studies exhibit more retention and success.

The present study further established that a favorable and substantial connection existed between resourcefulness in the institution and students' academic success. The finding that institutions' adequate resources significantly influenced students' success positively is consistent with previous Nigerian studies (Moradeyo & Babatonde, 2014:146; Olufemi et al., 2018:49 & 50) and a Malaysian study by Amoozegar et al. (2017:652) which found that physical and material resource conditions and students' academic success are positively and significantly correlated.

On the other hand, it also emerged from a study that the prevalence of less commitment and inadequacy of learning support and facilities in the institution affected students' success negatively. The finding that the occurrence of institutions' low commitment and inadequacy of support influenced first-year students' performance negatively concurs with Nigerian studies (Okoedion et al., 2019:413; Osaikhiuwu, 2014:17), a Taiwan study by (Chalapati et al., 2018:30) and a Ghanaian study (Frimpong et al., 2014:104 & 2016:107) which revealed that the inadequacy of learning support in the institution resulted in poor performance. Furthermore, a study in Hungary by Perger and Takács (2016:129), a study in the USA by Tinto (2003:3), and South Africa by Jones et al. (2008: 8, 11 & 13) found that the willingness to commit the funds and offer the incentives and rewards required to increase student retention constitutes institutional commitment, which in turn translates to expectations for student success. Institutional commitment is more than just words or mission statements published in fancy brochures. The present study further revealed that institutions' administration structures with less

technological support affected students' academic success negatively. The present study also found that the practices of institutions' commitment to the provision of quality support for students' success are consistent with a study by Ruthing (2008:244) which revealed that institutional administrators can keep an eye on how well their faculty members are teaching. Thus, administrators might therefore advocate for including attribution retraining concepts in introductory college courses for incoming students. Consequently, by giving new first year students these PAC resources at the beginning of their undergraduate studies, we can help them develop the skills they need to ask for help, improve their performance and reduce academic failure.

The study revealed that lecturers' teaching methods used by the institution for first-year students influenced students' academic success. That is teacher centered or lecturers' non-facilitative teaching methods practiced in the institution affected students' success negatively. The finding that the lecturers' centered approach negatively influenced students' performance is confirmed by a South African study by Ganyaupfu (2013:32), in Taiwan by Chalapati et al. (2018:35) which found that results obtained via the use of teacher-centered strategies were significantly inferior to those obtained through the use of student-centered and teacher-student interactive approaches.

On the other hand, the current study revealed that lecturers' use of students' interactive teaching methods adopted by an institution enhanced students' perceived academic control, which influenced their outcome positively. The present finding that lecturers' use of students' interactive teaching method enhanced students' perception of academic control which further resulted in better outcomes concurs with a German study by Respondek et al. (2017:3) which demonstrated that in order to increase students' perceptions of their academic control, the teaching strategy promotes reflection on prior performances and the creation of unstable, controllable attributions for bad academic experiences. Similarly, a Belgium study by De Clercq et al. (2021:100) found that academic performance was favorably correlated with the perceived of effective instruction. The present study that lecturers' use of students' interactive teaching methods affected students' success positively agrees with the theory of constructivist teaching method, which informed the present study, which students' success was based on the idea that learning happens when students actively participate in a process of meaning and knowledge

production, as opposed to passively taking in information. As a result, the instructor promotes a learning process in which students are urged to be accountable and independent which further enhances students' perception of academic control of autonomy and responsibility, which resulted in the successful outcomes. In addition, ACPA and NASPA (1997: 3) found that student who engages in active learning are encouraged to bring their personal experiences into the classroom, reflect on their own and other people's perspectives as they broaden their horizons, and apply new knowledge to their everyday lives.

In brief, the current study found that students' experiences in the institution affected students' performance; however, some Nigerian studies (Olufemi et al.,2018:113; Osaikhiuwu, 2014:176;) and a Turkish study by Aydin (2017:103), which found that the institutional factors considered did not significantly affect students' performance. The possible explanation for the contradiction between the finding from research in the past and the current study that institutional experiences affected their performance could be only high flyers that can do well even if the environment was not good for learning could have been involved in previous studies.

In general, the results of the current study show that the positive students' experiences in the institution influenced first-year students' performance positively while negative students' experiences with in institutions' commitment affected them negatively. The following subsection discusses the influence of gender issues on academic success.

4.7.4 The influence of gender on academic success

The discussion addresses the following sub-research question 4: To what extent does gender influence academic success among first-year university students?

It emerged from the study that the academic success of first-year students is not significantly influenced by their gender. This means that first-year students do not have any academic differences concerning whether one is male or female. The present finding that the gender of first-year students had little bearing on their academic success difference confirms a Canadian study by Ramey et al. (2018:82 & 84) who found that gender was not correlated with student success and it did not significantly predict student achievement as well. Similarly, previous studies in Singapore by Jayanthi et al. (2014:753 & 755), in Taiwan by Yang (2004:294), and in Spain by Dorta-Guerra et al. (2019:1498) found that gender had minor impacts on academic

success and there is little distinction between males and females students on the academic achievement scale. Furthermore, a Nigerian study by Okoedion et al. (2018:419) found that the causes of students' underwhelming academic performance at Nigerian universities are expressed similarly by male and female students.

The current research also found that there was no discernible difference in first-year GPAs between male and female students. The finding that gender difference was not observed in first-year students' GPA also corresponds with an Australian study by McKenzie and Schweitzer (2001:27) and a Malaysian study by Naderi et al. (2009a, 2009b) which showed that there was no discernible difference between the GPAs of men and women.

The current study established that no statistically significant link exists between the gender of first-year students and their academic success. However, an Ethiopian study by Kassaw and Astatke (2017:60& 62), in Turkey by Dayıoglu and Türüt-Asık (2004:19), in Australia by Anderton (2017:193&194), in Islamabad by Khan et al. (2020:208), in America by Yates (2017:85), in Singapore by Jayanthi et al.(2014:753 & 754), Blaze (2019:7) and Alonazi (2018: 35) also revealed that there is a difference in academic achievement between male and female counterparts, i.e., a statistically significant positive link between students' gender and academic success was identified. The possible explanation for the current study that there is no statistically positive and significant connection between first-year students' gender and their educational success may be that currently there are several women empowerment activities or affirmative actions and tutorial support in universities for female students. The subsequent sub-section discusses first-year students' coping mechanisms for academic success.

4.7.5 Coping strategies of first year university students use to succeed academically

The discussion addresses the following sub-research question 5: What coping strategies may be used by first-year university students so that they succeed academically?

The study revealed that first-year students' coping strategies affected their academic success. That is, there were many first-year students who used maladaptive or unhealthy coping mechanisms, which did not help manage their stress and resulted in poor performance. For instance, students who were exposed to ineffective coping strategies such as chewing chat, smoking cigarettes, using drugs and alcohol, cheating and others were not effective which

resulted in low performance. The finding that the students' unhealthy coping strategies which negatively influenced their academic outcome is consistent with a Nigerian study by Okoedion et al.(2019:412) and Fitz-Gerald (2017:3) which found that higher energy drink intake was substantially connected with lower undergraduate GPA. These beverages may contain alcohol and caffeine, and other active components negatively. Consequently, it suggested that a decrease in GPA is linked to higher consumption. Other earlier Brazilian study by Mamede et al. (2015:64) also revealed that smoking demonstrates a strong negative correlation between GPA and smoking, which means smokers have lower performance when compared to those who do not smoke.

On the other hand, the research revealed that first-year students' healthy coping strategies resulted in reduced stress and betterment of academic outcomes. That is, some first-year students' utilization of healthy or adaptive coping strategies helped them to succeed and minimized their stress. The present study revealed that students who performed better were utilizing healthy coping strategies. The current finding that students' utilization of healthy coping mechanisms resulted in a good performance confirms American studies (Fitz-Gerald, 2017:59; Okoro, 2018:24) which found that students observed to utilizing healthy coping even performed better in their academics (Freire et al., 2020:2; Khanam et al., 2017:4764).

The study found that first-year students planning practice of their tasks in the daily and weekly programmes and doing assignments and projects in the scheduled programme affected their performance well. This implies that students' practice of adaptive coping strategies influenced their outcomes positively. This finding also established that adaptive coping enhanced students' better perception of academic control and their confidence, too. The present finding that students' planned and structured way of coping to do their tasks led to improved outcomes also concurs with an Indian study by Khanam et al. (2017:4764) and a Taiwanese study by Chalapati et al. (2018:29) which revealed that some effective study techniques emphasize beginning assignments far before the deadlines, splitting up major work into smaller ones, and maintaining a regular reading routine to optimize production on time.

