Social Relations as a Social Psychological Construct and Academic Participation of Undergraduate Students in the University of Buea Cameroon

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ABSTRACT: *A significant body of literature attests to social relation on academic participation of students. A review of this literature led to the construction of a self-report instrument designed to measure Social Relations and academic participation. The conceptual framework underlying the designed instrument focuses on the factors that can potentially mal students' participation: these include stereotype, aggression, and prejudice. Specifically, the study seeks to measure the effect of stereotype, aggression and prejudice on the academic participation of student at the undergraduate level in the University of Buea. The correlational survey design was used for this study with a sample size 50 participants who were selected at randomly from the different levels of undergraduate student at the University of Buea.The findings brought out the results which indicate strong factor loadings of all items on their respective scales and excellent overall model fit showing that stereotype and prejudice have no significant effect on the social relations and academic participation of undergraduate students at the University of Buea while aggression has a significant effect on the social relations of undergraduate students at the University of Buea. The effect of stereotype, aggression and prejudice presented in this paper provides an essential foundation that will allow a comprehensive examination of social relations and academic participations of under graduate students at the University of Buea.*

Keywords: Social relations, Academic participation,student support, Aggression, Prejudice, Stereotype, University of Buea.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social relations among the University of Buea students could have great implication for academic outcomes. Studies have been conducted on the issue of social relation but the context of the University of Buea has not been exhausted in the area of social relations. The indicators of social relations are; stereotype, aggression, and prejudice. While the indicators of academic participation are; answering questions in class, participating in group work and in co-curricular activities. Social relations are patterned human interactions that encompass relationships among individuals, informally organized groups, and formally organized groups, including the state. Modern day approaches to social relations are represented by individualists, Structuralist, and Institutionalist theoretical framework.Social relationships are special case of social relations that can exist without any communication taking place between the actors involved. Categorizing social interactions enables

observational and other social Sciences; there is a standing debate over the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior.

Conceptualizing And Contextualizing Issues of Social Relations and Academic Participation
Historically, social relations have been in the life activities, because in what so ever environment humans find themselves, they get into contact with others, thus social relations cannot be avoided even in our schools and classrooms of today. The concept of the teachers doing all of the talking in classrooms is in direct contrast to the philosophy that learning is primarily a social activity(Dewey, 1963, Lindeman, 1926) and the idea that the person who is doing all of the work is the person doing the learning (Hurst, 1998). Vacca and Vacca (2002) contend that we need to shift the burden of learning from teachers' shoulders to students.

One way for students to shoulder the responsibility for learning is for them to be the readers, writers, speakers, listeners and thinkers in the classroom through active engagement in social interaction with others (Alvermann&Phelps, 2005; Vacca and Vacca, & Mraz, 2011).Routman (2005) contends "students learn more when they are able to talk to one another and be actively involved". Student activities are an integral part of the school program, qualified students must be able to participate in any of the activities without regard of race, religion, natural origin. Generally approved by the academic administrators, activities should contribute to the educational objectives of the school should avoid interrupting instructional program. One purpose of student activities is to provide opportunities. For students to be involved in the life of the school, Students experience leadership opportunities that help them grow into well rounded adults. Activities expand interaction among students who are likely to interact with others who are different from them. Thus opportunities to experience diversity are enhanced. Some of the activities form an integral part and enabling all student participation and some are extra-curricular activities like student government, choral and theater activities. This goes a long way to facilitate social relations between students in an academic milieu.

Prejudice is an effective feeling towards a person based on their perceived group membership. The word is often used to refer to preconceived, usually unfavorable, evaluation of another person based on that person's political affiliation, sex, gender, other personal characteristics. Auestad (2015) defines prejudice as characterized by symbolic transfer of a value-laden meaning content onto a socially formed category and then on to individual.Gordon Allport (1954), in his classic work "The Nature of Prejudice" linked prejudice to categorical thinking. Allport claimed that prejudice is a natural and normal process for humans. According to him, the human mind must think with the aid of categories, once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudgment. We cannot possibly avoid this process.

Stereotypes constitute a person's set of expectations about a social groups characteristics, including traits, behaviors, and roles. They are the categorical associations perceivers make to group members based on their membership. Although cognitive in form, stereotypes are interlocked with affect and behavior.

