



## The Moderating role of Self-efficacy on Coping Strategies as Predictors of Fear of Success among Undergraduate Students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Agbani

<sup>1</sup>Tobechukwu Rapuluchi Onwuekwem

<sup>2</sup>Anthonia Chigozie Nwatu

<sup>3</sup>Uche J. Aboh

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History

Received: 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2022

Revised: 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2022

Accepted: 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2022

#### Authors' Affiliation

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Department of Psychology  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
(FSSH)

Enugu State University of Science and  
Technology (ESUT) Agbani, Enugu State  
Nigeria

[toorapuluchi@gmail.com](mailto:toorapuluchi@gmail.com)

[tonia.chigozie@esut.edu.ng](mailto:tonia.chigozie@esut.edu.ng)

[toniaksly@yahoo.com](mailto:toniaksly@yahoo.com)

[james.aboh@esut.edu.ng](mailto:james.aboh@esut.edu.ng)

[anohabe@yahoo.com](mailto:anohabe@yahoo.com)

#### Keyword

**Coping Strategies**  
**Emotion-focused coping**  
**ESUT undergraduate students**  
**Fear of Success and Self-**  
**efficacy**

### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the moderating role of self-efficacy on coping strategies as predictors of fear of success among undergraduate students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Agbani. One hundred (100) participants (64 females and 36 males) between the age of 17-25 years (Mean =20.65 and Standard Deviation = 1.96) were drawn through multi-stage sampling techniques (simple random and purposive) from (ESUT), the study was cross-sectional in which Health and Daily Living Form: Adult Form B, General self-efficacy scale, and Fear of success scale were administered for data collection. Moderated hierarchical regression was used for data analysis. The result revealed that there is a positive statistically significant prediction of coping strategies ( $b = -1.09, t = 7.68, p < .001$ ) thus, only the emotion focused coping dimension of coping strategies negatively predicted fear of success. To conclude, ESUT undergraduate students and ESUT management should know that emotion focused coping aggravates the experience of fear of success thus, the need for adequate sensitization during year one orientation programs.*

## Introduction

Many students shared the belief that university education is a must in present Nigeria society, hence the struggle to enter and come out with flying colours as society celebrates paper qualification. There is no gain saying the indispensability of education (Ajayi, 2017). Academic success is an important goal for many people, for most students, academic success is based on maintaining a high grade point average (GPA) and receive recognition for their scholarly achievement, such as being placed on the honour roll (Gore et al., 2011) certain factors has made the struggle come out with a positive or negative outcome, one of which is fear of success. Fear is a fundamental sensation among humans which he has nurtured for his protection. Fear of success affects men, women, girls and boys equally. Fear of success is that which you wanted to do and bring to an end, despite all this you do not feel satisfied and happy about your goals (Fateme et al., 2015). To succeed in any field you must have self-esteem and self-respect, accept responsibilities and start a relationship with those who have succeeded and reached their goals (Fateme et al., 2015).

Yılmaz (2018) defined fear of success as the behaviours of avoiding success resulting from the anxieties of that those who overwork are negatively evaluated, the works of very successful individuals are sabotaged by others, and so resulting in the formation of low goals, the tendency towards easy tasks, the diminution of attainment with the worry that the interpersonal relations of highly successful people are interrupted. While success is greatly expected to be desired by all, there are reasons why people may be afraid of succeeding. It is important to recognize is that people often don't fear the success itself. Instead, their fear is centred on the potential consequences of success. Because expectations of success are often based on the idea that achieving your goals means making sacrifices or enduring losses, it is perhaps not surprising that people may be wary of what success might ultimately cost them.

Students fear success, which is common among those who are worried about the responsibilities they will face if they succeed or the ways their lives

might change once they succeed (NSHSS, 2021). They might fear college life or a difficult career if they should succeed. Sometimes students are afraid of leaving others, like family members or friends, behind if they succeed (NSHSS, 2021). Guides (2019) postulated that all irrational fears are maintained and strengthened by avoidance strategies, subtle mental and behavioural habits one engage in that send signal to the brain that the individual is afraid. While it feels relieving in the short-term to avoid things that frighten us, in the long-run we are teaching our brains to be afraid of something that it's truly dangerous, this is how all anxieties work, and fear of success is no different (Guides, 2019). However, it is very important to unravel coping strategies necessary in fear or success and the role of self-efficacy in enhance good coping during fear of success.