The present study established that students' use of problem-solving coping strategies helped to control their stress thereby significantly and positively predicting their success in first-year. The

finding that the students' practice of coping mechanisms through problem-solving model brought better performance is consistent with a Nigerian study by Manuabuchi and Gladys (2017:13) and a German study by Garriott and Nisle (2017:437 & 438) which found that a problem-focused approach made a large relative contribution to the prediction of first-year university undergraduates' academic adjustment. The finding that students' problem-solving coping styles managed or controlled their stress corresponds with the coping styles of Lenz (2010:69), which informed the present study, it states students directly engaging and managing the root of their stress is what is meant by problem-focused coping. In other words, people or students prefer to confront, regulate, or manage challenging tasks to deal with stress.

The current study further found that social support used among first-year students affected their academic success positively. For instance, the study established that students were overwhelmed and anxious because they have trouble juggling their commitments and obligations. The study further supported that some first-year students' social supports such as talking to friends, working with their groups, and talking to instructors and parents/ family members influenced their academic success positively. The finding that students' social support from others affected their success positively concurs with an American study by Fitz-Gerald (2017:57 & 58), a Nigerian study by Okoedion et al. (2019:412), and a German study by Garriott and Nisle (2017:437 & 438) who found out that the psychological and social assistance they got encouraged and equipped them to pursue academic success. Although the present finding revealed that social activities such as students working in groups influenced their academic success positively, a study in Islamabad by Khan et al. (2020:208) asserts that instead of students' group study, self-study is positively and strongly correlated with CGPA, indicating that academic achievement rises with increased self-study, however, group projects suffer from a negative correlation with CGPA. The possible explanation for the present study that social activities such as students working in groups coping affected their academic success positively could be current first-year students who may have experienced collective or group societal culture or behavior could have participated in the study and favored group influenced their success.

The present study also found that the first-year students' use of emotion-focused healthy coping styles helped to calm their stress which further influenced academic success positively. That is

students' utilization of emotion-controlling strategies such as yoga, meditation, sleep, and prayer and having media networks like listening to music and watching TV reduced their stress and facilitated success. The finding that students' use of emotion-focused approach among first-year students made them succeed also suits an emotion-focused coping approach of Lenz (2010: 69), which guided this study, which points to students controlling their emotional stress response. That is, individuals or students managed the emotional aspect of the stress instead of the task. Similarly, studies in America (Okoro, 2018:23 & 24; Trockel et al., 2000:126), Nigeria by Okoedion et al. (2019:412), Saud Arabia by Alonazi (2018:62) and Malaysia by Abdullah et al.(2010:5) which revealed that good study habits and academic accomplishment that is balanced can both be influenced by strong spiritual convictions. Furthermore, an Eritrean study by Yikealo and Tareke (2018:12) noted that typical healthy stress-coping techniques employed by college students include getting enough sleep and rest, talking and expressing a problem with parents, friends, and teachers, avoiding the scenario that causes tension, and watching movies and fun comedy.

The qualitative results revealed that students were practicing unhealthy coping mechanisms for their success. In contrast, the quantitative results indicated that students practiced healthy coping strategies to decrease stress and succeed. The possible explanation for the difference could be students who responded to quantitative data would not like to uncover or are willing to disclose unhealthy coping mechanisms or unacceptable behavior in which their social and cultural context condemn and influence them adversely; Or else, students may appear to respond with an acceptable and beneficial coping mechanisms which may be in favored on the influence of the broader social, cultural and spiritual setting of the Ethiopian society. The following sub-section focus on data presentation, analysis, and interpretations.

4.8 SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented, analyzed, and discussed the findings from the empirical study. The findings of the study were presented in the context of sub-research questions posed in Chapter 1, Section 1.3. It merged students and lecturers for first-year students, department heads and deans agreed on factors affecting the academic success of students' performance positively or negatively. The participants, however, raised concerns about psychological, prior academic achievement, institutional, gender, and coping strategy issues. Students, lecturers for first-year students, department heads, and deans all agreed that adequate students experiences in the institution increased psychological constructs, more particularly, students' perceived academic control and healthy coping strategies to improve students' academic success which try to inform much would be done in personal students' factors in the institution and institution conduciveness on students' effort to maximize students' success. The discussions were linked to Bandura's social cognitive, Vygotsky's social constructivism; Tinto's theory of social and institutional integration, and Astin's theory of Student development with a focus on student involvement that informed the current study. The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The current study aimed to assess factors affecting academic success among first-year students in Southern Universities of Ethiopia. The previous Chapter 4 presented, analyzed and discussed data. This chapter presents the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from the study. This chapter also presents a proposed model for the improvement of first-year students' academic success. The chapter finalizes by outlining potential areas for additional study and making closing remarks.

The following section presents the review of the research problem.

5.2 A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Chapter 1 emphasized that the first year of college is a crucial transitional moment for students, and regrettably many first-year students attend higher institutions without the essential academic preparation, making it very difficult for them to adjust to higher institutions (Alipio, 2020:1; Burton & Dowling, 2005:68; Daniel et al., 2014:27; De Berard et al., 2004:67; Fentaw, 2001:50 ; Fitz-Gerald , 2017:6 & 7; Omran & Saleh , 2019:1; Trinh et al., 2020:222; Tsehay et al., 2014:27; van Herpen et al., 2017:55).

It was noted in Chapter 1 that global studies by Pilly and Ngcobo (2010:234) and Daniel et al. (2014:27) showed that stress levels are concerning, particularly in light of how much they affect first-year students' level of functioning and academic success. Besides, the above studies highlighted dropout rate and failure in academics are even relatively higher during the freshmen programmes since the first-year experience is indicated to be the most difficult time for students.

Chapter 1 also noted that there were significant numbers of threatened factors that influence first-year university students to fail at alarming rates in Ethiopia (Aemero & Kinde , 2011:31;

Tamirie, 1997:7; Tsehay et al., 2014:27). After reviewing the research problem, the following section provides a summary of related literature.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM RELATED LITERATURE

This section presents the summary of the literature review findings on psychological factors, students' previous academic achievement, students' experiences with institutional factors, gender, and first-year university students' coping strategies and academic success.

5.3.1 Psychological factors affecting the academic success of first-year students

The literature review revealed that global studies stated that psychological factors influence first-year university students' academic performance. For example, studies by Alonazi (2018:23), Shell et al. (1989:91), Ayele (2011:187), Robbins et al. (2004: 270), Karwacinski (2017:30) and De Clercq et al. (2021:98) revealed that psychosocial factors are regarded as strong predictors of college students' academic achievement. Studies by (Adeyemo, 2007:200; Bandura, 1986:391; DeFreitas, 2011:110; Doménech-Betoret et al., 2017:4; Freire et al.,2020:2; Kolo et al., 2017:4; Morellia et al., 2021:172; Nākoa, 2020:20; Olani, 2009: 1057 & 1070; Richardson et al., 2012: 366; Zajacova, 2005:696) also shown that students' academic self-efficacy positively predicts academic achievement and GPA during the first year of university. Similarly, studies by Perry et al. (2008:235 & 236), Joelle et al. (2008:236), Alipio (2020:4), De Clercq et al. (2021: 109 & 112), Aydin (2017:98) and Clark (2018:11) found that perceived academic control states in contrast to those who view college as a low-control setting, students who feel in control of their academic outcomes are more likely to succeed. Furthermore, a review of related literature by the American College of Health Association (2006), Sommer (2013:214), Zajacova et al. (2005:679), Chow (2007:486), Neville et al. (2004: 611), Rayle and Chung (2007:24), Richardson et al. (2012: 366), Akgun and Ciarrochi (2003:287), Omran and Saleh (2019:2) and Fitz-Gerald(2017:6 & 7) revealed that first-year university students perform worse academically when they are under more stress.

5.3.2 Previous academic achievement and first year students' academic success

Findings from the literature revealed that a powerful predictor of current academic achievement is past academic performance history (Isonio, 1995:9). Prior studies by Sommer (2013:460),

Braxton and Lee (2005:112), Astin and Osegurea (2005:258), Robbins and et al. (2004:270), Lotkowski et al. (2004:396), Trapmann et al. (2007:17), Grebennikov and Skaines (2009:60), Whannell (2014:113), Burton and Ramist (2001:6), De Clercq et al.(2021:99), van Herpen et al. (2017:54), Alonazi (2018:29 & 35) and Karwacinski (2017:22) also indicated that previous academic success at high school trends are believed to be the single most crucial factor in predicting students' academic achievement in universities. Besides, studies conducted in Ethiopia by Olani (2009:1070) also confirmed that students' prior academic records positively predict first-year first semester academic GPA. The other study by Deberard et al. (2004:68), and Binder et al. (2019:2) also found higher SAT scores and high school GPA would correlate favorably with freshman GPA.