Aggression is a forceful physical, verbal, or symbolic action which is either appropriate and self-protective (self-assertiveness) or inappropriate (hostile or destructive behavior). It may be directed outwardly at either the environment or another person, inwardly towards one's self, manifesting as depression, self-mutilation, or another negative response. It is a behavior that is intended to harm another individual who does not wish to be harmed (Baron&Richardson, 1994). Becauseit involves the perception of intent, what looks like aggression from one point of view may not look that way from another, and the same harmful behavior may or may not be considered aggressive depending on its intent. Social psychologists agree that aggression can be verbal as well as physical. Therefore, slinging insults at a friend is definitely aggressive, according to our definition, just as hitting someone is, physical aggression that involves harming others physically for instance hitting, kicking, stabbing, or shooting them. Nonphysical aggression is aggression that does not involve physical harm. Nonphysical aggression includes verbal aggression (Yelling, screaming, swearing, and name calling). And

rational or social aggression, which is defined as intentionally harming another person's social relationships, for instance, by gossiping about another person, excluding others from our friendship, or giving others the silent treatment (Crick&Grotpeter, 1995). Nonverbal aggression also occurs in the form of sexual, racial, and homophobic jokes and epithets, which are designed to cause harm to individuals.

II.   Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura (1977)
Albert Bandura's theory is focus on how people learn in a social context by observing and interacting with other people. According to Bandura, human behavior is learned through observations, imitation and modeling. With respect to his work, he carried out a doll experiment which he presented children with social models of new violent and nonviolent behavior towards a doll. The children who viewed the violent behavior tend to also demonstrate violence to the doll. Bandura(1977) states, learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. From observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. Social learning theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, an environmental influence. The component processes underlying observational learning are: Attention, Retention, Reproduction, and Motivation.

Educational implications of the Social Learning Theory
Students are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, friends within their peer group and lecturers at school. These models provide examples of behavior to observe and imitate, and the students tend to pay attention to some of these people and encode their behavior. At a later time they may imitate the behavior they have observed and they may do this regardless of whether the behavior is appropriate or not.

It has been found that academic adjustment, social adjustment, and emotional adjustment are dependent on their abilities in receiving socio- educational participation from supportive friends, families, teachers, and significant others (Weiner& Smith 1992). First year students experience difficulties in adapting academically, socially, emotionally, which significantly affect their academic participation. That's why first year students always receive services like;

Orientation during matriculation ceremonies, during matriculation, the Vice Chancellor orientates students on their code of conduct to guide them during their stay on campus; they are made to take the oath to be good students, creates their awareness on various campus facilities. Faculty or departmental orientation helps to provide informational support to facilitate student's adjustment. That is; they create awareness of campus facilities, where and how to table their problems or solve problems. They also get information on what is expected of them. Despite all these measures put in place, students still face a lot of problems in their academic participation.

With the use of the social learning theory, if students can flee from imitating bad behaviors, then aggression will not really be an issue in our classrooms of today or our school milieus. And if students can treat each other as equal in the classroom, the situation will not aggravate to cause stereotype, aggression and prejudice.

The Ecological Systems perspective of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1994)
This theory looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships that forms his or her environment. Bronfenbrenner's theory defines complex layers of environment, each having an effect on a child's development. This theory has recently been renamed "*bioecological systems theory*" to emphasize that a child's own biology is a primary environment fueling her development. Changes in any one layer will ripple

throughout other layers. To study a child's development then, we must look not only at the child and her immediate environment, but also at the interaction of the larger environment as well. The Theory consists of Macrosystem, Exosystem, Mesosystem, Microsystem. These systems comprise of family friends, working, individual, family, neighborhood, school, social services, social, cultural, historical influences. These structures are; the microsystem- this is the layer closest to the child and contains the structures with which the child has direct contact.

The microsystem encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with her immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Structures in the microsystem include; family, school, neighborhood, or childcare environments. The mesosystem- this layer provides the connection between the structures of the child's microsystem. The connection between the child's teacher and his parents may affect his beliefs and behavior, the child also affects the behavior and beliefs of his parents. The exosystem, this layer defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly. The structures in this layer impact the child's development by interacting with some structure in her microsystem. The macrosystem- this layer may be considered the outermost layer in the child's environment. While not being a specific framework, this layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws. The chronosystem- this system encompasses the dimension of time as it relates to a child's environment. Elements within this system can be either external, such as the timing of a parent's death, or internal, such as the physiological changes that occur with the aging of a child.