Coping is an assessment process designed to respond to external and internal challenges. Coping also refers to how people try to manage traumatic events or everyday stressful situations; it is considered a process that arises in situations that strongly test the resources of an individual (Cattellino et al. 2021). Coping plays a pivotal role in adolescence that is a particular period during which individuals deal with new challenges that can represent, at the same time, opportunities for growth or sources of uncertainty and stress; such challenges are oriented to important developmental tasks, such as identity construction, autonomy acquisition, and life goals, all components of psychological well-being (Mayordomo-Rodríguez et al., 2015). Each situation requires the use of a specific coping strategy. In many cases, managing the situations exceeds the resources the individual has. When facing a difficult situation, we evaluate how threatening or challenging the situation is according to our own goals and resources. And then we activate our resources to handle it and apply coping strategies. Takács et al. (2021) distinguish several coping strategies: Problem-focused coping is activated when the situation is evaluated as changeable and controllable and we strive to focus on the problem. Problem-focused coping strategies can be very effective for stress relief; often a small change is all that's required to make a huge shift in

how you feel. For one thing, one change can lead to other changes, so that a chain reaction of positive change is created, opportunities are opened up, and life changes significantly. While emotion-focused strategies are activated when the situation appears unchangeable and we seek to reduce our negative feelings. Sometimes there's nothing you can do to change a situation, but often you'll find an opportunity to take action and actually change the circumstances you face (Takác et al., 2021). These strategies are great to use in situations where you have little ability to control what happens, and you need to see your stressors as a challenge instead of a threat. Hence, some research has found that people who have a fear of success also tend to have low self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs and ability to achieve their goals (Yilmaz, 2018). The term self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to complete a task or achieve a goal (Hopper, 2021). This system plays a major role in how we perceive situations and how we behave in response to different situations. Self-efficacy is an essential part of this self-system. In other words, our ability to achieve a goal or complete a task depends on whether we think we can do it (self-efficacy), and whether we think it will have good results (outcome expectancy). Self-efficacy has important effects on the amount of effort individuals apply to a given task. Someone with high levels of self-efficacy for a given task will be resilient and persistent in the face of setbacks, while someone with low levels of self-efficacy for that task may disengage or avoid the situation. For example, a student who has a lower level of self-efficacy for math might avoid signing up for challenging math classes. The basic assumption relating to self-efficacy is that individuals are more likely to take actions that they feel they can do and less likely to perform actions that they think they cannot do (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Redmond, 2015; Schunk, 1995; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2002; Zimmerman, 2000; Zulkosky, 2009). High self-efficacy has a protective role in encountering stressful situations and combating negative situations. In summary, when individuals have high self-efficacy, their motivation is also

known to be high (Pajares & Schunk, 2001; Zhou & Kam, 2017).

At this juncture, there is need to understand the role of self-efficacy in boosting the coping strategies adopted by the students in relation to fear of success. Students who want to succeed are often, understandably, afraid of failure. Similarly, parents of students are afraid of seeing their children fall prey to academic failure, since so much of today's modern society seems to depend on academic success for upward mobility (NSHSS, 2021). Of course, academic failure does not always depend on the student alone. Most of students find themselves in situations that thwart their failure, often due to socioeconomic status and issues with education inequality (NSHSS, 2021). The essential question then becomes, how do students get in the way of their own success? Hence the research questions:

1. Will coping strategies independently and jointly predict fear of success?
2. Will self-efficacy significantly predict fear of success?
3. Will Self-efficacy significantly moderate coping strategy as a predictor of fear of success?

### **Purpose of the study**

The aims of the study are stated below:

1. To examine whether coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping) will jointly and independently significantly predict fear of success.
2. To verify if self-efficacy will significantly predict fear of success.
3. To determine whether self-efficacy will significantly moderate coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping) as a predictor of fear of success.

The study adopted Mainstream Acknowledgement of fear of success theory (Horner, 1970, 1972) which concluded that women have "a motive to avoid success or a 'fear of success'". They feared the negative consequences for their succeeding in traditionally male domains. Such fears are based on societal expectations. Horner (1970, 1972)

identified fear of success as a psychological barrier to women's participation and advancement in the workforce and in society at large (Horner 1970, 1972). Horner's findings were considered as a psychological explanation for women's failure to achieve success at the same level as men in society (Eagle, 2003). Although this theory has been criticized for discriminating against men, it is still ideal in explaining fear of success, for instance, people fear being successful as a result of the possible outcome of such success mostly based on societal expectations. Undergraduate students may not be different from the above assertion by (Horner, 1970, 1972) in terms of the reason why some fear being successful.