5.3.3 First-year students' experiences with institutional factors and academic success

Reviewed literature established that students' experiences within institutional factors influence academic success among freshmen students. Studies by van Schalkwyk et al. (2009:7) and Sakız et al. (2021:8) demonstrate that every facet of a student's experience in college life affects their chances of being successful. According to a Southern African study by Sommer and Dumont (2011:388), Alipio (2020:4), Alonazi (2018: 28 & 29) and Ndoye et al. (2020:52) academic success and student adjustment to university have been demonstrated to benefit from interactions between students and teachers as well as from the use of student support services and intervention programmes.

Concerning students' experiences and satisfaction with instructors, which was associated with students' pleasure with colleges and university environment, faculty involvement, was found to be a crucial element for student success (Perry, 2010:25 & 26). Furthermore, findings from the reviewed studies by Hassan (2014:73), Bridges et al. (2005: 30), Amelink (2005:36), Paredes (2009:17) Respondek et al. (2017:3), De Clercq et al. (2021:100) and Morellia et al. (2021:172) confirmed all students who are enrolled in institutions that use a complete system of complementary efforts that are based on good teaching methods include students' and institutions' commitment, learning support and facilities, lecturers' motivation, teaching methods, competence influence students' success.

5.3.4 Gender and academic success among the first year university students

Results of the literature showed that substantial gender variances exist in the actual experiences of first-year students over time as well. Studies conducted by De Berard et al. (2004:71), Ayele (2011: 201), and Lawrence et al. (2006:278) on the undergraduate of first-year university students analysis revealed that gender is a key determinant in academic success. Studies conducted by other studies also found first year of college of female students performed better than male students did (Christiana, 2014:172; Grebennikov & Skaines , 2009:60; Ismail & Othman, 2006; Nasir, 2012:404). Similarly, a study in Ethiopia by Olani (2009:1068), Blaze (2019:7), Anderton (2017:193 & 194), Khan et al. (2020:208), Yates (2017:85), Kassaw and Astatke (2017:60 & 62) and Alonazi (2018: 35) also confirmed gender differences in one of the studies show that predictor variables accounted for more of the variation in female university GPA than male university GPA. However, reviewed literature by Faisal and Haidar (2011) found no disparities between the academic success and achievement of males and females.

5.3.5 First-year higher education learners' coping strategies and academic success

Reviewed literature revealed that by using coping mechanisms effectively, individuals can solve issues, ease emotional pain, and continue on the path to accomplishing their goals (Brown et al., 2005: 792 & 797; Earnest & Dwyer, 2010: 3). Studies further revealed different types of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping techniques. Individuals, for instance, prefer to confront, control, or manage stressful jobs in order to cope with stress directly. It defines active coping is defined as "the process of making conscious efforts to reduce or avoid the stressor or to lessen its effects" (Abdullah et al., 2010; Carver et al., 1989:268; Fitz-Gerald, 2017:59; Freire et al., 2020:2; Khanam et al., 2017:4764; Okoro, 2018:24). The other form of coping mechanism is coping with emotions which are identified by Lenz (2010:69) states persons managing their emotional stress response. Individuals deal with the emotional side of stress rather than the work side. On the other hand, an Ethiopian study by Ayele (2011: 188 & 202), Okoedion et al. (2019:412), and Fitz-Gerald (2017:3) found that dysfunctional coping strategy is a significant direct predictor of adjustment problems, whereas help-seeking behaviors are an indirect significant predictor of adjustment problems. The section that follows provides an overview of the research methodology after discussing the summary of related literature.

5.4 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paradigm used in the current study is post-positivism. The researcher used a mixed-methods approach to assess factors affecting academic achievement among freshmen in Southern Universities in Ethiopia. Data was generated using both quantitative and qualitative methods, employing a concurrent combined technique design. A total sample of 854 respondents comprising first-year students, lecturers for first-year students, department heads, and college deans, and coordinators were randomly and purposely selected for the study. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and non-participant observations were used to gather data. Statistics that are descriptive and inferential were used to analyze generated data.

After summarizing the research methodology, the findings of the current study are presented in the part that follows.

5.5 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

This section summarizes the research findings in light of the objectives and sub-research questions in Chapter 1.

5.5.1 Sub-research question 1: What are the psychological factors affecting the academic success of first-year students?

It emerged from this study that first year students, lecturers for freshmen students, department heads, coordinators, and deans viewed that several psychological factors influenced academic success of first-year students.

The present research found that first-year students' psychological factors like students' self-efficacy, perceived academic control and stress affected their academic success in one or the other way. For instance, most of the first-year students' inadequate self-efficacy, low perceived academic control, and increased stress influenced their current academic success negatively. However, some of the first-year students' high self-efficacy, better perceived academic control, and appropriate stress affected their success positively. Furthermore, first-year students' increased perceived academic control contributed a mediating role for students' psychological factors which further increased the betterment of academic success while the decreased perceived academic control played a facilitating role in resulting lower academic success.

5.5.2 Sub-research question 2: To what extent does previous academic achievement affect first-year students' academic success?

The current study revealed that first-year student's academic success during the pre-university phase influenced their present academic success. It revealed that first-year students whose prior university academic success was poor performed poorly in the university while those with good prior university academic success performed well during the first year. Good prior university academic achievement predicted higher perceived academic control.

5.5.3 Sub-research question 3: To what extent do students' experiences with institutional factors affect their academic success?

It came out of the research that first-year students who perceived positive experience with institutional factors performed better than those who did not have this. In a nutshell, students' experiences within institutional commitment, engagement, and active involvement were substantially and favorably associated to enhanced students' perception of the academic control and academic achievement as well.

5.5.4 Sub-research question 4: Do gender differences influence academic success among first-year university students?

The current study found that students' first-year academic success did not show a significant difference regardless of the gender of the students. The gender difference was not a strong and significant variable for making difference among students' academic success in their first year and their GPA in the present study.

5.5.5 Sub-research question 5: How do first-year university students cope with different challenges they face to enhance their academic success?

The study revealed that students' healthy and improved adaptive coping mechanisms affected their academic achievement positively. The study revealed that healthy coping mechanisms such as studying, designing an action plan and hardworking had positively predicted academic success while unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drinking alcohol, drug use, smoking, chewing chat, and cheating did not predict positive outcomes. It also emerged from the present study that most of the first-year students did not practice positive and healthy coping styles sufficiently which

influenced their success negatively. The study is concluded in the part that follows after summarizing its findings.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

What is at its core of the current study was to assess factors affecting academic success among first year students in Southern Universities of Ethiopia. From the study, it can be concluded that psychological factors such as students' increased self-efficacy and perceived academic control and minimized stress affected the first-year students' academic success positively while students' low self-efficacy and perceived academic control and heightened stress affected the success negatively.

Another conclusion from the study was that first-year students' prior university academic achievement influenced their academic achievement in the first year. For instance, previous low achievement influenced their academic success negatively in the university.

It was further concluded that first-year students' academic success was affected by various students' experiences with institutional factors. Students' experiences with institutional factors such as lack of facilities, resources, and low students' satisfaction, weak institutions commitments, and poor lecturers' teaching methods, and commitments influenced students' success negatively.

The present study also concluded that gender did not influence academic success among first-year students.

It was further concluded that students' dysfunctional or unhealthy coping mechanisms influenced their academic success negatively while students' improved healthy coping mechanisms influenced their academic success positively.

Generally, students' psychological factors that is, students' decreased self-efficacy and perceived academic control and heightened stress, students' lower previous achievements, insufficient students' experiences with institutional factors and students' un-adaptive coping mechanisms negatively influenced first year university students' academic success.

Having presented the conclusions drawn from the present research, the next section presents the recommendations.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the results of the present study the factors affecting the improvements in first-year students' academic success are students' low self-efficacy, perceived academic control, prior academic achievement and their increased stress, the inadequacy of students' experiences within institutional factors, and unhealthy coping mechanisms.

The following recommendations are forwarded by the researcher.

5.7.1 Policy

Policy makers and concerned bodies need to establish first-year students' academic success policy which is publicized by the Ethiopian Parliament and Ministry of Education clearly and specifies services and strategies that could help improve first-year students' academic success in university settings.