Educational Implications of Urie Bronfenbrenner Theory

Bronfenbrenner sees the instability and unpredictability of family life we've let our economy create as the most destructive force to a child's development (Addison, 1992). Children do not have the constant mutual interaction with important adults that is necessary for development. According to the ecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate microeystem break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of his environment.

The theory has dire implications for the practice of teaching. Knowing about the breakdown occurring within children's homes, is it possible for our educational system to make up for these deficiencies? It seems now that it is necessary for schools and teachers to provide stable, long-term relationships. Yet, Bronfenbrenner believes that the primary relationship needs to be with someone who can provide a sense of caring that is meant to last a lifetime. This relationship must be fostered by a person or people within the immediate sphere of the child's influence. Schools and teachers fulfill an important secondary role, but cannot provide the complexity of interaction that can be provided by primary adults. For the educational community to attempt a primary role is to help our society continue its denial of the real issue. The problems students and families face are caused by the conflict between the workplace and family life, not between families and schools. Schools and teachers should work to support the primary relationship and to create an environment that welcomes and nurtures families.

We can do this while we work to realize Bronfenbrenner's ideal of the creation of public policy that eases the work/family conflict (Henderson, 1995). It is in the best interest of our entire society to lobby for political and economic policies that support the importance of parent's roles in their children's development. Bronfenbrenner would also agree that we should foster societal attitudes that value work done on behalf of children at all levels, parents, teachers, extended family, mentors, work supervisors, legislators.

Statement Of The Problem

It is accepted and well known in all academic milieus that teaching and learning is a two way coin, reciprocal and give and take thing which means that the formal traditional ways to teaching where teaching and learning was teacher-centered where the teacher does all the talking while students just listen has been long forgotten. The students are to be actively involved in the teaching and learning process. It should be a student-centered process. This emphasizes the fact that the students should be actively involved and participate in the activities

that involves the teaching and learning process. This emphasize the fact that the students should be actively involved and participate in the activities that involves the teaching and learning process such as; class talk, assignments, group task, relating with friends. But the reverse is the case, students don't take part or involve themselves in school activities, they shy away from class talks, tasks and some don't even do their take home assignments nor relate with their friends concerning school activities. This has led to them not relating well with their school/ classmates, their teachers who are the facilitators of the learning process and their school environment, which therefore affects the way they relate with others in the school environment and also their academic progress which is an issue that the researchers sees it necessary to carry out a research on. It is to this effect that this study sought to investigate the effects of social relations and the academic participation of students in the University of Buea, Southwest Region of Cameroon.

Purpose Of The Study
- The main objective of the study was to find out the impact of social relations and academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea, SouthWest Region of Cameroon. Therefore, the study aimed to;
- To examine the effects of stereotypes on academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea.
- To investigate the effects of aggression on the academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea.
- To find out the effects of prejudice on the academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design
Based on the nature of the research objectives and questions, the research design adopted for this study was the correlational research design particularly the descriptive. This design was used for the study because the researcher aimed at collecting data on student's perception, opinions as concerned the phenomenon under investigation. Also, data was collected from a fewer group of students in the University of Buea selected for the study and the questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. This justifies the researcher's reason for using the survey research design.

Area of the Study
This study was caried out in the University of Buea, Fako Division, South West Region of Cameroon. Buea is the capital of the Southwest Region of Cameroon located at the foot of Mt Cameroon. We choosed this area for the study because it's a highly concentrated student area made up of students coming from different regions or areas to study in higher institutions. Students from these higher institute of learning requires a lot of resources to sail through their academic; they need accomodation, feeding, Morals, peer acceptance and to farmiliarise themselves with the environment. So we want to find out how parents, teachers, and peers relation can enhance students participation on campus and their academics.This area is threfore suitable for the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique
Participants for the study were undergraduate students of the University of Buea, selected at random. Two sampling techniques were used for this study that is the simple random sampling technique and convenient sampling techniques. The researcher employed or used the simple random sampling technique in selecting the number of students desired to work with from each of the department. The convenient sampling technique was also used in administering questionnaires to the students in the accessible Faculty. The convenient sampling technique is different from accidental and incidental sampling in that with the later ones, the initial sample size is not known meanwhile the former, the initial sample size must be known. This was the case in this study whereby the number of students to be sampled from each department was made known first and the researcher

had to give just the exact number of questionnaires to the students to solicit for their responses.

