

Socioeconomic Background and Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Emotional Resilience among In-School Adolescents in Abeokuta, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of adolescence is often based on the idea that it is a stormy period of development, where the person goes through maturation, identity-making, and increased vulnerability to the judgment of others. The adolescents in schools are simultaneously faced with a convergence of demands that are caused by the school environment, including academic, peer, and family-related demands, which can act as triggers of stress and psychological distress. Resiliency in such environment has been shown to alleviate susceptibility to depression, anxiety as well as suicidal behaviours. Modern systematic reviews highlight the universal predictive role of academic overload on mental health problems in adolescents, establishing the necessity of a framework that will improve resistance (Wu et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024). In addition to its protective effect, there is a binding developmental process to foster resiliency in adolescents to help them stay motivated despite challenges, get back on track after a failure, and make a psychological balance in a straining learning environment (Zhang et al., 2023). School is a social environment that is central in stimulating or inhibiting the process of developing resilience among adolescents. Peers, teachers, and a positive school milieu support are simultaneously linked with greater resilience levels and adaptive outcomes (Arias et al., 2024). Findings revealed a negative effect of peer support on maladjustment and indirect positive effect of family and teacher support on resilience and self-perceptions (Garcia-Moya et al., 2024). Another study in India are repeatedly performed to point out that favourable school climates reduce psychological distresses and augment educational performance at the secondary level (Patel et al., 2024). On the other hand, negative experiences like peers neglect, teacher neglect and academic overload have adverse effects on the resilience of the adolescents to adapt to school conditions in institutions (Salavera et al., 2023).

The adolescent populations in the Nigerian context are unique in terms of the influence of certain cultural and socioeconomic variables. Parental influence, economic difficulties, and insufficient investment in the educational facilities are other stressors that put pressure on them. According to more recent findings, it seems that family and social and peer support are strong predictors of resilience in Nigerian adolescents, who were found to be more resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic (Okeke al., 2023). In Anambra State, academic and emotional regulation performance showed a very strong level of resilience indicating that it is one of the key predictors of achievement in chemistry examination, nearly half the variance in results were explained by this factor (Nwokolo and Eze, 2024). An emotional resilience training programme in Owerri, in addition to the increase of the psychological wellness, also raised an academic performance (Ogu & Ibe, 2024). Nigerian research, however, uses cross-sectional designs and, therefore, restricts a more in-depth understanding of the longitudinal patterns of resilience moderated by such variables like gender, family structure, and institutional type (Umeh al., 2023).

Exploring the emotional stability of in-school teenagers is crucial in informing the intervention programmes that have a positive impact on psychological health and academic success. Other efforts like the ReSET project in Europe are using evidence-based socio-emotional training to enhance support to adolescents who develop early mental vulnerabilities (Fornaro et al., 2024). Traits emotional intelligence has proved to be a protective construct in Italy that alleviates burnout symptoms and poor academic achievement in students (Mariani et al., 2025). According to related studies, enhancement in emotional resilience techniques lowers the rates of truancy among junior secondary students, hence, promoting academic persistence especially in low-income families (Usman et

al., 2024). However, these strategies need to be operationalised in culturally sensitive and contextually informed research in the Nigerian schools.

Socioeconomic background (SEB) refers to economic, social and educational assets possessed by individuals or families that include income, level of parental education, occupation as well as material acquisition. SEB has also been referred to as a huge predictor of exposure to stress factors like the lack of resources, unstable living conditions, or over-crowded classrooms and the protective buffers (family, school, or health services) offered to in-school teenagers (Ogunnubi et al., 2018). The results in Nigeria show that there is a mixed relationship between SEB and resilience in adolescents. In a case study of the South-Western part of Nigeria, most youths were found to be highly resilient but maltreatment, neglect, or low family conditions related to low SEB were correlated with low resilience levels (Ogunnubi et al., 2018). On the contrary, the comparative impact of family wealth and social backing on depression and self-esteem revealed that the direct impact of wealth was not significant, however, the moderate one was significant among low SEB groups (Yusuf et al., 2024).