Universities should be empowered by policies that mandate lecturers' methodology for first-year students' academic achievement students' curriculum since they have responsibility for students' academic success.

5.7.2 First-year students' academic success practices

It is recommended that universities more strengthen first-year academic success support offices within the university. Higher institutions should assign experienced and qualified lecturers for first-year students to assist in the teaching and management of various categories of problems and challenges across first-year course curricula.

5.7.2.1 Department heads and college deans

It is recommended that department heads and college deans work in collaboration to ensure lecturers' knowledge within their field for first-year students' academic success improvement during teaching and learning instruction. Department heads and college deans should be engaged in international and national workshops focusing on how to improve first-year academic success.

5.7.2.2 Lecturers' for first-year students

Experienced and qualified lecturers as facilitators and supporters of first-year students taking part in the teaching and learning process should be engaged in the ultimate students' academic success and practice their appropriate methodology so that they guide and scaffold students on learning with diligence.

5.7.3 Students' self-efficacy

Universities need to enhance first-year students' self-efficacy in developing strategies. Lecturers for first-year students and concerned bodies should pair students up as accountability partners, and instructions are given on how to help one another succeed academically.

Lecturers should select significant and genuine projects that will benefit students for their success and future career. With these tasks, they can exert influence the quality and effort of student projects and enhance their belief of they can.

5.7.4 Students' perceived academic control

Universities and concerned bodies need to keep first-year students' course material proportionate to the length of the subject term or duration and ensure all material is coherent and meaning full, clarifying expectations and enough feedback.

There is a need to identify and overcome challenges and strategies for coping with performance anxiety through training on confidence, problem-solving skills, and anxiety management techniques.

5.7.5 Students' stress

The current study recommends that first-year students' stress should be managed as appropriately and genuinely thereby enhancing stress coping mechanisms as possible. There is a need to establish and strengthen first-year students' psychosocial support systems such as giving sufficient and consistent advice, stress management skill, study skills, students' time management skill, structured counseling support, and working in groups, pairs, and individually in the university. For instance, supplying information and techniques for helping students cope with challenging situations and their course overload can be an irreplaceable cache for advancing both their self-efficacy and perception of academic control. This is consistent with some

lecturers' comments for first-year students, department heads, and deans' responses in this current study.

5.7.6 Students' previous academic achievement

Universities need to establish a structured system of guiding, supporting, and scaffolding students with low prior academic achievement under the first-year programmes.

5.7.7 First-year students' experiences within institutional factors

There is a need to have formal and a structured engagement and enhance the adequacy of institutional factors with department heads, college deans, and other academic and administrative staffs' collaborative works.

5.7.8 Students' coping mechanisms

Department heads, Lecturers for first year students and other concerned bodies need to guide, advice, and facilitate study and academic skills training to improve adaptive coping such as studying, setting a plan for reading, and hardworking and healthy emotion-focused coping mechanisms based on the nature of problems they encountered. The subsequent section presents the proposed model on the variables that influence academic success among college freshmen.

5.8 PROPOSED MODEL TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS AMONG FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Considering the results, literature and theories related to academic achievement that informs the study the following model enables the implementation of pertinent programmes, practices, and strategies that could be beneficial for an improvement of first-year academic success.

5.8.1 The proposed model for improvement of first year students' academic success

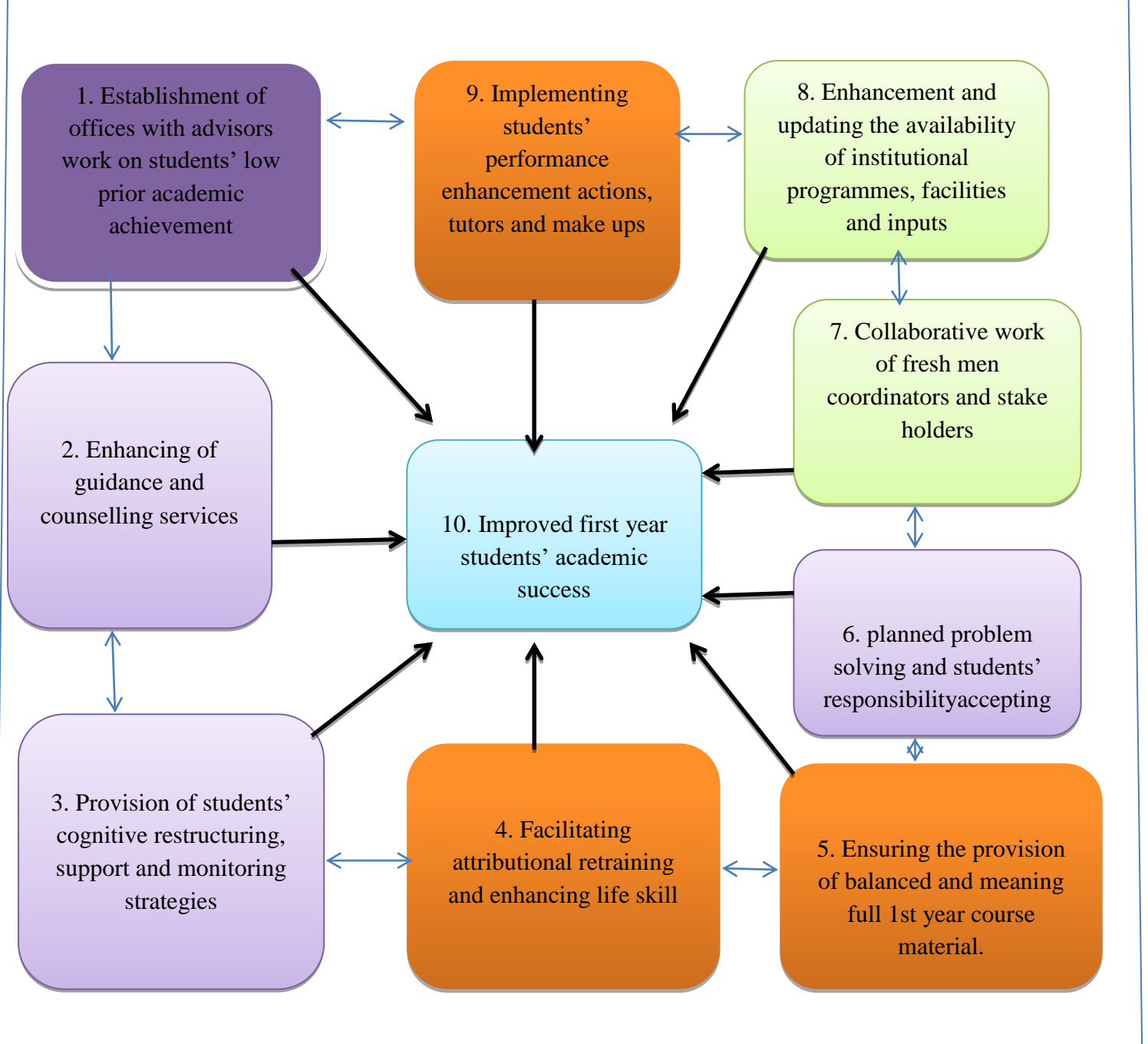


Figure 5.1: A proposed model to improve first year students' academic success

Source: Demissie Semebo (2023)

In the above model, improved students' academic success is central. This would be surrounded by increasing students-support or engagement through academic advising and mentoring, the establishment and strengthening of offices with advisors to work on students' low prior academic achievement, provision of students' cognitive restructuring, support and monitoring strategies, facilitating attributional retraining and enhancing life skills and ensuring the provision of balanced and meaning-full first-year course material. In addition to this, implementing students' performance enhancement actions, tutors and make up classes, enhancement and updating the availability of institutional programmes, facilities, and educational inputs, and collaborative work of freshmen coordinators and stakeholders for students' success are included in the cycle. Promoting students' planned problem-solving strategies and accepting responsibility and enhancing guidance and counseling services further surround the improvement of students' academic success.

5.8.1.1 Component 1: Establishment and strengthening of offices with advisors work on students' low prior academic achievement

The component is concerned with the establishment and strengthening of advisors' offices provided that advisors help and work with first-year students with low prior academic achievement. That is, when first-year students with poor prior university and within the university academic success are supported appropriate contents, guidance, and interventions which fit with the framework of their prior knowledge, they can improve their success (Alt, 2016:377; Binder et al., 2019:11).