In Nigeria for example, many people go to school without being sure of the benefits their success in school will bring to their lives such as finding good job immediately after higher education. This kind of fear just like other fears may not be addressed without proper coping skills. The ability to use necessary coping strategies in the face of fear of success may also depend on one's perceived ability (self-efficacy) which may in turn help to reduce or eliminate fear of success. When the individual learns to believe in his or her ability to accomplish a task it will motivate him or her to adopt a perfect coping strategies to handle fear of success. The ability of an individual to use either problem or emotion focused coping strategies may also depend on the person's belief regarding his/her abilities (self-efficacy). Most of the past studies such as (Shaeffer, 2015; Stanculescu, 2013; Bramante, 2015; Yilmaz, 2018 and Nelson et al., 2013) found that self-efficacy is related to fear of success. Although, there seem to be dearth of report on coping strategies and fear of success since (Sagar & Stoeber, 2009) found an association between fear of failure and coping strategies, hence the need for this study.

## Hypotheses

The hypotheses stated below were tested:

1. Coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping) will independently and jointly predict fear of success.

2. Self-efficacy will significantly predict fear of success.
3. Self-efficacy will significantly moderate coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping) as a predictor of fear of success.

## Method

### Participants

One hundred (100) undergraduate students from Enugu State University of Science and Technology comprising 64 females and 36 males with age range of 17-25 years, mean age of 20.65 and standard deviation of 1.96 were selected as participants with the aid of multi-stage (simply random and purposive) sampling techniques. Twenty (20) students were drawn from law, thirty (30) from Social Sciences and Humanities, twenty-seven (27) from Management Sciences and twenty-three (23) from Applied Natural Sciences faculties. Inclusion Criteria includes: participants must be students undergoing an undergraduate program in any of the Faculties in ESUT Agbani, participants must be regular undergraduate students. Exclusion Criteria include: Participants that do not consent to partake in the study, None students, staff, postgraduate students and part-time students.

### Instruments

Three sets of instruments were used, namely:

#### *The Health and Daily Living Form (HDL): Adult Form B (Moos et al., 1990)*

This scale measures five categories of coping strategies namely: Logical analysis, Information seeking, Problem solving, Emotional discharge and Affective regulation. These can be grouped into two namely: Problem-Focused and Emotion-Focused strategies. While the logical analysis, information seeking and problem-solving items constitute problem-focused strategies, emotional discharge and emotional regulation form the emotion-focused subscale. The items in the inventory were rated on a four-point scale, thus: rarely = 1, sometimes = 2, often = 3 and always = 4. Those constituting problem-focused strategies have a sum total of 20-items while emotion-focused strategies have 12-items for each subscale.

### Scoring/Samples

The scale HDL was used to categorize participants into problem-focused strategies and emotion-focused strategies. For classification, the 20-items that constitute the problem-focused subscale was scored from 1-4 while 12-items of the emotion-focused strategies were scored in the reverse order, 4-1. As such the highest score in problem-focused plus the lowest score on emotion-focused items placed a participant as problem-focused, while the highest score on the emotion-focused plus the lowest score on the problem-focused placed a participant as emotion-focused. For instance, highest score on PF = 80, lowest score = 20; highest score on EF = 48, lowest score = 12. Meanwhile, problem-focused category =  $80+12 = 92$ , while emotion-focused category =  $48+20 = 68$ . Therefore, below 68 is emotion-focused and above 68 is problem-focused.

#### **Reliability/Validity**

A pilot study conducted with 30 undergraduate students selected from university of Nigeria, Enugu campus (UNEC) in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State, yielded a reliability Cronbach alpha coefficient of .86 in problem focused and .976 in emotional focused respectively.

**General self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer, & Jerusalem, 1995):** The questionnaire has 10 items based on the Likert scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 is never, and 10 is always (Babler & Schwarzer, 1996; Sanjuán et al., 2000). This unidimensional scale assesses general self-efficacy in coping with stress. This scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 and a high validity index and has been used in numerous studies beforehand (Sanjuán et al., 2000; Espada et al., 2012). A pilot study conducted with 30 undergraduate students selected from University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC) in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State with the aid of purposive sampling techniques, yielded a reliability Cronbach alpha coefficient of .91.

