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PARENTAL SUPPORT AND RESILIENT BEHAVIOUR AMONG EMERGING ADULT STUDENTS IN CAMEROON STATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study examined relationships between parental support and resilience among emerging adult students in Cameroon State Universities. It was predicated on the understanding that university emerging adult students face numerous challenges during their transition to adulthood, necessitating specific capabilities to achieve their life objectives. It was hypothesized that parental support could serve as a fundamental framework for developing resilient behaviour among emerging adult students in universities. The study employed a mixed-methods approach with a concurrent nested design, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative elements. The sample comprised of 537 emerging adult students strategically selected from four State Universities, with selection criteria based on Cameroon diverse climatic and cultural landscapes. Data collection was facilitated by questionnaires, and the analysis incorporated both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The descriptive findings revealed compelling evidence regarding parental support patterns. A substantial majority (86.0%) of emerging adults reported receiving parental support, yielding a mean score of 3.34 on a 4-point scale. Conversely, a minority (14.0%) indicated an absence of parental support. The inferential analysis, conducted using Spearman's rho correlation, demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between parental support and resilient behaviour (R-value = 0.358**, p-value = 0.000 < 0.05). The findings suggests that resilient behaviour among emerging adult students strengthens with increased parental support and diminishes with decreased support. They emphasize the pivotal role of family dynamics in shaping resilience, suggesting that parental involvement serves as both a protective and a catalyst for fostering adaptability and perseverance in emerging adult students. Based on these, recommendations emphasized the critical role of parental engagement since their support enhances resilience. Parents are advised to prioritize quality time with their children, provide both emotional and physical support, include them in decision-making processes, and help protect them against psychological challenges such as loneliness and depression. These recommendations aim to enhance students' educational outcomes and strengthen their resilient capacities.

Keywords Parental support, resilient behaviour, emerging adult students, state universities.

INTRODUCTION

Experiencing difficult or disturbing events can significantly impact the adaptability and resilient nature of emerging adults. Exposure to violence or disaster, loss of, or separation from family members and friends, deterioration in living condition and lack of access to services can all have immediate, as well as long term consequences on the lives of emerging adults. Emerging adulthood is an emerging stage of human development occurring between the ages of 18 and 29 (Arnett, 2000). It suggests an age range that is distinct from both adolescence and adulthood and including a prolonged period of identity exploration, preferences regarding career, romantic relationships and interpersonal characteristics, subjectively feeling in between adolescence and adulthood and idealistic thinking about future possibilities (Arnett, 2004). These transitions can leave emerging adults vulnerable to distress, a condition very common to university students (Lanz, 2017). This is because the period is critical and entails many life transitions in living arrangements, relationships, education and employment, higher risks of identity crisis which can generate stress and psychological distress. Therefore, during this time, parental support remains a significant protective factor, despite dependency on parents compared to adolescence. Such support serves as a foundation for healthy development, also constituting resilient behaviour.

The years of emerging adulthood constitute a high degree of risk-taking behaviours, impulsivity, and psychiatric risk (Arnett, 2004; Baggio et al., 2015). That is, not only is emerging adulthood a time of vulnerability to stress, but also a time of elevated risk for maladaptive stress responses. However, the degree to which an individual feels supported by their close relationships mitigates distress during stressful situations (Sarason et al., 1991). The supportive actions provided by their parents

often lessen the impact of stress by increasing the effectiveness of coping efforts, which in turn decrease distress among emerging adults (Lakey and Cohen, 2000). For example, receiving financial, material, emotional support and companionship from their parents may encourage effective adaptation among emerging adults in facing and coping with uncontrollable events.

Deficits in parental support have been shown to be related to many psychological problems such as depression, loneliness, and anxiety social problems such as isolation, mistrust, lack of social skills and poor intra and interpersonal relations (Eskin, 2003). Elliot and Gramling (1990) found that parental support helps college students to lessen depression, anxiety, and stress and build more positive relations with others. They also found that support from parent could help the emerging adults students manage and lessen their psychological and social problems thereby enabling them to adapt, recover, thrive and flourish in the face of challenges. Based on these, it is likely that emerging adult students who perceive higher levels of parental support demonstrate greater resilience, characterized by effective problem-solving skills, adaptability to stress, and a positive outlook on future possibilities. Therefore, this study investigated parental support and resilient behaviour among emerging adult students in some public universities in Cameroon.