Evidence across the world shows a correlation where the lower the SEB, the more negative emotional outcomes a teenage would have although the correlations are not absolute. Parental support and school environments are the most common protective factors that reduce the negative effects. As an example, a modern Chinese study demonstrated that the SEB levels of family members had a direct effect on the conformity of adolescents to learning and partially mediated this phenomenon through self-esteem (Chen et al., 2024). In the same way, longitudinal studies with European settings testify to the correlation between lower familial SEB and increasing mental health problems in adolescence, but the risk factor is mitigated by resilience factors (Schlack et al., 2023). In general, it seems that SEB influences the emotional resilience of adolescents by influencing both the experience frequency and the accessibility of positive experiences. This highlights the need to develop resilience-promoting programmes that can be applied to tackle individual competency and structural inequities like disparities in resources, social support of parents, and school infrastructure (Schlack et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024).

Self-efficacy refers to the ability of a person to believe that he or she can handle and attain certain tasks or circumstances. Self-efficacy plays an essential role in adolescence by converting the integration of academic demands, social processes, formation of identity, and economic scarcity into the perception that adolescents experience stressful situations, the approach of coping, and persistence of negative events (Bandura, 1997; Onah and Okolie, 2021). Several researches in Nigeria find positive correlations between self-efficacy and psychological adjustment. A research study was carried out in Awka Education Zone and the results showed that a higher self-efficacy in teenagers in secondary schools, especially when combined with emotional intelligence, had significant positive changes on the psychological adjustment (Nwankwo et al., 2021). Similarly, the study in Niger State demonstrated that self-efficacy was a predictor of social, academic, and emotional adjustment in senior secondary students, which supported its status as a resilience factor on the Nigerian profile (Ibrahim, 2023). The buffering effect of self-efficacy on emotional discomfort is supported by international studies, not only in Nigeria. According to a recent study of adolescents, self-efficacy positively correlated with resilience and indirectly insulated against the adverse consequences of Internet addiction like affecting emotional control and social support (Sahin & Ozer, 2025). In another study, self-efficacy was found to increase resilience by promoting coping and emotional regulation especially in the learning context (Guo et al., 2025). Besides, self-efficacy mediates the effects of other antecedents on resilience. As an example, it can alleviate the negative impact of low socio-economic background (SEB) or serve as an intervening factor in which the support systems (family, school, peers) become resilience (Lucidi et al., 2024). Therefore, self-efficacy does not only serve as a predictor but also as a leverage point of the interventions that would result in improving the perceived capabilities of students, which in turn may have a ripple effect on the emotional resiliency in the settings with limited resources (Nwankwo et al., 2021; Sahin & Ozer, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a stage of high development and increased susceptibility when young individuals face various challenges associated with their academic achievement, relations with peers, identity, and family aspects. These issues are compounded by the requirements of the school or learning setting, such as academic achievement, peer rivalry, and the need to determine social identity, among in-school teens. Although these pressures can be

overcome by some adolescents who have acquired the emotional strength to handle them, others are not as lucky, leading to emotional distress, lack of interest in studying, and in extreme instances, harmful habits like substance abuse, aggression, or dropping out of school. In other nations like Nigeria, structural factors, such as social-economic inequality, access to counselling services and mental health services, overcrowded classrooms, and family instability contribute to the problem. The low-income households tend to expose their adolescents to a higher level of stress owing to financial burden, food insecurity, and limited access to supportive resources and this may lead to decreased resilience and predispose the adolescents to negative affective and behavioural consequences. Even though the schools should be supportive environments, not all schools can respond to the psychosocial needs of students appropriately, thus increasing the gap in the emotional strength of learners. Although emotional resilience is significant in terms of adolescent well-being and academic performance, the body of literature on this topic is limited in most emerging economies. Most of the literature that has been created is concerned with academic performance, the emotional aspects of the adolescent experience are not discussed in detail. In Nigeria, specifically, there is a paucity of empirical researches, which address the interactions involving socio-economic background, self-efficacy, and social support to influence resilience among in-school adolescents. This gap in knowledge presents critical challenges to educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals who may want to develop an effective programme to develop emotional resilience in schools. These problems are widespread and this is why it is so crucial to examine what the determinants of emotional resilience are in in-school adolescents. Lack of specific knowledge and solutions may also make a huge number of young people subject to the emotional issues, which is likely to impact negatively not only upon academic performance, but upon long-term psychological and social development as well. Addressing this gap is important to end up with healthier, stronger, and productive adolescents who would be able to tolerate hardship and become productive individuals in society.