Instruments for Data Collection

In this study, the instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire specifically the structured questionnaire. This questionnaire consisted only of closed ended items designed using the four-point Liket scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was organized in three sections. Part one consists of the demographic information/profile of the students while, part two consists of the test items assessing the specific objectives of the study respectively as stated in chapter one.

Procedure

The researchers personally administered the instruments to the respondents (face to face) so as to reduce missing copies of instruments and to ensure confidentiality by making the students to know that their information will be purely for academic purposes. The researchers used one day to administer the instruments.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Table1: Showing the Demographic Data

Gender	No	Percentage%
Male	19	38%
Female	31	62%
TOTAL	**50**	**100%**

Table 1 above shows the distribution of gender with a total number of 19 males, giving a percentage of 38 and a total 31 females, giving a total of 62% thus making a total of 50 respondents. This gives a total of 100%.

Table 2: To examine the effects of stereotype on academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea.

Items	Stretched				Collapsed	
	Strong Agree (SA)	**Agree (A)**	**Disagree (D)**	**Strongly Disagree (SD)**	**SD&D**	**A&SA**
I do not aesily accept change brought by others, reason why I find it dificult to interact in class.	26% (13)	24% (12)	34% (17)	16% (8)	50% (25)	50% (25)
My opinion is always the best thus I careless about my classmates's opinion.	16% (8)	20% (10)	28% (14)	36% (18)	64% (32)	36% (18)
I am the only one to veto who adds to our group of friends hence I find it difficult to work with classmates whom I am not familiar with.	10% (5)	18% (9)	42% (21)	30% (15)	72% (36)	28% (14)
I am a rigid and inflexible person, which makes it very difficult for me to acceptchanges brought by my classmates.	6% (3)	24% (12)	46% (23)	24% (12)	70% (35)	30% (15)
I get threatened when others are appreciated, thus I always want to be the best in my class.	30% (15)	20% (10)	32% (16)	18% (9)	50% (25)	50% (25)
I am only open to my group of friends, thus I find it difficult to	12% (6)	24% (12)	40% (20)	24% (12)	64% (32)	36% (18)

associate with others.						
Total	**17% (50/300)**	**22% (65/300)**	**37% (111/300)**	**25% (74/300)**	**62% (185/300)**	**38% (115/300)**

From table 2 above, it can be seen that 38% 0f students agreed that stereotype affects their academic participation while 62% of students disagreed that stereotype has an effect on their academic participation.

Table 3: To investigate the effects of aggression on the academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea.

ITEMS	Stretched				Collapsed	
	Strongly Agree (SA)	**Agree (A)**	**Disagre e (D)**	**StrongLy Disagree (SD)**	**SD &D**	**SA&A**
I get into fight a little more than the average person, why I always stay calm in class.	26% (13)	26% (13)	28% (14)	26% (1o)	48% (28)	52% (26)
I can't help getting into an argument when people disagree with me, hence I don't participate in most class activities.	26% (13)	40% (20)	20% (10)	26% (7)	34% (17)	66% (33)
I get impatient when time scheduled is altered, thus I get angry working with classmates who are not time conscious.	8% (04)	28% (14)	34% (17)	8% (15)	64% (32)	36% (18)
I have trouble controlling my temper, as such I stay away from classmates who use fowl languages.	24% (12)	24% (12)	30% (15)	24% (11)	52% (26)	48% (24)
I frown when my personal belongings are not respected, thus the reason why I don't share my school materials with classmates.	18% (14)	20% (10)	40% (20)	28% (06)	52% (26)	48% (28)
When I am angry, I threaten and bully others as such most of my mates avoid me.	56% (28)	18% (9)	10% (5)	56% (8)	26% (14)	74% (37)
Total	**28% (84/300)**	**26% (78/300)**	**27% (81/300)**	**19% (57/300)**	**46% (162 /300)**	**54% (138/3 00)**

Table 3 above shows that 54% of respondents agreed that aggression has an effect on their academic participation while 46% of respondents disagreed that aggression has an effect on their academic participation.