#### **Fear of Success Scale (FOSS) (Zuckerman & Allison, 1976)**

It consists of 27, seven-point agree-disagree statements which describe (a) the benefits of

success, (b) the cost of success, and (c) the respondent's attitudes toward success when compared to other alternatives. For approximately half the items, agreement is keyed as high fear of success; for the remainder, disagreement is keyed as high fear of success. The Internal reliability of the FOSS is .69 for males and .73 for females. Concurrent validity measures of the FOSS with Mehrabian's Achievement Motivation measure. (1968) indicated a significant negative relationship between FOSS and achievement motivation (Zuckerman & Allison, 1976). Scores on the FOSS measure can range from 27 to 189; high raw scores indicate a greater fear of success than low scores. A pilot study conducted with 30 undergraduate students selected from University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC) in Enugu South Local Government Area of Enugu State with the aid of purposive sampling techniques, yielded a reliability Cronbach alpha coefficient of .88

#### **Procedure**

The researchers obtained necessary approvals from the faculty representatives to draw some of the students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Agbani as the study participants. Multi-stage sampling techniques method was adopted by the researchers to select participants from the target population. Students were clustered according to their faculties before simple random sampling techniques (balloting) was apply to pick the four faculties (Law, Social sciences and Humanities, Management Sciences and Applied Natural Sciences) used for this research, while students were selected with the aid of purposive sampling techniques. Twenty (20) students from law, thirty (30) from Social Sciences and Humanities, twenty-seven (27) from Management Sciences and twenty-three (23) from Applied Natural Sciences faculties. The researchers employed undergraduate students' faculties' executives as research assistants who help in distributing and retrieving the questionnaires. Only the sampled students who gave their consent to the study took part in the research. One hundred and thirty copies of the questionnaires were distributed, one hundred and fourteen were returned, five bears same initials, five were wrongly responded to, and

while four were incomplete which sum the numbers well responded to one hundred which was used for analysis.

### Design and Statistics

The study adopted cross-sectional survey design; while moderated hierarchical regression analysis was adopted based on one predictor variable coping strategies with two dimensions (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping), one criterion variable (fear of success) and one moderating variable (self-efficacy). The analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 25 and also Process procedure for SPSS version 4.0 (Model 1)(Hayes, 2022).

### Results

**Table 1: A Correlation Matrix between Age, Gender, Coping strategies, Self-efficacy and Fear of Success.**

		Mean	SD	FOSS	Age	Gender	HDL	GSE	PFC	EFC
Pearson Correlation	FOSS	93.60	52.86	1						
	Age	20.65	1.96	.021	1					
	Gender	1.64	.48	-.259**	-.060	1				
	HDL	86.20	29.91	.633*	.071	-.244**	1			
	GSE	27.56	7.44	-.028	-.047	.068	-.088	1		
	PFC	55.30	32.34	.700*	.102	-.234**	.893*	-.068	1	
	EFC	30.44	11.95	-.415*	-.010	.155	-.013	.004	-.362*	1

Note: \*\* =  $P < .01$ , \* =  $P < .001$ , SD = standard deviation, FOSS = fear of success, HDL = Health and Daily Living (coping strategies), GSE = General Self-efficacy, PFC = Problem focused coping, EFC = Emotion focused coping, Gender = 1 (male) and 2 (female), Age = 1 (Adolescents) and 2 (Adults).

Table 1 demonstrates the correlation matrix. Negative correlations between gender and fear of success  $r(100) = -.259$ ,  $p < .01$  and emotion focused coping and fear of success  $r(100) = -.415$ ,  $p < .001$  were observed. Additionally, there was also positive correlation between coping strategies and fear of success  $r(100) = .633$ ,  $p < .001$ , problem focused coping also yielded positive correlation with fear of success  $r(100) = .700$ ,  $p < .001$ . Furthermore, coping strategies  $r(100) = -.244$ ,  $p < .01$ , correlated negatively with fear of success, problem focused coping correlated negatively with fear of success  $r(100) = -.234$ ,  $P < .01$ , while coping strategies correlated positively with problem focused coping  $r(100) = .893$ ,  $P < .001$ . However self-efficacy did not correlate with fear of success  $r(100)$ ,  $-.028$ ,  $P > .05$ . To investigate the extent to which demographic variables in this study (gender and age) covariates with fear of success, how coping strategies predicted fear of success and also how self-efficacy moderates the relationship between coping strategies and fear of success, a moderated regression analysis was conducted.