Purpose of the Study

The general aim of the research is to test the degree to which emotional resilience of in-school adolescents in Abeokuta, Nigeria, can be predicted by socioeconomic background and self-efficacy. Specifically, the study will:

1. Determine the extent of emotional resilience of in-school adolescents in Abeokuta.
2. Consider if there exists an association between emotional resilience and socioeconomic background of in-school adolescents in Abeokuta.
3. Establish the correlation that exists between self-efficacy and emotional resilience in in-school adolescents in Abeokuta.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions that were established to structure the way the study was conducted and would be answered in the study:

1. What is the extent of emotional stability in in-school adolescents in Abeokuta?
2. How is the socioeconomic background linked to emotional resilience of in-school adolescents in Abeokuta?
3. How do self-efficacy and emotional resiliency relate to one another in in-school adolescents in Abeokuta?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional resilience can be defined as the ability of a person to be adaptive and overcome adversity, stress, or any difficult situations in life. This ability is particularly vital in the case of adolescents who are still in the stage of transition characterised by physical, emotional, and social alterations. Emotional resilience helps the individual to control the emotions, be optimistic and interact with their peers and academic activities despite

disappointments. Empirical research evidence reveals that strong adolescents find it easier to succeed as students, support psychological health, and prevent risky behaviours. Indicatively, a cross-sectional study conducted in Nigeria found variability in resilience in adolescents in correlation with drug use, feelings of anxiety and depression, which posits that emotional resilience is protective against these adverse effects (Ogunleye et al., 2023). Similarly, a study carried out in the COVID-19 crisis concluded that resilience patterns were dependent on age and school level and decreased at critical moments but could be restored with the help of organised assistance (Martinez-Garcia et al, 2023).

There is a strong influence of socio-economic background on the emotional strength of adolescents. The representatives of higher socio-economic status (SES) families tend to have more access to better resources, including quality education, favourable learning conditions, and extracurricular activities that allow developing coping mechanisms. Conversely, adolescents in low SES households, can have financial instability, lack of food, and lack of parental care, thus, undermining resilience. Chinese evidence shows that family SES has a positive predictive value on self-esteem, which subsequently leads to academic compliance, indicating that family SES has a positive impact on not only material exposure but also the internal emotional resources (Zhang et al., 2024). Likewise, protective factors, like peer support and effortful control, were observed in a European longitudinal dataset protecting the negative impact of poor parental SES on scholastic outcomes (Van der Werf et al., 2023).

Self-efficacy as the individual belief that he/she can perform certain things or circumstances is a very important determinant of emotional resilience. Those adolescents who have high self-efficacy handle challenges with confidence, see failures as learning opportunities and continue to persist despite the difficulty. The psychological resource increases their capacity to deal with stress and control emotions. A study in Nigeria found self-efficacy to indicate psychological adjustment among secondary-school students significantly (Ude and Eze, 2021). Similarly, a study of Rivers State, Nigeria, has shown that self-efficacy was a predictor of emotional intelligence among adolescents (Akpan et al., 2022). Globally, the results show that academic self-efficacy has a strong relationship with higher emotional well-being and lower negative affect, even in students with low and medium socio-economic-background (SEB) (Baka and Derbis, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

The main sources used by this investigation include Resilience Theory and the Social Cognitive Theory by Bandura, which helps to understand the interaction between socio-economic background and self-efficacy to determine the extent of emotional resilience.