Literature Review

Parental support is a critical factor influencing the development of resilient behaviour among emerging adult students, a group characterized by significant transitions and challenges. Pérez-Marín (2015) argued that parents play a critical role which help emerging adults in creating positive coping strategies to overcome physical and psychosocial problems. This is in line with Rowling (2006) who declared that support of family is

helpful to emerging adults who seek to achieve physiological and psychosocial adaptation. In this light, family and familial bonds serve as crucial buffers against stress and adversity during emerging adulthood. Those who benefit from such support easily bounce back when they face challenges and persist in the face of adversity. According to Pérez-Marín (2015), family support enhances positive coping strategies among emerging adults and hence, helps them to achieve good metabolic control through adherence in care while improving their quality of life. This may be common among individuals dealing with chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases.

According to Barrera and Li (1996) greater parental support predicts better functioning and fewer problem behaviours among emerging adults. Emerging adulthood is a stage of life that is marked by increased independence from parents and heightened tension between parents and emerging adults (Steinberg and Morris, 2001). Despite this, parents play a critical role in scaffolding their emerging adult children by providing them with opportunities for exercising autonomy and supporting them through the trials and tribulations of gaining full adulthood. These concerns may range from navigating first romantic relationships to preparing for challenging academic tests at school. This support is particularly important given that some emerging adults experience drops in self-esteem and increases in emotional distress (Costel, 2011).

Emerging adult students with poor family support suffer significant disturbances in cognition, emotion regulation or behaviour. This reflects a dysfunction in the psychological, biological or developmental processes underlying their mental functioning (Aftab, 2016). The detrimental consequences of negative interpersonal relationships during emerging adulthood extend far beyond immediate psychological distress, manifesting in a complex array of health and developmental challenges. For example, findings reveal that negative relationship dynamics are linked to increased risk of mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical health concerns, including disrupted sleep and chronic stress (e.g., Brandt et al., 2022). Moreover, MacPhee et al. (2015) found that these adverse interactions hinder the development of essential skills, such as emotional regulation, effective communication, and resilience, potentially derailing personal and professional trajectories. Meanwhile, Sharan and Sagar (2007) illuminate the profound interconnectedness between suboptimal relational experiences and multiple dimensions of individual functioning. These adverse relationship dynamics can precipitate significant mental health complications that systematically undermine an individual's potential across various critical life domains. The cascading effects are particularly evident in educational achievement, where compromised psychological well-being can substantially impede academic performance and learning capacity. Moreover, the psychological vulnerability induced by negative relationships creates heightened susceptibility to destructive coping mechanisms, including substance abuse, which represents a maladaptive strategy for managing emotional distress.

The ramifications of such relational challenges extend into broader behavioral domains, potentially increasing propensities for interpersonal violence and manifesting in compromised reproductive and sexual health outcomes. In line with this, Leadbeater et al. (2008) found that exposure to relational conflicts and unhealthy relationships correlates with an increased propensity for interpersonal violence, including aggressive behaviours and dysfunctional conflict resolution. Rakovec-Felser (2014) adds that such challenges may be linked to

compromised reproductive and sexual health outcomes, including higher rates of unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and diminished self-efficacy in making informed sexual and reproductive choices.These interconnected challenges underscore the intricate relationship between psychological well-being and holistic developmental trajectories, emphasizing the critical importance of supportive, nurturing relational environments during the formative emerging adult years. The multifaceted nature of these developmental risks highlights the necessity of comprehensive, integrated approaches to understanding and addressing the complex interactions between relational experiences and individual developmental outcomes. These negative experiences not only affect their mental health but also limit their capacity to acquire the skills to feel confident in interpersonal interactions and resilience in case of life stresses (Rowling, 2006). Some of the most important determinants of mental illnesses include lack of social support and social protection (WHO, 2019).

In addition, strong family support promotes a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to her or his community (WHO, 2014). A supportive and understanding family environment can have a positive impact on mental health. Family members can provide emotional support, assist in recognizing early signs of illness and encourage in seeking professional help. When emerging adults are dissatisfied with their psychosocial support networks, the likelihood of developing anxiety, depression, or sleep problems increases substantially (Cohen et al, 2000). Again, stress coupled with absence of psychosocial support from family, friends and significant others could have negative effects on the health of emerging adults. This inevitably affects the emerging adult

performance scores in school, career, relationships and attainment of life goals and other adult responsibilities; and supportive actions provided by significant others are thought to buffer the effect of stress by increasing the effectiveness of coping efforts thereby reducing distress (Teoh & Rose, 2001).