5.8.1.2 Component 2: Enhancing of guidance and counseling services

There is a need to enhance counseling services. For instance, first-year students could be counseled and taught how to increase their confidence by giving extra or additional tutoring time or office advising hours. The universities also need to do better to increase students' understanding of the availability and utilization of counseling services. Besides, the counseling teams should develop programmes that actively help to define students' self-efficacy and related problems. The universities further need to strengthen counseling service offices and establish psychosocial support training centers. For instance, the training centers at the universities should

not only train but also offer mentorship programmes where first-year students ('mentees') are matched up with mentors. That is, when students are counseled appropriately and efficiently, they increase their coping ability which may improve their effectiveness. As a result, they start believing that their efforts are successful which raises confidence in accomplishing similar or related tasks in the future (Bandura, 1986: 391; Bandura, 1994: 1; Chemers et al., 2001: 56; Korgan, 2013:30; Lehman, 2019:11).

5.8.1.3 Component 3: Provision of students' cognitive restructuring, support, and monitoring strategies

The component is concerned with the need to analyze and challenge students' efforts could be able to change maladaptive ideas if there is also a discussion of strategies. The component also advocates monitoring strategies which are seeking information about the stressor. That is, helping students to gain more control over the stressor by preparing students for an academic exam and developing effective study habits by giving them appropriate time (Khan et al., 2013:149). There is also a need to make students feel they have helpful lecturers and believe there are other people "like them" on campus. For example, accessing students' networks is encouraged to challenge matters of students' aversive stimulation, a high degree of ambiguity, and academic issues to achieve appropriate stress, internal control, and a sense of challenge as opposed to a threat. Furthermore, there is a need to alter lecturers' teaching methods appropriate to students' motivation and participation (Earnest & Dwyer, 2010: 3; Krohne, 2002; Pereira & Barbosa, 2013; Zajacova et al., 2005:680).

5.8.1.4 Component 4: Facilitating attributional retraining and enhancing life skill course as a first-year level course

The component is concerned with the need to facilitate the training on life skill and the life skills course should be developed to freshmen-level course so that students' perceived academic control could be enhanced. Lecturers for first-year students need to employ direct language to link triumphs or failures to foreseeable reasons in shifting students' attributions. Lecturers should apply strategies for classroom retraining or offer programmes that support university students more broadly based on the nature of students. So, institutions and lecturers can also help students feel more in charge by making things more predictable and manageable for them, like through well-structured courses, prompt and helpful failure feedback, and clear task expectations. By

encouraging them to take responsibility and develop a "can do" attitude, this will assist students in reframing their views on failure as well as perceived control (Haynes et al., 2009; Henry et al., 2019:13; Perry et al., 2005:424; Perry et al., 2005a;).

5.8.1.5 Component 5: Ensuring the provision of balanced and meaningful first-year course materials

There is a need to have monitoring on how students' first-year course material is proportional to the length of the subject term. The component further advocates the course materials should be meaningful and delivered having clarified expectations. When students' course material is balanced and organized to the extent of students' control level, there would be positive outcome expectations. So, students are more likely to stick with a work until it is finished if they believe they have control over how it will turn out. That is, the SCT of Bandura shows that students' self-efficacy, causal attributions, and academic success are related in educational settings (Khan, 2013:2; Lehman, 2019:11; Stupnisky et al., 2012:82).

5.8.1.6 Component 6: Promoting planned or scheduled problem-solving coping and students' accepting responsibility

This model advocates that healthy coping mechanisms such as studying, hardworking, and designing an action plan should be more emphasized and better practiced among first-year students. The present model also suggests there is a need to improve students' responsibility acceptance. When students are helped to take responsibility and practice confrontative coping directly to react to the challenges, they start decreasing their maladaptive coping. That is, individuals or students prefer to address, control, or manage uncomfortable things in order to cope with stress directly when they are encouraged adaptive coping (Alonazi, 2018:62; Carver et al., 1989:268; Earnest & Dwyer, 2010: 3; Henry et al., 2019:12; Lenz, 2010:69; Okoro, 2018:23 & 24; Trockel et al., 2000:126).

5.8.1.7 Component 7: Collaborative work of freshmen coordinators and stakeholders

The component is concerned with freshmen coordinators' tasks need to be well established and empowered with responsibility and accountability for the increment of students' experiences in the institution and the improvement of students' academic success as well. The component is also concerned with the collaboration of freshmen coordinators, lecturers, department heads,

college deans, and other stakeholders to help students with low performance and make interventions of relevant and feasible actions for students' academic success.

5.8.1.8 Component 8: Enhancement and updating the availability of institutional facilities and educational inputs

The model suggests enhancing the adequacy of students' experiences by fulfilling the necessary educational inputs and improving the institutional programmes. That is, when first-year students are more engaged and satisfied with institutional facilities, they improve their experience. There is a need to advance the institutional inputs with up-to-date technological educational facilities.

5.8.1.9 Component 9: Implementing students' success enhancement actions, tutors, and make up classes

The component suggests implementing low performing first-year students' empowerment programmes such as students' problem tackling targeted actions related to students' nature of performance problems, tutorials and make up classes. There is a need to implement students' success-increasing interventions to where their nature of weak performance is recognized. The component shall further cover students should be empowered through students' success problem-targeted practical tutors and make-up classes and enable them to feel and perceive first-year academic tasks as controllable.

5.8.1.10 Outcome 10: Improved students' academic success or GPA

The suggested model advocates for students' academic success. Improved students' academic success is critical and central. Improved first-year students' academic success is influenced by the extent of better prior academic achievement, students' better self-efficacy, increased perceived academic control and minimized stress, enhanced students' experiences within institutional factors, and improved coping mechanisms. Better first-year students' academic success is achieved through the extent to which the component is comprehensively and holistically managed and monitored with stakeholders' levels of support and involvement and duly with students' higher commitment and hard work. The model further suggests when the above factors are mediated, facilitated, and jointly work by students' perceived academic control, students' academic success can be improved.

5.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The current study is the initial comprehensive analysis to assess the factors affecting first-year students' academic achievement. The current research has made a substantial contribution to the improvement of first-year students' academic success for teaching practice experiences in identifying the major influencing factors of academic success and implementing them in a way that affect the performance positively during teaching practice.

The body of knowledge for improving first-year students' academic success will significantly help policymakers, and universities to review first-year students' course curriculum and interactive and learners' focused pedagogical practices in higher education institutions. This research may also be used in studies on similar topics and the current issue as a baseline for further research. The suggested framework for improvements in students' academic success can be adapted for use a university setting institutions, particularly within the first year teaching-learning process. The recommendations of the current study for future research are presented in the following section.

5.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The subsequent areas are considered for additional study in the area of improving first-year academic achievement of students in the university.

The study covered only a few universities in one of the states of the country, therefore the findings might not be generalized to first-year students' academic success nationally with precision. A more rigorous study is needed to survey all first-year students at the national level in public HEIs. Besides, the study did not include views from students' support services, counselors, and university support personnel. The study recommends students' support services, counselors, and other concerned bodies inclusion for further research towards the improvement of first-year students' academic success in Ethiopian Public University Education.

The study further advises that additional empirical research should thoroughly and intensively explore to what extent that perceived academic control can mediate and predict first-year students' academic success more than the other psychological variables. Furthermore, the current study recommends that future study thoroughly explore the students' various experiences and

their hindering effect on students' achievement in the institution instead of pushing the causes of students' failure back to the prior academic achievement problem at large.

5.11 FINAL COMMENTS

The current study successfully assessed variables affecting university students' first-year academic success in some of Southern Ethiopia Public Higher Educations Institutions (SEPHEIs). The study emphasized first-year students' academic success affecting factors expressed by first-year students themselves, lecturers for first-year students, department heads, college deans, and freshmen coordinators.

Results showed that first-year students were affected by a number of factors that influenced academic success. The challenges identified were aggravated by weak prior academic achievement, low students' self-efficacy, weak perceived academic control and enhanced stress, inadequate students' experiences within institutional factors, and dysfunctional students' coping mechanisms.

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, students' success was viewed as a cure-all for academic, psychosocial, and economic problems that they encounter students specifically and Ethiopia in the broad. Perceived advantages of students' success are complex and comprise but are not confined to success academically, persisting in the university, and reduce failure, and dismissal rates and producing competent graduates, and safeguarding the economic cost invested for education as a whole.