The theory behind Resilience is that people are faced with risk factors (including poor SEB and adversity) and protective factors (including supportive relationships and self-beliefs) that, in combination with risk factors, define the outcomes of adaptation (Ungar, 2021). According to recent longitudinal findings, protective variables such as peer support, emotion regulation, and school climate have a significant reducing influence on the impact of risk on maladaptive psychological results (van der Werf et al., 2023). This framing lays stress on the fact that resilience is not a predetermined characteristic but an evolving system depending on the personal and environmental factors.

The Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura focuses on the role of self-efficacy in the functioning of human beings. The self-efficacy modulates the behaviour, emotional control, persistence, and motivation (Bandura, 1997). The empirical research in Nigeria and other countries proves the fact that self-efficacy is the predictor of psychological adjustment, emotional intelligence, and academic performance (Ude and Eze, 2021; Akpan et al., 2022; Baka and Derbis, 2024). It offers a theoretical framework of the functioning of self-efficacy as a resilience mechanism, which empowers adolescents to consider challenges as chances to grow and increase their adaptability to dealing with adversity.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted correlational survey design . The design was considered as appropriate since it allowed studying the relationships between the variables without manipulation and provided the information about the impact of socio-economic background and self-efficacy on the emotional resilience in the group of in-school

adolescents. The population of the study included every in-school teen in Abeokuta, Nigeria. The reason why this population was chosen is that adolescents in the school environment are exposed to a number of emotional and social difficulties, which makes them an appropriate population group to use in examining resilience and its related determinants. Out of this population, 250 in-school adolescents were selected and used as the research participants. The stratified sampling approach was used to make sure that the students of all schools were fairly represented in terms of gender and the grade level, which contributed to the improved validity of the insights due to the low sampling bias and the quality reflection of the diversity among the teenagers population.

The instrument used for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to obtain relevant information on the respondents' socio-economic background, self-efficacy, and emotional resilience. The questionnaire comprised both researcher-developed items and standardized psychological scales to ensure adequate coverage of the study variables and to enhance the validity and reliability of the measurements.

The socio-economic background section was developed by the researcher to gather demographic and contextual information about the respondents. This section contained items that elicited data on age, gender, class level, parental educational attainment, parental occupation, family structure, and estimated monthly family income. The items were structured in a multiple-choice and categorical response format to facilitate ease of response and coding for statistical analysis. For example, parental education and occupation were grouped into clearly defined categories, each assigned numerical codes for analysis. As this section measured factual and objective background characteristics rather than psychological constructs, internal consistency reliability was not computed. However, the items were subjected to expert review to ensure face and content validity before administration.

Self-efficacy was measured using the General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Ralf Schwarzer and Matthias Jerusalem in 1995. The scale consists of ten items designed to assess individuals' general belief in their ability to handle difficult situations and cope effectively with challenges. The items are rated on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true) to 4 (Exactly true). The total score is obtained by summing the responses to all items, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived self-efficacy. The scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties across different cultural settings, with reported Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.90, indicating satisfactory to high internal consistency.

Emotional resilience was measured using the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale developed by Kathryn M. Connor and Jonathan R.T. Davidson in 2003. The original version of the scale contains 25 items that assess the individual's capacity to cope with stress, adversity, and emotional challenges. The items are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Not true at all) to 4 (True nearly all the time). Scores are summed to produce a total resilience score, with higher scores reflecting greater emotional resilience. Connor and Davidson (2003) reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, demonstrating high internal consistency reliability, and a test–retest reliability coefficient of 0.87 over a two-week interval, further supporting the stability of the instrument.