Parental encouragement has been noted to be a major source of emotional support for emerging adults (Lord et al, 2013). This is because parental involvement improves self-esteem, model positive coping skills to identify and mange stressful scenarios, and helps build stronger relationships between parents and the child. Parental encouragement equally provides the most intimate context for the protection and nurturing of the children as they develop their personalities and identities. External communities, such as family and friends back home, exert an influence on persistence among emerging adults. Parental support as a protective factor modifies the effects of risk in a positive direction. These supports enhance the internal locus of control of emerging adults through having a positive relationship with at least one adult, groups of youngsters exposed to significant adversities with such attributes internal locus of control frequently fare better than youth who lack them (Masten, 2001). Strong family relationships have long been seen as critical in maintaining stability in the face of adversities. The earliest studies of resilience indicated that the presence of a close relationship with at least one parent figure was highly protective across of risks ranging from early institutionalization and serious parent mental illness, to chronic family poverty and multiple co-existing adversities (e.g., Rutter, 2000). Recent reviews of the existing literature, similarly, continue to point to supportive and responsive parenting as being among the most robust predictors of resilient adaptation (e.g., Luthar & Zelazo, 2003).

The intricate dynamics of parent-child relationships during emerging adulthood reveal profound implications for psychological development and well-being. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that specific parenting dimensions critically influence emerging adults' resilience, emotional adjustment, and overall life satisfaction. Meeus et al. (2005) illuminate the transformative potential of parental warmth, involvement, and support, highlighting these dimensions as fundamental catalysts for developing robust resilient behaviors. Subsequent research by Parra, Oliva, and Sánchez-Queija (2015) further substantiates this perspective, revealing a nuanced correlation between relationship quality and psychological outcomes. Specifically, relationships characterized by high levels of warmth, affection, and emotional closeness correlate positively with resilient behavioral patterns, while emotionally disengaged familial environments demonstrate a significant negative association with life satisfaction.

Autonomy-supportive parenting emerges as a particularly critical factor in facilitating healthy psychological adaptation. Kins et al. (2009) underscore the importance of parental approaches that balance support with opportunities for independent decision-making. Reinherz et al. (2003) provide compelling evidence that heightened levels of parental affection, involvement, and supportive interactions are inversely related to stress and depressive symptomatology among emerging adults. Conversely, excessive parental control represents a potentially detrimental developmental dynamic. Nelson et al. (2011) and Padilla et al. (2012) present compelling research demonstrating that high levels of behavioural and psychological control are associated with diminished parent-child intimacy and increased vulnerability to anxiety and depression. These findings emphasize the critical importance of nuanced, adaptive parenting strategies that prioritize emotional support and autonomy over restrictive control mechanisms. The research collectively illuminates a sophisticated understanding of parental influence, highlighting the delicate balance between providing supportive guidance and allowing emerging adults the psychological space to develop independent coping strategies and personal identity.

Practical support during emerging adulthood represents a multifaceted framework of parental assistance that extends far beyond emotional sustenance, encompassing critical financial and logistical dimensions of young adult development. Steelman and Powell's (1991) research illuminate the socioeconomic determinants of such support, revealing that parental resources significantly influence the extent of financial assistance provided to emerging adults students. This is so because, there are fewer persons to take care for unlike cases where there are many siblings and a corresponding need for more finances to ensure their needs. Divorced parents may provide less financial support than parents in intact marriages. Supports from families by parents and grandparents during emerging adulthood are also provided in the form of guidance or advice, information, and emotional support (Steelman & Powell, 1991). Parents of emerging adults may also help the emerging adult negotiate the health-care system, formulate and carry out educational and vocational goals, and acquire leases for apartments and even provide advice for intimate relationships. Where there is a positive relationship coupled with consistent social and financial resources received by emerging adult students from their parents, it is a very significant factor in the positive life trajectory during emerging adulthood (Aquilino, 2005). Bennett (2014) found a high correlation between improved emerging adulthood outcomes and adolescent hope in the future which is a resilient behaviour.

METHODS

The research design adopted for this study was the mixed methods approach with a concurrent nested design. This enabled comprehensive data collection and analysis by integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, thereby providing a more nuanced and holistic understanding of the study. The sample was made up of 537 including 195 male and 321 female students between 18 to 25 years of age in State Universities in Cameroon.