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APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS

This questionnaire seeks your opinion on the **Factors affecting academic success among the first year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia**. This study forms part of my DEd degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and should help improve academic success among university students in the university. On the questionnaire, please omit writing your name. Anonymity is ensured by this. I ask that all questions be answered honestly. There are no correct or incorrect responses. I am solely interested in your personal viewpoints. Your responses will be handled in confidence. I appreciate you taking the time to respond to this survey.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Kindly indicate your response by placing a tick (✓) in the appropriate box at each statement or question.

Serial number

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1. Gender

Female	1
Male	2

16- 18 years	1
18- 20 years	2

2 .Age

Above years	20	3
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3. Religion.

Protestant	1
Orthodox	2
Catholic	3
Muslim	4
Others	5
None	

4. Year:

1 st year	1
2nd year	2
3rd year	3
4th year	4
5 th year	5

5. The scores you have scored in your university entrance marks or Matriculation Admission Point Score (APS):-----

Section B Psychological factors

Please tick the box that most closely corresponds to your view on the following statements.

Psychological statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. A first year student's ability to study independently can lead to academic success.					
2.The level of confidence among first year students affects their academic success.					
3.A first year student's confidence to manage academic work load results in better grade.					
4.A first year student ability to Work hard confidently leads to attain good grades.					
5.Ability to engage in profitable academic debate with peers among first year students affect their academic success.					

6. A first year student's ability to produce the best work under examination conditions lead to academic success.					
7.Ability to confidently ask lecturers questions about the material teaching during a lecture affect first year students result.					
8.A first year student's ability to produce coursework at the required standard lead to better grade.					
9.An ability to remain adequately motivated throughout among first year student leads to better results.					
10. First year students' ability to ask for help if they don't understand can affect their academic success.					
Perceived academic control statements					
1.Having academic control over one's work results in better academic success.					
2.Having academic responsibility & autonomy over work lead to academic					

success in first year.					
3. Feeling in control over one's academic outcomes results in first year academic success.					
4. One's perception of first year university as a low-control environment results in academic failure.					
5. First year students exerting more effort to their courses lead to better work.					
6. First year student's lack of confidence on controlling over work experience results in academic failure.					
7. Having one's decreased opportunity to exert control over their tasks made them feel "out of control.					
Stress measuring items					
1. Stress from work overload among first year students results in poor academic performance.					
2. Feeling "stressed" and nervous affect academic performance of first year students.					
3. Being upset of things that happened unexpectedly among first year students results in poor performance.					
.. 4. Being stressed and angered due to uncontrollable things among first year					

students lead to poor performance.					
5.First year student's feelings of difficulties due to inability to overcome their lesson lead to poor result.					
6.Being stressed of inability to cope with all the things among first year students results in poor result.					
7.Being stressed of inability to control important things by first year students results in poor success.					
8.Stressfromlack of good quality sleep among first year students affect their academic performance.					
9.On the whole, satisfaction with teaching and learning among first year students results in poor academic performance.					

Section B:Previous academic achievement versus present academic success

Please tick the box that most closely corresponds to previous academic records affecting the academic success of first year students.

Previous academic success and present academic success	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	3	Undecided Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5

1. One's high school academic performance predicts university academic success.					
2. The better prior academic achievement is motivation of the success in university.					
3. High school grade-point average predicts university success.					
4. Higher high school GPA is positively correlated with freshman GPA.					
5. High school academic preparation is positively related to university engagement.					
6. High school GPA is weakly related to retention and university success.					
7. High school performance did not adequately prepare university life.					
8. Prior academic performance is seen as inaccurate predictor of university academic success.					

Section C Institutional factors

Please tick the appropriate box that best represents your opinion on the extent to which you agree or disagree on institution related factors items of the following statements.

Institutional factors focus and academic issues	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. First year students have inadequate learning support which leads to academic failure					

2. Teaching methods employed in first year university lead to academic failure.					
3. First year students' academic performance is negatively affected by large classes.					
4. Student's academic performances in first year are negatively affected by inefficient administration.					
5. First year students academic performances are negatively affected by irrelevant continuous assessment.					
6. One's academic performances in first year is negatively affected by inadequacy of facilities (stationary, photocopier, printing).					
7. First year students academic performances are negatively affected by inadequate/wrong course Information.					
8. Lack of vast array of books in library during first year negatively affect students' academic performances.					
9. First year students' academic performances are negatively affected by inconsistent and unfair type of assessment.					
10. Students' academic performances during first year are negatively affected by uninteresting class environment.					
11. The use of poor teaching methods among first year students negatively affect academic performances.					
Institutional factors related to students' issues					
1. First year students' perceived low level of academic integration lead to academic failure.					
2. Learning backlogs experienced by first year students results in poor academic experience.					
3. First year students' heavy workload results in poor academic performance.					
4. Lack of foundational knowledge experienced by first year students results in academic failure.					
5. Lack of commitment experienced by first year students lead to low academic performance.					

Institutional factors related to teaching method					
1.The role played by the Lecturer/ Tutor in the teaching process byfirst year student led to poor academic performance					
2. Tutorial classes provided among first year student did not result in academic success.					
3. The lecturers' un well organization use of group work for first year class lead to academic failure.					
4.Lack of essential technology in teaching process among first year student resulted in academic failure.					
5.The over dependence of first year students on lecturers lead to low academic performance.					
6.Lecture'squestioning methods on conceptual understanding among first year students lead to less performance.					
7.The instructional methods and activities used among first year students result in poor academic performance.					

Institutional factors related to time management					
1. One's lack of having very good time management skill results in weak academic performance.					
2. Inability to manage study time schedule by first year student lead to academic failure.					
3. Difficulty to study on regular basis among first year students results in poor academic success.					
4. Late preparation for an examination among first year students lead to academic failure.					
5. Difficulty in organizing study and leisure time by first year results in low academic performance..					
Institutional factors related to attendance					

1. Attending all the classes in the first year did not affect academic performance.					
2. Missing classes rarely among first year students have a negative effect on academic performance					
3. Attending the class on regular basis by first year students lead to academic success.					
4. Coming late for classes in first year negatively affects their academic performance.					
Institutional factors related to students' health issues					
1.In first year going to bed at an unusual time (later than usual) at night lead to poor academic success.					
2.Having difficulty to sleep at night among first year student lead to academic failure.					
3. Waking up due to noise among first year university students results in low academic performance.					
4. Waking up due to nightmares among first year students results in low academic performance.					
5.The academic performance of first year students is negatively affected by waking up too early and difficulty in back to sleep.					
6. In first year feeling daytime sleepiness all day long affects academic performance.					
7. Academic performance among first year students is negatively affected by feeling of daytime sleepiness during lecture.					

Section D: Gender and Academic success

This section is seeking your opinion regarding gender difference and academic success in first year of tertiary education. Please indicate [(1) = Strongly Disagree; (2) = Disagree; (3) =

Neutral; (4) = Agree and (5) = Strongly Agree] by circling the number corresponding to the statements.

Gender and academic success measuring items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1.Girls perform better in first year than boys.					
2.Boys outperform girls in science.					
3.Girls are more academically responsible than boys in first year.					
4.Being different as boys or girls make difference in first year cumulative GPA.					
5.Girls outperform their counterparts at all levels of education system.					
6.Girls score higher GPA than boys in the first year university.					
7.Girls have overall better memory in academics than boys in the first year.					

Section E:Coping strategies: To what extent do you practice the following coping mechanism items ?

Coping mechanisms	Never	Often	Not sure	Sometimes	Always
	1	2	3	4	5
1.Meditate and pray					
2.Sleep					
3.Listening to music / watching T.V.					
4.Talking to Parents/ family members/friends					
5. Exercise /yoga					
6.Hobby/interest					
7.Smoking					
8. Taking alcohol					
9 Using drugs(chewing chat, and others).					
10. Managing time well					
11. Designing an action plan and solving the problem					

APPENDIX B: AN INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS LECTURERS

This in-depth interview seeks your opinion on the factors affecting academic success among the first year students. The objective of this interview guide is assess the first year instructors view, experience, and opinion regarding first year students’ gender and academic success, previous academic records, psychological factors , institutional experiences they face and the coping mechanisms.