Table 4: To find out the effects of prejudice on the academic participation of undergraduate students in the University of Buea.

Items	Stretched				Collapsed	
	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	SD&D	SA&A
I dislike some people when I meet them for the first time, hence most of my classmates see me as a snobbish person.	18% (9)	30% (15)	26% (13)	26% (13)	52% (26)	48% (24)
No one does anything better than me thus I always see my classmates as not being up to my level.	10% (5)	8% (4)	42% (21)	40% (20)	82% (41)	10% (9)
It is difficult appreciating other's giftedness, hence I question the giftedness and success of some of my classmates.	20% (10)	20% (10)	34% (17)	26% (13)	60% (30)	40% (20)
I am very selective in making friends, thus I have limited friends in school to interact with.	24% (12)	36% (18)	22% (11)	18% (9)	40% (20)	60% (30)
I always judge some of my classmates even without knowing them, therefore I don't get closer to understand them.	12% (6)	22% (11)	42% (21)	24% (12)	66% (33)	34% (17)
I don't devote time to know people around me, and so I careless about others.	14% (7)	22% (11)	36% (18)	28% (14)	64% (32)	36% (18)
Total	**16% (49/300)**	**23% (69/300)**	**34% (101/300)**	**27% (81/300)**	**61% (182/300)**	**39% (118/300)**

Table 4 above shows that 39% of respondents agreed that prejudice has an effect on their academic participation while 61% of respondents disagreed that prejudice has an effect on their academic participation.

Educational Implications Of The Study
The study would help teachers and educators to understand the different aspects of social relations and how they affect the academic participation of students either negatively or positively. Educators and teachers will understand how to handle students in class by learning how to avoid bias, also by learning how calm students in class whenever they become aggressive. This will help to improve the teaching and learning process.

Again, this study will be helpful to students because they will understand the negative things that cause none participate in class such as aggression, stereotype and prejudice. This would help them to understand why their academic participation has been eitherlow, average.
This study would also help students to know the individual differences that are brought into the classroom setting, thus helping them to know how to bridge the gap between themselves in order to make academic participation effective.

Teachers should take out time to emphasize on lessons concerning aggression, stereotype and prejudice. This will make students to understand and be able shape their attitudes and behaviors in the school and classroom environment thus, improving academic participation.

IV.　　RECCOMENDATIONS

Teachers should extinct negative behavior in class such as students disturbing or arguing during the lesson. This can be done through pointing one student in the argument group to stand infront of the class to explain why they are arguing for fear of being embarrassed the aggressive group will stop the argument.

The university authority should include social relation to be a course to one of the university required courses such as civics and ethics where aggression can be taught as a topic to make all students at the beginning level to get the teaching which can help to reduce aggressive behaviors in the school milieu and society.

Time slot should also be provided for counselors with the University of Buea to take time with students and educate them on the effect of aggression to their academics.

The university authority should give a greater grange of time for counselors to talk to students during orientation of new and returning students. This will help students to be able to manage their issues with friends and seek for counseling from any of the university counselor. This will help curb the aggressive nature of students in the academic environment thus enhancing academic participation.

Educating students on the effect of aggression on their academic participation, stereotype and prejudice should also be considered because looking at the findings of the study, the rate disagreeing on prejudice and stereotype as factors that affect academic participation is not really that significant which means that students are portraying stereotype and prejudice in the school environment to some extend

The study should also be conducted in other state university of Doula, Yaounde 1,2 and even in other private universities.

During orientation program of the new students, students should be encouraged on good team spirit skills which is establishing a good report among peers.

CONCLUSION

Following the findings from the study and the problem at hand, it was discovered from the indicators under study that aggression has a significant effect on the academic participation of undergraduate students within the University of Buea while the other two indicators which were stereotype and prejudice does not have a significant effect on the academic participation of undergraduate students at the University of Buea. Even though the results from stereotype and prejudice was negative, stereotype and prejudice weren't significantly absent.

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