Table 1

Distribution Sample of Student for Selected Universities

Institutions	Emerging adult enrolment	No students Sample (18-25 year)
University of Buea	34887	136
University of Bamenda	14695	57
University of Younde1	61004	238
University of Maroua	27053	106
TOTAL	**137639**	**537**

Among the 516 emerging adult students sampled, 50.7% (308) were within the age group of 18-21 years and 40.3% (208) were within the age group of 22-25 years. Based on their marital status, 50.4% (260) were married, 48.3% (249) single and 1.4% (7) were widowed. In terms of their parents' marital status, 4.69% (242) of the emerging adult students' parents were married, 41.1% (212) were single, and 11.0% (57) were divorced. With reference to the emerging adults' employment status, many 64.5% (333) were unemployed and 35.5% (183) employed.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select four Universities and undergraduate students while the simple random sampling techniques was used the select the respondents within the specified ages (18-25years). The sample was undergraduate students aged 18-25 years and selected through simple random sampling. This sampling approach ensured a representative and unbiased selection of participants, providing each eligible emerging adult student an equal probability of being included in the study.

The simple random sampling technique eliminated potential selection bias by randomly choosing participants from the broader university student population. This enhanced the study's scientific rigor, allowing for more generalizable findings across the specified demographic of undergraduate students in State Universities in Cameroon. By maintaining a structured and randomized selection process, it strengthens the reliability and validity of the data collection, ensuring that the findings can be more confidently extrapolated to the wider population of emerging adult university students.

Data was collected with the help of questionnaire. The data collected from the field was first processed using an Epi-Data 3.0 to key in all the participants' responses in accordance with each of the test items. After the data were completely entered for all the participants, the data based were exported to SPSS version 27 for further consistency, data range and validation checks with the purpose to first identify invalid codes (data cleaning) with the aid of exploratory statistics. The quantitative data were analyzed using the descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools used are frequency

count, percentages, mean and standard deviation and multiple responses set which aimed at calculating the summary of findings for a quick comprehension of the overall findings. The mean in addition to percentage was used to better appreciate the level of psychosocial support and resilient behaviours of emerging adults. The Spearman's rho correlation test was used to test the hypothesis.
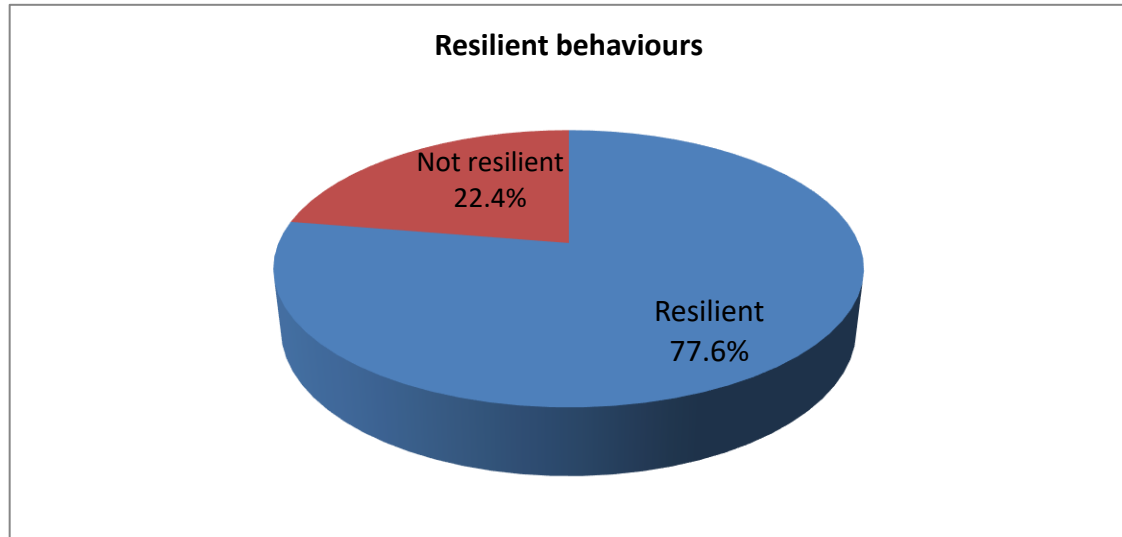
FINDINGS