The items were also designed well and were reviewed by experts to ascertain their relevancy and clarity in respect to the research objectives. The questionnaire was given by the researcher himself with the help of the trained assistants. Respondents were promised confidentiality and the objective of the study clarified so as to make them be truthful and open in responding. Students had sufficient time to complete the task and instruments were collected immediately after the administration in order to have a high return rate. The data collected was coded and the SPSS was used to analyse the data. To summarise the demographic data, the analysis entailed descriptive statistics, which are frequency distributions and percentages. To test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance, inferential statistics, namely Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient, were to be used. This approach permitted establishing the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables of the study.

RESULT

Research Question 1: What is the level of emotional resilience among in-school adolescents in Abeokuta?

The level of emotional resilience was assessed using a structured questionnaire measuring coping skills, adaptability, and stress tolerance. Scores were categorized into Low, Moderate, and High levels of resilience.

Table 1: Levels of Emotional Resilience among In-School Adolescents (N = 250)

Emotional Resilience Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Low	50	20.0
Moderate	140	56.0
High	60	24.0
Total	250	100.0

The outcomes show that most teenagers (56%) have attained the moderate level of emotional resilience, which represents the fairly good ability to cope with stress and adjust to the challenges. The high resilience was observed in some teenagers (24%) indicating strong coping mechanisms, adaptability, and adequately regulated emotions. In contrast, 20% of the respondents had low resilience, which implies that they were more susceptible to stress and did not cope with emotional problems. The results highlight the need to launch resilience-building programmes in the school environment to support the mental wellbeing and adaptive abilities of adolescents.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between socioeconomic background and emotional resilience among in-school adolescents in Abeokuta?

The relationship between socioeconomic background (measured via family income, parental education, and material resources) and emotional resilience was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation between Socioeconomic Background and Emotional Resilience (N = 250)

Variable	N	Mean ± SD	r	p-value
Emotional Resilience	250	74.3 ± 12.5	0.412**	<0.05
Socioeconomic Background	250	69.8 ± 10.7		

Emotional resilience mean score of the respondents was 74.3 (SD = 12.5). The average of the social economic background was 69.8 (SD = 10.7) with moderate values of both variables recorded in the sample. Correlational analysis showed that there is a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between socioeconomic status and emotional resilience (r = 0.412, p < 0.05). This shows that higher socioeconomic strata adolescents will be more prone to emotional resilience, possibly because of greater accessibility of resources, greater levels of parental education, and material support.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between self-efficacy and emotional resilience among in-school adolescents in Abeokuta?

The relationship between self-efficacy and emotional resilience was also analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r). Self-efficacy was measured through a scale assessing adolescents' confidence in their ability to handle tasks and overcome challenges.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation between Self-Efficacy and Emotional Resilience (N = 250)

Variable	N	Mean ± SD	r	p-value
Emotional Resilience	250	74.3 ± 12.5	0.578**	<0.05
Self-Efficacy	250	71.6 ± 11.4		

The mean score on self-efficacy was 71.6 (SD = 11.4), which implies that, the adolescents have a moderate level of confidence in their abilities to cope with tasks and challenges. Correlation analysis revealed that self-efficacy and emotional resilience were found to be correlated and this correlation was strong and statistically significant ($r = 0.578$, $p < 0.05$). The implication of this is that, adolescents with higher levels of self-efficacy are better positioned to exhibit high levels of emotional resilience. It can be expected that high self-efficacy can thus positively increase problem-solving abilities, coping-mechanisms and mindfulness in the face of adversity, which are part of general mental health and adaptive outcomes.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This research study established that a majority of the in-school teenagers in Abeokuta were emotionally resilient at a moderate level, with some having high or poor resilience. This demonstrates that despite the fact that a significant number of adolescents have the ability to deal with stress, there is still a significant proportion of adolescents who are prone to emotional problems. The same tendencies are reported by recent research, which demonstrates that the resilience of adolescents can often change in accordance with the support systems available, the impact of socio-cultural factors, and exposure to stressors (Martinez-Garcia et al., 2023; Ogunleye et al., 2023). Such results lead to the necessity to incorporate resilience-enhancing interventions within the school setting, such as mentoring services, the peer support systems and emotional regulation trainings, to enhance the adaptive capacity and psychological health of the adolescents.

