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Investigation of the Correlation between Students' prior University Prospects and their Actual University Academic Achievements

Fisseha Motuma

Kotebe University of Education, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; E-mail: fissha2006@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study was designed to determine the correlation between students' prior university prospects and their actual academic achievements. The study employed correlational research method and quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Stratified and systematic random sampling techniques were used to identify a sample of 150 students from the total 603 2nd year degree students at Kotebe University of Education (KUE) in the year 2021. Data were collected using a rating scale questionnaire, FGD, and document review. Descriptive analysis was used for quantitative Data, whereas thematic analysis was used for qualitative data. Results confirm that the correlation coefficient between students' prior university prospects and their actual academic achievement is **r= 0.989.** It shows a statistically significant and positive correlation in which students with high earlier university expectations are more likely to be higher achievers than students who had low-achieving prospects. On the other hand, the main constraints students faced in their study were lack of self-study timetable, random study habits, inadequate academic consultancy, and follow-up, absence of tutorial supports, achievement anxiety, ethno-linguistic and/or religious affiliation groupings, heightened sense of the right to deserve a passing grade (i.e. 'C',) and inability to adjust to the new academic environment. In conclusion, as students' prior university prospects are found to be potential predictors of academic success, universities should establish awareness raising programs and consultancy office in charge of university study habits and academic success strategies.

Key words: University, education, prospects, academic achievements, correlation

1. Introduction

At university, students are expected to be self-dependent and self-regulated learners. They need to program their learning and study time and experience the different university learning behaviors. They should be aware of that studying in a university requires different approaches including

solitary study, library study, peer study, idea sharing, conducting interview, survey, reporting, presenting speech, debating, reflecting, etc.

Students may have different perceptions, prospects or expectations about university learning. Suyitno et al. (2019), for example, have had the idea that many students usually have certain prospects about their future higher education study. Some may have positive expectations while others may anticipate some difficulty or challenging intervening situations. Learning prospects whether positive or negative, could have its own influences on students' performances. Likewise, Hassel & Ridout (2018) have made clear that students' prior learning prospects could be taken as potential predictors of students' academic performances.

Stated differently, learning prospect is what students predict or expect to happen in their future education. It is learning view or expectation which involves students' future orientation, aspired goals, ideas of learning values, and academic success desires (Harackiewicz et al. 2002; Hassel & Ridout, 2018; Suyitno et al., 2019). Having clear university learning prospects encourage students to be more active and interested to realize their aspired goals of academic achievement. Besides, learning prospects may act as catalyst in facilitating students' courage and determination to complete a given learning task or activity with more commitment. Hence, students who have prior university prospects are more likely to perform well and achieve better scores (Katttab, 2015).

Developing higher aspirations, prospects or expectations for university study is important for students because such perceptions mostly serve as positive energy to inspire students to work hard and realize better academic achievement. Feeling positive university expectations also helps students to experience strong mental and psychological readiness (Khattab, 2015). Besides, high university prospects and readiness influences students' level of readiness and preparation to challenge more demanding academic tasks (Harackiewicz et al., 2002; Lowe, & Cook, 2003).

Academic achievement shows the extent to which a student performs the given learning activities and scores certain marks or grade at the end of completing the academic activities as directed. Though students' actual learning potential and hardworking behavior could determine their academic achievement, other factors could intervene in the process of learning. Among the many influential and determining factors, prior academic and success experiences, study habits and strategies are some of them. Similarly, many scholars argue that students' prior university

expectations, academic understandings and success could ease the students' university learning behaviours (Lowe & Cook, 2003; Yorke & Longden, 2004; Hailikari, 2009; Khattab, 2015; Tentama & Abdillah, 2019). Whilst students with high university expectations are more likely to achieve better, students with low expectations and performance may be less prepared to deal with the challenges of higher education learning activities (Regier, 2011).

Research findings show that newly joined university students often encounter the challenges of meeting tough academic demands, while they are still under pressure to familiarize themselves with the new and complex academic environment and practices. The learning tasks are tougher and so it requires students to work hard and confront the progressively challenging academic tasks. In other words, by its own very nature, the academic environment promotes differences in thinking, interpersonal interactions, active engagement, analytic and self-regulated learning strategies. And this in turn could generate favorable learning atmosphere that does not only meet students' expectations, but also that maximizes their academic performance skills. Yet, it should be accompanied by progressive academic achievements.

Most notably, joining higher institution requires students to have clear purpose and academic expectations. They need to have mental readiness and academic goals to be achieved. However, as stated by Blonna (2005) some students may have no or low expectations about higher institution academic requirements and practices. Students who lack expectations are often stressed when they are surrounded by some challenging academic environments. For instance, "… Some are trying to cope with demands of adapting to a new living environment, new peers, academic pressures, and sexual concerns. (p. 1). Moreover, it has been exemplified that "Issues such as the nature of college classes, autonomy, the time requirement of academic work, and the outside demands on students' time were examined as factors that influence the perception of academic work as stressful" (p. 318).