Figure: 1

Distribution of Emerging Adults by Resilience

In summary, 77.6% of the emerging adult students agreed of been resilient while a significant proportion 22.4% are not and the overall mean of 3.08 slightly above 3.0 on a mean scale of 1-4 implies that a significant proportion of emerging adult students were not resilient.
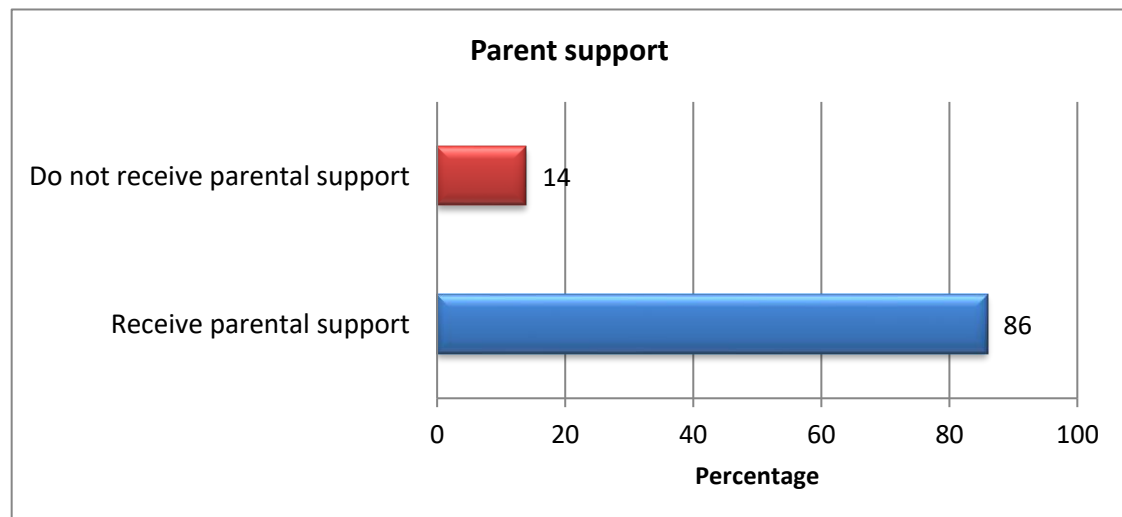

Figure: 2

Distribution of Emerging Adult students by Parents Support

In overall, 86.0% of emerging adult students with a mean of 3.34 on a mean scale of 1-4 receive parental support while 14.0% do not.

Table: 2

Relationship between Parents Support and the Resilient Behaviours of Emerging Adult Students

		Parents support	Resilient behaviour among emerging adults
Spearman's rho	R-value	1	.358**
	p-value	.	.000
	N		537

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistically, findings showed a significant and positive relationship between parents' support and the resilient behaviour of emerging adult students (R-value 0.358**, p-value 0.000 < 0.05). The positive sign of the correlation value implied that emerging adult students' resilient behaviours increases with increase in parents' support and decreases with decrease in parents' support. Thus, the hypothesis that states there is a significant relationship between parents' support and the resilient behaviour of emerging adult students was accepted.

DISCUSSIONS

A significant and positive relationship between parental support and the resilient behaviour of emerging adult students was revealed. This means that that emerging adult will easily resist from adversity when adequate supported are provided by their parents. This is in congruence with Auerbach (2011) who opined that parental support acts as a buffer from stress. This is also in line with Orth (2012) who reported that parental care may effectively signal to the emerging adult students that their parents see them as important and valuable. This understanding may be beneficial to their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and optimism which are indicators of resilient behaviours. High self-esteem in emerging adulthood is known to predict lower levels of distress as well as higher levels of relational and occupational satisfaction in adulthood which is a protective factor for resilience.

Emerging adult students reported that their parents care about their wellbeing and always assured them of their readiness to help. They equally revealed that their parents provide them with their basic needs, financial support and also counsel then when there is issue or need. When this support is provided, emerging adult students feel less troubled knowing that their parents are always there to help them out when there is need and hence make them to be persistent and motivated to move on. The findings also revealed that parents have what it takes to take care of their children since their job can sustain their families. This is in congruence with Ormrod (2006) who argued that when a child's physiological needs of food, air, water, sleep, clothing, shelter, clothing are met, the child will happily learn in school and develop a positive personality leading to a healthy psychosocial wellbeing of emerging adults, but the absent of these physiological needs affect the child's development and wellbeing. Economic hardship has sweeping and intense consequences for parents and children, including lower levels of parental nurturance, inconsistent discipline, and adolescent distress (Ormrod, 2006).

Emerging adult students reported that they have good relations with their parents, and this made them to easily adjust since their needs are easily provided. Parents always encouraged them to accomplish their goals and make them feel warmth and love, have a high expectation from them, and monitor their academic and future goals. This finding is supported by Grohnick et al (2009) who found that families can have a strong influence on the adjustment and adaptation of students and a variety of school outcomes and other life engagement including development and maintenance of positive motivation to learn. According to Heckman (2011), when parents believe in children's competence and high expectation for them, they provide the resources that children need to feel connected to others and facilitate a sense of authority by supporting children's initiative and problems, children' motivation to learn is most likely to thrive.