**Table 2: Moderation Coefficient table on the moderating role of self-efficacy in coping strategies as predictors of fear of success among undergraduate students.**

<b>R</b>	<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>MSE</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>P</b>
.66	.44	1655.95	14.61	5.00	94.00	.00
<b>Model</b>	<b>Coeff.</b>	<b>Se</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
Constant	131.94	46.45	2.84	.01	39.72	224.17
Coping Strategies	1.09	.14	7.68	.00	.81	1.37
Self-efficacy	.29	.55	.53	.60	-.81	1.39
Interaction	-.04	.02	-1.96	.05	-.08	.001
Age	-.99	2.10	-.47	.64	-5.17	3.18
Gender	-11.31	8.78	-1.29	.20	-28.75	6.12

a. Dependent Variable: Fear of Success

Table 2 shows the moderating role of self-efficacy in coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping) and fear of success. Also, the table showed gender and age as covariate variables in fear of success. Only coping strategies had a positive statistically significant prediction of fear of success ( $b = -1.09$ ,  $t = 7.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hence, the first hypothesis which stated that coping strategies will independently and jointly predict fear of success was partially accepted, thus only emotion focused coping dimension of coping strategies negatively predicted fear of success. Self-efficacy did not significantly predict fear of success ( $b = .29$ ,  $t = .53$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Again, the second hypothesis which stated that self-efficacy will predict fear of success was rejected. Further, self-efficacy failed to statistically moderate the positive relationship between coping strategies and fear of success ( $b = -.04$ ,  $t = -1.96$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Also, the third hypothesis which stated that self-efficacy will moderate the positive relationship found between coping strategies and fear of success was rejected. The two control variables (age and gender) failed to statistically predict fear of success ( $b = -.99$ ,  $t = -.47$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $b = -11.31$ ,  $t = -1.29$ ,  $p > .05$ ) respectively. All the variables, coping strategies, self-efficacy, interaction of coping strategies, gender and age accounted for  $R = .66$  ( $R^2 = 43.74\%$ ) of variation in fear of success and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(5,94) = 14.61$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In order to ascertain the roles of the dimensions of coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping), a hierarchical regression analysis was done.

**Table 3: A table providing a summary of the hierarchical regression analysis between coping strategies (problem focused coping and emotion focused coping) on fear of success.**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	137.005	58.825		2.329	.022		
	AGE	.151	2.655	.006	.057	.955	.996	1.004
	GENDER	-28.366	10.765	-.259	-2.635	.010	.996	1.004
2	(Constant)	30.250	51.937		.582	.562		
	AGE	-.742	2.131	-.027	-.348	.729	.992	1.009
	GENDER	-12.496	8.891	-.114	-1.406	.163	.937	1.068
	HDL	1.078	.144	.610	7.503	.000	.932	1.072
	GSE	.225	.561	.032	.402	.689	.989	1.012
3	(Constant)	68.680	46.082		1.490	.140		
	AGE	-.685	1.862	-.025	-.368	.714	.973	1.028
	GENDER	-5.072	7.868	-.046	-.645	.521	.895	1.117
	HDL	1.219	.410	.690	2.972	.004	.086	11.657
	GSE	.219	.486	.031	.451	.653	.987	1.013
	PFC	-.126	.403	-.077	-.312	.756	.076	13.150
	EFC	-1.890	.493	-.427	-3.830	.000	.371	2.695

a. Dependent Variable: FOSS

**Note:** For step 1:  $R = .259$   $R^2 = .067$   $\Delta R^2 = .048$ ,  $p < .05$ ; for step 2:  $R = .644$   $R^2 = .414$   $\Delta R^2 = .390$ ,  $p < .001$ ; for step 3:  $R = .755$   $R^2 = .571$   $\Delta R^2 = .543$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see appendix E for Model Summary Table.

The hierarchical multiple regression revealed that at step1, gender contributed significantly to the regression model,  $F(2,97) = 3.495$ ,  $p < .05$  see table 4 below. The relationship between variables ( $R = .259$ ) accounted for approximately 07% ( $\Delta R^2 = 04\%$ ) of the variance in fear of success scores. Although, gender had a negative statistically significant impact,  $\beta = -28.366$ ,  $t(100) = 2.635$ ,  $p < .01$ . Adding step 2 to the regression model accounted for 41.4% ( $\Delta R^2 = 39\%$ ) of variation in fear of success and this change in  $R^2$  was significant,  $F(4,95) = 16.802$ ,  $p < .001$  see table 4 below and the relationship between these variables were strong ( $R = .644$ ). However, of the two dimensions of the predictor variable only emotion focused coping was a significant negative predictor of fear of success  $\beta = -1.219$ ,  $t(100) = -3.830$ ,  $p < .001$ ; which accounted for 57.1% ( $\Delta R^2 = 54\%$ ) of variation in fear of success when the two dimensions of the predictor variable were added in step 3  $F(6,93) = 20.605$ ,  $p < .001$ . Thus, problem focused coping dimension of coping strategies did not statistically predict fear of success  $\beta = -.126$ ,  $t(100) = -.312$ ,  $p > .05$ .



**Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) summary table the moderating role of self-efficacy in coping strategies and fear of success.**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18595.370	2	9297.685	3.495	.034 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	258058.630	97	2660.398		
	Total	276654.000	99			
2	Regression	114627.692	4	28656.923	16.802	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	162026.308	95	1705.540		
	Total	276654.000	99			
3	Regression	157886.122	6	26314.354	20.605	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Residual	118767.878	93	1277.074		
	Total	276654.000	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Fear of Success (FOSS)

b. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Age

c. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Age, GSE, HDL

d. Predictors: (Constant), Gender, Age, GSE, HDL, EFC, PFC

## Summary of Results

The findings were summarized as follow:

1. There is a positive statistically significant prediction of coping strategies thus, only the emotion focused coping dimensions of coping strategies negatively predicted fear of success., thus, the first hypothesis was partially accepted.
2. Self-efficacy failed to predict fear of success, hence, the second hypothesis was rejected.
3. Finally, self-efficacy failed to moderate the positive relationship found between coping strategies and fear of success. Hence, the third hypothesis was rejected.
4. One the two demographic variables (gender) which served as covariates or control variable negatively predicted fear of success.

## Discussion

The present research investigated the moderating role of self-efficacy in coping strategies and fear of success. The findings illustrated that coping strategies jointly and positively predicted fear of success, thus, only emotion focused coping dimension of coping strategies independently and negatively predicted fear of success, and therefore, the first hypothesis was partially accepted. This implies that high score in coping strategies depicts high score in fear of success. Again, the negative prediction of emotion focused coping dimension of coping strategies portrays that low score in coping strategies which represents emotion focused coping brings about fear of success. Those who use

emotion focused coping are the ones who have fear of success.

The result obtained agreed with the work of Sagar et al. (2010), which theorised that coping strategies independently and jointly predicted fear of success. The result shows that for a student to overcome fear of success, problem focus has to be adopted. It shows emotional focus is not a strong coping strategy to adopt when faced with fear of success, also both problem and emotional focus can be adopted together to help overcome fear of success. Therefore, it is interesting to note that the findings of the present study were consistent with the literature above, thus this study is very necessary because although one of the studies sampled

Engineering students (Nelson et al., 2013), it seems there is none of such studies in Nigeria.

The findings demonstrated that self-efficacy did not predict fear of success hence, the second hypothesis which stated that “self-efficacy will predict fear of success” was rejected. This means that for undergraduate students’ to have high self-efficacy or not, it does not affect the students’ fear of success. Separate studies by (Bramante, 2015; Stanculescu, 2013) was not in line with the above findings as they found that self-efficacy predicted fear of success, one of the studies found that self-efficacy negatively and statistically predicted fear of success. The student is very necessary since the researchers did not sample students in their study which made the findings of this work relevant as it addressed undergraduate students. The findings further revealed that self-efficacy failed to moderate coping strategies in fear of success. Actually, the third hypothesis which stated that “self-efficacy will moderate coping strategies in fear of success” was rejected. This implies that self-efficacy did not interact with coping strategies in undergraduate students’ fear of success. This shows self-belief of accomplishing a task along with coping strategies cannot effectively assist the ESUT undergraduate students to submerge fear of success. This result shows that self-efficacy is not an important variable that can help the students to cope with fear of success, and that presence of fear of success along with coping strategies can propel the students to look beyond the fear to succeed, through third variable certainly not self-efficacy because it did not strengthen the positive relationship found between coping strategies and fear of success. This study is again very necessary since none of the past studies reviewed in this work used self-efficacy as a moderator.

### **Demographic variables/control variables**

The current findings revealed that whilst age had no correlation with fear of success, gender had a negative relationship with fear of success. The findings suggested that male undergraduate students experience fear of success more than female undergraduate students. However, the two control variables did not independently predict fear of

success. Although, it was observed that gender had an indirect effect on fear of success. This is because gender was significant at step 1 of hierarchical regression analysis but when the predictor variable (coping strategies) and the moderating variable (self-efficacy) were added in step 2, gender ceased to be statistically significant predictor of fear of success.

### **Implications of the findings**

The present study enhanced knowledge surrounding coping strategies, self-efficacy, gender and fear of success, and shed light upon these areas for future examination. Understanding the processes and influences within fear of success is of paramount importance as fear of success disorder seems to be a predominant mental health problem, among undergraduate students of ESUT. Thus, the findings of this study have theoretical, empirical and practical implications. Theoretically, the findings of this study have given credence to the theoretical framework of the study, social learning theory of Bandura (1977) which postulates that the learning of fears does not occur simply through impersonal associations with events but is moderated by human interactions and through created expectations. The emphasis is that fear is learnt and acquired and it can also be unlearned, when an individual learns to accommodate fear of the unknown, the person tends to be scared to try new ideas. The individual learns to cope with stress through past experience, and from how others manage to handle their stress. Once an individual learns to be emotional towards issues, he or she tends to employ the emotional coping strategies to solve the problem which predisposes the person to have fear of success.