Respondents	Biographical variable	Variable description	Frequencies
Lecturers	Gender	Female	
		Male	
		Total	
	Age	20-30years	
		31-40years	
		41-50years	
		50+years	
		Total	
	Teaching experiences	1 term	
		2 terms	
		3 terms	
		4 terms	
Total			
Department heads	Gender	Female	
		Male	
		Total	
	Age	20-30years	
		31-40years	
		41-50years	
		50+years	
		Total	
	Teaching experiences	1 term	
		2 terms	
		3 terms	
		4 terms	
Total			
Deans and coordinators	Gender	Female	
		Male	
		Total	
	Age	20-30years	
		31-40years	
		41-50years	
		50+years	

		Total	
	Teaching experiences	1 term	
		2 terms	
		3 terms	
		4 terms	
		Total	

Section A: Psychological factors

- 1) Do first year students feel confidence in their studies? Explain your answer.
- 2) Have you ever observed first year students getting stressed in doing their tasks and other related activities in your class specifically and in the university as well? If yes, mention what are the feelings and how it affects their academic performance?
- 3) Have you observed any other psychological problems students face during first year class? If yes, mention them and explain how they affect their academic performance?
- 4) What do you do when your students have any psychological problems in your course during the first year class?
- 5) Have you ever observed first year students showing a sense of perceived academic control over their courses? Explain your answer.

Section B: Previous Academic success

- 1) Does high school grade-point average predict university success in the first year? Explain your answer .
- 2) Have you observed that students who scored high GPA in university preparatory programme perform better when they get into a first year university programme? Explain your answer.
- 3) As instructors have you ever seen students who have good previous academic record in high school and preparatory programmes performing better when they enter first year university programmes?
- 4) Do you believe that students with high perceived academic preparation in high school are more likely to intend to graduate from their current university? If yes, justify your answer.
- 5) Generally, do you think that students' previous over all academic performance predict first year university students performance? Explain how previous academic does or does not affect academic performance?

Section C: Institutional factors

- 1) What institutional academic related factors do you think fresh students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure in the first year university programme?
- 2) What students' related issues or problems have you observed in first year that results in problem for academic success?
- 3) Do you think that students in your class use your time effectively? If yes, mention how and what activities they are engaged in during this period?
- 4) Have you observed students encountering health and social related problems in your class for academic success? If yes, mention what problems and how it affects the academic success?
- 5) As an instructor, how do you deliver your lectures to your first year students? Explain your answer.

Section D: Gender and academic success

- 1) As instructor, have you observed any difference in academic performance between males and females during first year? If yes, explain what differences and how they relate to their academic success?
- 2) Have you observed any differences in nature of course specific areas in between males and females? explain what courses / disciplines and how it affects their academic success?
- 3) Do you think that greater percentage of females perform and proceed from first year to the next year to earn degree than males? Explain your answer.
- 4) As instructor, have you seen both males and females take equivalent responsibility in their academic works particularly and social issues as well.? Explain your answer.
- 5) Overall, do you think that males usually succeed better than females in first year university performance? Explain your answer.

Section E; Coping mechanisms and academic success

- 1) In your opinion, how would you and your department do to enhance fresh students' academic success?

- 2) As an instructor, what have you observed that first year students practice as coping mechanisms so as to succeed their academic success?
- 3) What strategies do your students' usually use to cope with their academic problems? Explain them briefly.
- 4) In your opinion, what specific coping mechanisms do you prefer for your first year students to perform better in their academic work?
- 5) Generally, in your university what motivates fresh students to cope up with their academic work?

APPENDIX C: AN INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS DEPARTMENT HEADS

This in-depth interview seeks your opinion on the **factors affecting academic success among the first year students**. The objective of this interview guide is to assess the department heads view, experience, and opinion regarding first year students' previous academic success, gender and academic success Previous academic records, psychological factors, institutional experiences they face and the coping mechanisms.

Section A: Psychological factors

- 1) As a department head, have you observed first year students feeling confident in their studies? Explain your answer.
- 2) In your department, have you ever observed first year students getting stressed in doing their tasks and other related activities in your class specifically and in the department as well? If yes, mention what are the feelings and how it affects their academic performance?
- 3) Have you observed any other psychological problems students face during first year class? If yes, mention them and explain how they affect their academic performance?
- 4) What do you do as a Departmental head when your students have any psychological problems in your course during the first year class?
- 5) Have you ever observed first year students showing a sense of perceived academic control over their courses? Explain your answer.

Section B: Previous academic success

- 1) Does high school grade-point average predict university success in the first year? Explain your answer.
- 2) Have you observed that students who scored high GPA in university preparatory programme perform better when they get into a first year university programme? Explain your answer
- 3) Have you ever seen students who have good previous academic record in high school and preparatory programmes performing better when they enter first year university programme?.

- 4) Do you believe that students with high perceived academic preparation in high school are more likely to intend to graduate from their current university? If yes, justify your answer

- 5) Generally, do you think that students' previous over all academic performance predict first year university students performance? Explain how previous academic does or does not affect academic performance?

Section C: Institutional factors

- 1) What institutional academic related factors do you think fresh students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure in the first year university programme?
- 2) What students' related issues or problems have you observed in first year that results in problem for academic success?
- 3) Do you think that students in your department use their time effectively? If yes, mention how and what activities they are engaged in during this period?

- 4) Have you observed students encountering health and social related problems in your department for academic success? If yes, mention what problems and how it affects the academic success?
- 5), How do your first year lectures deliver to your first year students? Discuss it briefly

Section D: Gender and academic success

- 1) Have you observed any differences between men's and women's academic achievement during first year? If yes, explain what differences and how they relate to their academic success?

- 2) Have you observed any differences in nature of course specific areas in between males and females? explain what courses / disciplines and how it affects their academic success?
- 3) In your department, do you think that greater percentage of females perform and proceed from first year to the next year to earn degree than males? Explain your answer
- 4) In your department,,have you seen both males and females take equivalent responsibility in their academic works particularly and social issues as well.? Explain your answer
- 5) Overall, do you think that males usually succeed better than females in first year university performance? Explain your answer.

Section E: Coping mechanisms and academic success

- 1) In your opinion, how would you and your department do to enhance fresh students' academic success?
- 2) What have you observed that first year students practice as coping mechanisms so as to succeed their academic success?
- 3) What strategies do your students usually use to cope with their academic problems? Explain them briefly.
- 4) In your opinion, what specific coping mechanisms do you prefer for your first year students to perform better in their academic work?
- 5) Generally, in your university what motivates fresh students to cope up with their academic work?

APPENDIX D: AN INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS COLLEGE DEANS

This in-depth interview seeks your opinion on the **factors affecting academic success among the first year students**. The objective of this interview guide is to assess the **faculty deans** view, experience, and opinion regarding first year students' psychological factors, previous

academic success, gender and academic success and institutional experiences they face and the coping mechanisms

Section A Psychological factors

1) Do first year students feel confidence in their studies. Explain your answer. Explain your answer.

2) In your faculty, have you ever observed first year students getting stressed in doing their tasks and other related activities in your class specifically and in the university as well? If yes, mention what are the feelings and how it affects their academic performance?

3) In your college, have you observed any other psychological problems students face during first year class? If yes, mention them and explain how they affect their academic performance?

4) In the faculty/institution, what do you do when your students have any psychological problems in your course during the first year class?

5) Have you ever observed first year students showing a sense of perceived academic control over their courses? Explain your answer.

Section B: Previous academic success related factors faculty/college deans

1) Does high school grade-point average predict university success in the first year? Explain your answer.

2) Have you observed that students who scored high GPA in university preparatory programme perform better when they get into a first year university programme? Explain your answer.

3) Have you ever seen students who have good previous academic record in high school and preparatory programmes performing better when they enter first year university programme?.

4) In your college, do you believe that students with high perceived academic preparation in high school are more likely to intend to graduate from their current university? justify your answer.

5) Generally, do you think that students' previous over all academic performance predict first year university students performance? Explain how previous academic does or does not affect academic performance?

Section C: Institutional factors related items faculty/college deans

1) What institutional academic related factors do you think fresh students perceive as determinants of academic success/failure in the first year university programme?

2) What students' related issues or problems have you observed in first year that results in problem for academic success?

3) Do you think that students in your faculty use their time effectively? Discuss it briefly

4) Have you observed students encountering health and social related problems in your class for academic success? Explain your answer.

5) How do fist year lecturers deliver their lectures to your first year students? Discuss it briefly

Section D: Gender and academic performance related items faculty/college deans

1)Have you observed any difference in academic performance between males and females during first year? Explain you're your answer.

2) Have you observed any differences in nature of course specific areas in between males and females? explain what courses / disciplines and how it affects their academic success?

3) In your college, do you think that greater percentage of females perform and proceed from first year to the next year to earn degree than males? Explain your answer.

4) In your college, have you seen both males and females take equivalent responsibility in their academic works particularly and social issues as well.? Explain your answer.

5) Overall, do you think that males usually succeed better than females in first year university performance? Explain your answer.