Findings revealed that emerging adult students learn problem solving skills from their parents through interactions and in times of adversities, their parents are always ready to help. This study ties with Lord et al, (2013) who opined that parental encouragement is a major source of emotional support to emerging adults. This is because parental involvement improves self-esteem of the child, model positive coping skills to identify and mange stressful scenarios, and helps build stronger relationships between parents and the child. Parental encouragement equally provide the most intimate context for the protection and nurturing of the children as they develop their personalities and identities.

The finding is in line with Meeus et al., (2005) who opined that parenting dimensions such as warmth, involvement and support, as perceived by young people in connection with the parent-child relationship, provide numerous benefits for emerging adults' adjustment. Specifically, higher

levels of warmth, affection, closeness and support in relationships with parents are associated with higher levels of well-being, while distant and emotionally disengaged family environments are negatively related to life satisfaction. Similarly, autonomy-supportive parenting is associated with better adjustment among emerging adults (Parra et al., 2015).

The finding is supported by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecological theory that theorized that as individual interacts from one ecological system to another, they learn from care givers attitudes, values and problem-solving skills which help them to easily navigate the different developmental stages. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that the student's development and growth is a result of interactions between student characteristics and the environment. The individual is viewed not as a passive recipient of experiences in these settings, but as one who help to construct the setting. This is to say that the recipient (student) should make necessary use of the available resources given to him. He should learn to exploit his environment to the fullest degree and by so doing make his environment a better place because he can now help others through the knowledge and skills that have been impacted on him. The finding is also supported by Arnett theory of emerging adulthood (2000) which emphasizes that how emerging adults traverse this life stage is dependent upon the personal, family, and social resources they possess as they enter this stage of life, dynamic and reciprocal interaction between the emerging adult and their environment, and the supports they receive during this stage. Many emerging adults are beginning to establish themselves outside of their family of origin, but still may be dependent on their siblings for certain resources such as financial and emotional support. Arnett (2015) argued that emerging adults focused on themselves by develop daily skills, gain a better understanding of who they are and what they want

from life. During the age of possibilities, people have greater future expectation by viewing their future more positively and optimistically.

CONCLUSION

The study illuminated the significant relationship between parental support and resilient behavior among emerging adult students in Cameroon State Universities. The findings demonstrated that students who received consistent parental support exhibited enhanced resilient characteristics. This underscores the crucial need for establishing a robust collaborative framework between educational institutions and parents to optimize student development and academic success. The study emphasizes the importance of creating an integrated support system where academic instruction at school is reinforced through parental engagement at home. This holistic approach encompasses material, financial, and emotional support, forming a comprehensive foundation for student resilience. The synergy between parental involvement and educational institutions creates an environment conducive to developing resilient behaviors and academic achievement.

The recommendations derived from the findings advocate for enhanced parental engagement characterized by demonstrable love, care, and consistent outreach to their emerging adult children. Parents are encouraged to actively celebrate their children's achievements and consistently affirm their worth and importance. These actions serve to strengthen students' self-esteem, confidence, and self-efficacy, particularly during challenging periods. The provision of emotional and physical affection, coupled with inclusive decision-making processes and protection against psychological challenges such as loneliness and depression, forms a crucial support framework.

The study highlights how comprehensive psychosocial support cultivates various dimensions of resilient behavior, including endurance, self-confidence, life satisfaction, determination, and the ability to confront and overcome challenges. Parents are encouraged to serve as role models and actively participate in developing their children's coping mechanisms. This involves fostering self-awareness regarding emotions, strengths, and limitations, facilitating exposure to resilient individuals, and teaching positive affirmations to counter negative experiences and thoughts.

The findings also emphasize the transformative potential of parental involvement in shaping resilient behaviors among emerging adult students. By implementing these recommendations, parents can create an environment that nurtures psychological well-being and academic success. This comprehensive approach to student support acknowledges the interconnected nature of emotional well-being, academic achievement, and resilient behavior. The research concludes that effective education of emerging adult students requires a coordinated effort between educational institutions and parents, with particular emphasis on maintaining consistent psychosocial support. This collaborative approach ensures that students receive the necessary guidance and support to develop resilient characteristics essential for navigating academic challenges and personal growth during their university years.

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