Empirically, the findings of this study align with earlier findings (e.g. Nelson et al., 2013; Sagar et al., 2010). Practically, ESUT management should include a sensitization program during the year one orientation programs on the danger of using emotion focused coping as it aggravates fear of success. Also, ESUT undergraduate students should be educated during the year orientation program about their vulnerability to fear of success than their female counterparts. This sensitization if

carried out very well may reduce or eliminate the experience of fear of success.

### Limitations of the findings

Many issues militated against this research work, one of such is the indiscriminate calling for sit at home by none state authors which reduces the days at which students come to school. More students would have participated assuming there was no continues calling for sit at home.

Above all, self-report measure was used in obtaining data from the participants at one point in time and this might have causal social desirability and fake responses thus, the need for missed design other than cross-sectional design in subsequent studies. Also, generalization of the findings of this study should be done with caution because only ESUT undergraduate students took part in this study and somehow affected the external validity of the study.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should investigate the predictor variable and the moderating variable in relation to different course of study and year of study to allow for a more representative exploration within the fear of success and undergraduate students.

Other designs such as factorial could be used to eliminate or reduce the effect of faking since more control will be exerted. Future research should widen the scope of the study to include all other tertiary institutions and also post graduate students across various states in Nigeria even those in diaspora in order to enhance generalization among Nigerian undergraduate students. Consequently, future research should further explore this effect perhaps by conducting mediation analyses to be more certain of these assertions especially to use gender as a mediator variable.

### Summary and Conclusion

To conclude, the current study highlighted evidence establishing relationships between the predictor variable of coping strategies, emotion focused coping and gender on the criterion variable of fear of success. Implications for future research were proposed in order to deliver a more comprehensive and in-depth examination into this psychological

field. Coping strategies yielded a positive prediction of fear of success, however, only the emotion focused coping that yielded a negative and statistically predicted fear of success among ESUT undergraduate students. Self-efficacy failed to predict fear of success. Also, self-efficacy failed to moderate coping strategies in fear of success among undergraduate students. Further, one of the demographic variables in this study (gender) yielded a statistically negative prediction of fear of success, hence ESUT male undergraduate students experience fear of success more than their female counterparts. On a final note, coping strategies positively and statistically predicted fear of success though, only the emotion focused coping dimension yielded a negative and statistically predicted fear of success. ESUT undergraduate students and ESUT management should know that emotion focused coping aggravates the experience of fear of success thus, the need for adequate sensitization during year one orientation programs.

### References

- Ajayi, K.(2017). Global Trends And Emerging Issues In Teacher Education In Nigeria. Keynote Paper Delivered at The 2nd Induction Ceremony into The Teaching Profession By Teachers' Registration Council Of Nigeria (TRCN) Held at Faculty of Education, Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye in January 2017.
- Babler, J. & Schwarzer, R. (1996). Evaluacion de la autoeficacia: Adaptacion Espanola de la escala de autoeficacia general (Measuring generalized self-beliefs: A Spanish adaptation of the General Self-Efficacy scale). *Ansiedad y Estrés*, 2(1), 1-8.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A., & Schunk, D. H. (1981). Cultivating Competence, Self-Efficacy, and Intrinsic Interest through Proximal Self-Motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, 586-598. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.41.3.586>