Section E: Coping mechanisms and academic performance faculty/college deans

- 1) In your college, what have you observed that first year students practice as coping mechanisms so as to succeed their academic success?
- 2) In your opinion, your faculty or university environment do to enhance fresh students' academic success?
- 3) In your institution or college or faculty what strategies do your students' usually use to cope with their academic problems? Explain them briefly.
- 4) In your opinion, what specific coping mechanisms do you prefer for your first year students to perform better in their academic work?
- 5) Generally, in your university, what motivates fresh students to cope up with their academic work?

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed!

APPENDIX: E

Request for permission to conduct research at Dilla University

Title of the research: Factors affecting academic success among the first year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia

Date: -----

Name of the person to who you address the request: The Director (Dr. Asebe Regasa)

Department of the person: Director, Research and dissemination office

Contact Telephone:

: +251-929034905

Fax: 046-31-25-68

Address P.O. Box: 419 Dilla

Email:dillacc@ethionet.e

Dear: Dr. Asebe Regasa (Director, Research and dissemination office)

I, **Demissie Semebo** am conducting research under their guidance or supervision of **Regis Chireshe a Professor** in the Department of Special Needs Education (Great Zimbabwe University) towards a **Doctor of Education** at the University of South Africa. I am requesting for permission to carry a research study in your university.

The study is entitled by: **Factors affecting academic success among the first year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia**

Your University has been selected because you are one of the universities which has many first year students.

The study will involve gathering quantitative data and qualitative data. A total of 398 first year students will be selected to respond to a questionnaire. Besides, 6 lecturers for first year students, 3 department

heads and 3 deans and freshmen coordinators will be selected to participate in in-depth interview. If the selected people agree to take part, they must complete a consent form. The questionnaires will be personally delivered and collected by the researcher. Besides, the interview guide line will be conducted by the researcher in person or physically.

As a result, I am requesting your permission to conduct the research in your university.

Participants in the present study will be strictly volunteer. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any stage if they like not want to continue.

Anonymity will be maintained and information provided by participants will be managed with strict privacy and confidentiality.

The advantages of this research could be:

1. Affect policies on academic success in first year and senior years as well in Government higher education Southern Ethiopia and the whole Ethiopia.
2. Solve multitude of problems affecting academic success among first year students.
3. Encourage governments to allocate funds to the success of education and quality education as well. Potential risks are: Feedback procedure will entail: The thesis will be published as per University of South Africa (**UNISA**) regulations

Yours faithfully,

Demissie Semebo

Researcher

My contact details are: **+251913245252** e-mail: **demissem2004@gmail.com** and my supervisor can be reached at the Department of Special Needs Education (Great Zimbabwe University)+**263777308244**, e-mail: **chireshe@yahoo.co.uk**.



APPENDIX: F

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT UNIVERSITIES

Request for permission to conduct research at Hawassa University

Title of the research: Factors affecting academic success among the first year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia

Date:

Name of the person to who you address the request: The V/ President of research and dissemination (Prof. Alemayehu Regassa)

Department of the person: Research and Dissemination Office

Contact Telephone: +251 936011774

Address P.O. Box 05 Hawassa

Email address: alemregassaa@gmail.com

Dear: Prof. Alemayehu Regassa : Research and Dissemination Office V/president

I, **Demissie Semebo** am conducting research under their guidance or supervision of **Regis Chireshe a Professor** in the Department of Special Needs Education (Great Zimbabwe University) towards a **Doctor of Education** at the University of South Africa. I am requesting for permission to carry a research study in your university.

The study is entitled by: **Factors affecting academic success among the first year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia**

Your University has been selected because you are a one of the universities which has first year students.

The research will require the gathering of quantitative data and qualitative data. A total of 502 first year students will be selected to respond to a questionnaire. Besides, 8 lecturers for first year students, 4 department heads and 4 deans and freshmen coordinators will be selected to participate in in-depth interview. If the chosen participants agree to participate, a consent form must be filled out. The

researcher will personally hand out the questionnaires and collect them. Besides, the interview guide line will be conducted by the researcher in person or physically.

In order to achieve this, I am requesting your permission to conduct the research in your university.

Participants in the present study will be strictly volunteer. Participants are free to with draw from the study at any stage if they like not want to continue.

Anonymity will be maintained and information provided by participants will be managed with strict privacy and confidentiality.

The advantages of this research could be:

1. Affect policies on academic success in first year and senior years as well in Government higher education Southern Ethiopia and the whole Ethiopia.
2. Solve multitude of problems affecting academic success among first year students.
3. Encourage governments allowing funds toward the success of education and quality education as well. Potential risks are: Feedback procedure will entail: The thesis will be published as per University of South Africa (**UNISA**) regulations

Yours sincerely

Demissie Semebo

Researcher

My contact details are: **+251913245252** e-mail: **demisse2004@gmail.com** and my supervisor can be reached at the Department of Special Needs Education (Great Zimbabwe University)**+263777308244**, e-mail: **chireshe@yahoo.co.uk**.

APPENDIX G :CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____, confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

The researcher explained to me and I understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname (please print)

Demissie Semebo Bikamo

Researcher's signature

Date

My contact details are: **+251913245252** e-mail: **demissem2004@gmail.com** and my supervisor can be reached at the Department of Special Needs Education (Great Zimbabwe University) **+263777308244**, e-mail: **chireshe@yahoo.co.uk**.

APPENDIX H: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2019/07/24

Ref: **2019/07/24/50788949/13/MC**

Dear Mr Bikamo

Name: Mr DS Bikamo

Student No.: 50788949

Decision: Ethics Approval from
2019/07/24 to 2024/07/24

Researcher(s): Name: Mr DS Bikamo
E-mail address: demissem2004@gmail.com
Telephone: +252 91 324 5252

Supervisor(s): Name: Prof R Chireshe
E-mail address: chireshe@yahoo.co.uk
Telephone: +263 77 730 8244

Title of research:

Factors affecting academic success among first year students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia

Qualification: D. Ed in Psychology of Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2019/07/24 to 2024/07/24.

The low risk application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2019/07/24 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.

3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2024/07/24**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number **2019/07/24/50788949/13/MC** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof AT Motlhabane
CHAIRPERSON: CEDU RERC
motlhat@unisa.ac.za



Prof PM Sebate
ACTING EXECUTIVE DEAN
Sebatpm@unisa.ac.za

ሀዋሳ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
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Hawassa University
Registrar and Alumni Affairs
Directorate

ቁጥር: Reg/0006/15
Ref. No
ቀን: 16/19/2022
Date

To Whom it may concern

Subject: - Permission grant letter

This is to confirm you that we allowed Mr. Demissie Semebo Bikamo to collect and use the statistical data from Hawassa University for his PhD thesis work.



With Regards

[Handwritten signature]
Registrar & Alumni Affairs
Directorate Director

+046 220-02-29
220-03-41
220-01-88

Email: registrar@hu.edu.et

<http://www.hu.edu.et>
5, Awassa, ETHIOPIA
Fax +046 221-47-81



Ref. no. DUELL/020/35/2015

Date December 18/2022

LETTER OF PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE EDITOR

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, the undersigned, Belilew Molla Gebre (Ph.D.) who is currently working at Dilla University as an assistant professor in the department of English Language and Literature, have done the language edition for **Mr. Demissie Semebo Bikamo** on his Doctoral dissertation entitled **“Factors Affecting Academic Success among First-year Students in Southern Universities in Ethiopia”** based on the professional assistance he requested.

Accordingly, I, Belilew Molla Gebre (Ph.D.) confirm that upon the request of **Mr. Demissie Semebo Bikamo**, a Doctoral candidate at the University of South Africa (UNISA), I did the language editing for him. If any further information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me at +251924408355 or belilew67@gmail.com.

With best regards,

Belilew Molla Gebre (PhD)





Ref: *Du-2018-ES-12 / 12/17*
Date: *05-11-2019*

Dr Belilew Molla

Dilla University

Subject: Appointment

It gives me great pleasure to appoint you as **Language editor** which is equivalent with **Associate editor** as of this date of 1 July, 2018 for “**Ethiopian Journal of Environment and Development- EJED**” that was recently announced by our university in a competitive basis.

Therefore, I trust that you will discharge your duties and responsibilities effectively.

Regards,

Handwritten signature
ፍሬዎስ አንዳ (PhD)
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CC: Firehwot Endale (PhD)
President for Research and
Technology Transfer



- President office
- Vice president for Research and technology transfer
- Research and dissemination office
- Finance and budget directorate office