The result also indicated a positive relationship between the emotional resilience and the socioeconomic background. Youths who had more resources, their education levels, and other financial advantages in their family were more likely to portray resilience in contrast to their peers with lower economic backgrounds. This confirms previous findings that socioeconomic position is a decisive factor in influencing self-esteem in adolescents, access to coping resources, and adaptive capacity in general (Zhang et al., 2024; van der Werf et al., 2023). Our results in Nigeria indicate that children in less-fortunate families can experience further emotional vulnerabilities, and the gaps in the economic opportunity are visible, which explains why the less-privileged teenagers should be the focus of specific interventions and why interventions that enhance the resiliency of less-privileged adolescents are necessary. Additionally, the study showed that there was a strong correlation between self-efficacy and emotional strength. Young people who had more confidence in their ability to handle issues exhibited more tendencies to develop resilience, continue after the challenges, and manage their emotions effectively. This is in line with the Social Cognitive Theory posited by Bandura (1997) which puts more emphasis on the concept of self-efficacy in influencing behavioural and emotional behaviour. Parallel statistics on the Nigerian and international settings confirm that self-efficacy is the predictor of psychological adjustment, emotional intelligence, and general wellbeing (Ude and Eze, 2021; Akpan et al., 2022; Baka and Derbis, 2024). These results are an appeal to the significance of enhancing self-efficacy by providing school-based interventions that induce problem-solving, goal setting, and personal mastery.

Collectively, the findings indicate that both external (socioeconomic background) and internal (self-efficacy) psychological factors influence emotional resiliency in teenagers. It promotes the resilience theory that considers resilience to be a product of risk and protective interactions (Ungar, 2021). Empowering the school environment and the self-perceptions of adolescents may therefore provide the holistic solution to the resiliency and the guarantee of the good developmental outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This research paper has investigated the degree of emotional resilience in in-school adolescents in Abeokuta, the effect of the socioeconomic background, and self-efficacy. The results showed that although the vast majority of teenagers exhibit low levels of resiliency, a considerable number of them are sensitive to stress and emotional problems. The socioeconomic background was suggested as a key factor, and teenagers in a more privileged family were more resilient, possibly because of better access to resources and support groups. Besides, self-efficacy had a significant correlation with emotional resilience indicating that those adolescents who believe in their ability are more competent to overcome difficulty and manage emotions. All of these findings highlight the importance of interdependence between individual and situational factors in the formation of adolescent

resilience and reveal the need to engage in comprehensive interventions that enhance the inner strength and the outer support systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School Based Resilience Programmes: Schools must incorporate well planned resilience-building approaches in the curriculum like mentoring, peer-support groups and learning social-emotional skills in schools to help adolescents learn coping skills and adaptive skills.

Parental and Community Engagement: It is important to sensitise the stakeholders, particularly the parents and the community leaders on the importance of establishing supportive environments that promote resilience, especially among those adolescents who are in poor socioeconomic conditions.

Optimising Self-Efficacy: The schools are in a position to introduce training in the areas of problem-solving, goal-setting, and mastery and improve the confidence of adolescents in their skills and, subsequently, their resilience.

Policy Support: Educational leaders have the opportunity to focus on the mental health and resilience of adolescents by creating the policies that will introduce psychosocial support services to schools so that adolescents could gain the constant guidance and counselling.

Tailored Interventions that are targeted towards the Groups at Vulnerability: Special interventions must be created that cater to the adolescents of low-income families, such as scholarship opportunities, welfare, and access to psychosocial services, to counter the risks of being low-income.

Future Research: Future studies on resilience patterns of teens and the efficacy of resilience-enhancing therapies should be conducted to give more in-depth information on how to maintain the wellbeing of adolescents over their course.

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