- Bramante, A. (2015). Correlation between self-esteem, self-efficacy, personality, fear of success, and self-defeating behaviours of performing artists (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI No. 3706727)
- Cattelino, E., Testa, S., Calandri, E., Fedi, A., Gattino, S., Graziano, F., Rollero, C., & Begotti, T. (2021). Self-efficacy, subjective well-being and positive coping in adolescents with regard to Covid-19 lockdown. *Current Psychology (New Brunswick, N.j.)*, 1 - 12.
- Eagle, J. (2003). 'Fear of Success' Revisited: A replication of Martina Horner's Study 30 Years Later. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Educational Research in Chicagi, IL, April 21-25 2003. (Recovered from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> January 2006).
- Espada, J. P., Gorizalvez, M. T., Orgiles, M. & Carballo, J. L. (2012). Validation of the general self-efficacy scale with Spanish adolescents. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 10 (1): 355-370.
- Fatemeh, B., Soheila, H., Maryam, K., et al. (2015) Efficacy of Tenofovir Disoproxil Fumarate Therapy in Nucleoside-Analogue Naive Iranian Patients Treated for Chronic Hepatitis B. *Hepatitis Monthly*, 15, e25749.
- Gore, J. S., Wilburn, K. R., Treadway, J. R. & Plaut, V. C. (2011). "Regional collectivism in Appalachia and Academic Attitudes." *Cross-cultural Research* 45: 376-398.
- Guides, I. N. (2019). *Fear of Success: How It Works and What to Do About It*. Anxiety. Nickwignall.
- Hopper, E. (2021). *Understanding Self-Efficacy*. <https://www.thoughtco.com/self-efficacy-4177970>
- Horner, M. S. (1970). Femininity and Successful Achievement: A Basic inconsistency. In J. M. Bardwick, E. Douvan, M. S. Horner, & D. Gutmann (Eds.), *Feminine Personality and Conflict*. Belmont: Brooks/ Cole Publishing Company.
- Horner, M. S. (1972). Toward an Understanding of Achievement-Related Conflicts in Women. *Journal of Social Issues*, 28(2), 157-175.
- Mayordomo-Rodriguez, T., Melendez, J. C., Vigour, P. & Sales-Galen, A. (2015). Coping Strategies as Predictors of Well-Being in Youth Adult. *Social Indicators Research* 122 (2): 479-489.
- Mehrabian, A. (1968). *An analysis of personality theories*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Moos, R., Cronkite, R. C. & Finney, J. W. (1990). *Health and Daily Living from Manual Social Ecology Laboratory, Veterans Administration and Stanford Medical Centers*.
- National Society of High School Scholars (2021). Overcoming Fear Of Academic Failure: Reasons Why Students Fail Vs. Thrive. Unpublished manuscript
- Nelson, K. L., Newman, D. N., McDaniel, J. R. & Buboltz, W. C. (2013). Gender Difference in Fear of Failure amongst Engineering Students. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Vol. 3* No. 16.
- Pajares, F. & Schunk, D. H. (2001). Self-beliefs and school success: Self-efficacy, self-concept, and school achievement. In R. Riding & S. Rayner (Ed.), *Perception*. London: Ablex Publishing
- Redmond, B. F. (2015). *Self-Efficacy and Social Cognitive Theory*. Retrieved from <https://wikispaces.psu.edu>
- Sagar, S. S., & Stoeber, J. (2009). Perfectionism, fear of failure, and affective responses to success and failure: the central role of fear of experiencing shame and embarrassment. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 31(5), 602-27. doi:10.1123/jsep.31.5.602
- Sanjuán, P., Pérez, A. M., & Bermúdez, J. (2000). Escala de autoeficacia general: datos psicométricos de la adaptación para población española. *Psicothema*, 12(2), 509-513.
- Schunk, D. H. (1995). Self-efficacy, motivation, and performance. *Journal of Applied Sport*

*Psychology*, 7(2), 112-137.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10413209508406961>

- Schwarzer, R. & Jerusalem, M. (1995). Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale. In J. Weinman, S. Wright, & M. Johnston, *Measures in health psychology: A user's portfolio, Causal and control beliefs* (pp. 35-37). Windsor, UK: NFER-NELSON.
- Sheaffer, Z., (2015). Do Fear of Success and Work Family Conflict Adversely Impact Affective Commitment: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Intrinsic Motivation, 2015 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings, (2015).
- Stajkovic, A. D. & Luthans, F. (2002). *Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy: Implications for motivation theory and practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258995495>
- Stanculescu, E. (2013). University students' fear of success from the perspective of positive psychology. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 78, 728-732. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.04.384
- Takács, R., Takács, S., T., Kárász, J., Horváth, Z. & Oláh, A. (2021). Exploring Coping Strategies of Different Generations of Students Starting University. *Front. Psychol.* 12:740569. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.740569
- Yilmaz, H. (2018). Fear of success and life satisfaction in terms of self-efficacy. *University Journal of Educational Research*. 6(6):1278-1285. doi:10.13189/ujer.2018.060619
- Zhou, M. & Kam, C. C. S. (2017). Trait procrastination, self-efficacy and achievement goals: The mediation role of boredom coping strategies, *Educational Psychology*, 37(7), 854-872.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Self-Efficacy: An essential motive to learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25(1), 82-91, <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1016>
- Zuckerman, M., & Allison, S. N. (1976). An objective measure of fear of success: Construction and validation. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 40(4), 422-430. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4004\\_12a](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4004_12a)
- Zulkosky, K. (2009). *Self-Efficacy: A Concept Analysis*. Journal Compilation, Wiley.

**Open Access:** This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).