Previous research findings indicate that there found substantial mismatch between students' higher education performance expectations and their actual university academic achievements. In this sense, varied barriers might be cited as reasons for the mismatch and the magnitude of these differences may vary from institution to institutions. Eventually, nonetheless, Good & Brophy (1987: 118) describe that "Studies conducted in quite different settings have shown that student

achievement can be affected by expectations induced in instructors." In one sense, some lecturers may institutionalize their own culture of teaching and own expectations which may or may not meet the student's academic prospects, whereas the students may have their own different prospects. Such discrepancies between university lecturers' expectations and new entry students' prospects could incite mismatch between the students' preset university learning behaviors and the lecturers' actual academic expectations.

The crux of the matter is that the existence of mismatch between students' expectations and their higher institutions academic requirements may have long-term effects on the students' self-confidence, competence and on their future academic life (Smith & Brown 1995; Brown, Armstrong & Thompson 1998; Purkey & Novak 1996). Even worse is that students, who are being trapped in such expectations and academic achievement mismatch may experience academic failure. Otherwise, they may suffer a lot to cope up with the academic anxiety and stresses that are confronted due to the demanding nature of academic tasks. There may also be cases in which those students who face such mismatch become anxious and so frustrated that they give up their academic efforts. In particular, "…Anxiety, discomfort and fear are incompatible with the learning process and make the teaching and learning difficult." *(*Burden, 2003:2).As a result, the students become vulnerable to academic warnings, drop outs or even to academic dismissals (Matiru, Mwangi & Schlette 1995; Ellwein, Grave, and Comfort 1990.) .

On the other hand, Weiten & Lioyd (2007: 24), have claimed that "Today, a huge number of students enter college study with remarkably poor study skills and habits." They further argue that students who lack effective study skills and experience, and who fail to expect more demanding study habits in their university life are less likely to succeed in their academic achievements.

Correspondingly, Blonna (2005: 318) has also presented the evidence that:

> …… Some college students feel inadequate and unable to cope with the intellectual demands of college. They lack the study skills…. Still others cannot handle the autonomy. With no one nagging them to get up and go to class or study, they fall behind in their classes. They lack the self-discipline necessary to get their work done.

A correlation study in Indonesia, for example, found that students' school achievements influence the students' future academic performance. Students who are academically successful are found

to show higher self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy in their future learning (Tentama & Abdillah, 2019), while those with poor learning performance experiences are found to suffer hard from higher anxiety, depression, confusion and unstable learning behaviors (Regier, 2011). Similarly, a descriptive study conducted at Arba Minch University, Ethiopia, reveals that students with relevant previous school academic records were found to be more likely to succeed in their university education (Yigermal, 2017).

Another study carried out by Hassel & Ridout (2018) looked into what expectations students hold when starting university education, and what expectations university lecturers have about new students who are entering university. The study used investigative research approach in which it comprised freshman students (n= 77), and lecturers (n= 20) who were teaching the students. The participants were selected using systematic random sampling techniques. Data were collected through open-ended and close-ended questionnaires and self-reporting written responses. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics: one sample t-tests and paired sample t-tests. Results prove that students had largely realistic expectations of university education. The majority of the respondents expected that university teaching approach and study strategies become the same to school teaching and study strategies. In the same way, results indicate that lecturers expected to teach first year students in the same way as they were teaching 2nd and above year students. The teaching method was focused on information transmission with teacher dominant approach.

It would seem highly likely that students whose expectations do not go in line with the actual university academic requirements, or whose expectations mismatch with the actual academic environment may show poor academic performances. Of all, one of the potential reasons is that such students are often less motivated and do have less courage to actively engage in the tough academic practices. Even more to the point, as Brown, Armstrong, & Thompson (1998: 4) have remarked, “Under-motivated students are hard to teach, gain little benefit from their studies and drain the resources of the institutions in which they study, contributing to poor completion rates and stretching the capacities and the patience of their tutors.

In much the same way, it has been learned from the lived-in-it-experiences that first year students joining KMU are not expected to face an easy and welcoming academic environment. There found

little attention to support freshman students on, for example, academic consultancy, study habits and strategies, coping up with the new academic environment, providing follow-up and awareness raising programs, informing where to go for advice, etc. So, there observed lots of confusions and student wandering around with in the campus. Even worse is that there is no academic initiation programs that could cool down the anxiety and stresses freshman students are often experiencing. Similarly, there found no special preparation on how to deliver lessons and teach freshman students. In short, it can be witnessed from personal observation and professional experiences that the university academic environment reflects business as usual.

In short, it is hypothesized that the aforementioned literature-driven data has been conceptualized as major defining factors determining students' university academic success and could be illustrated as follows:

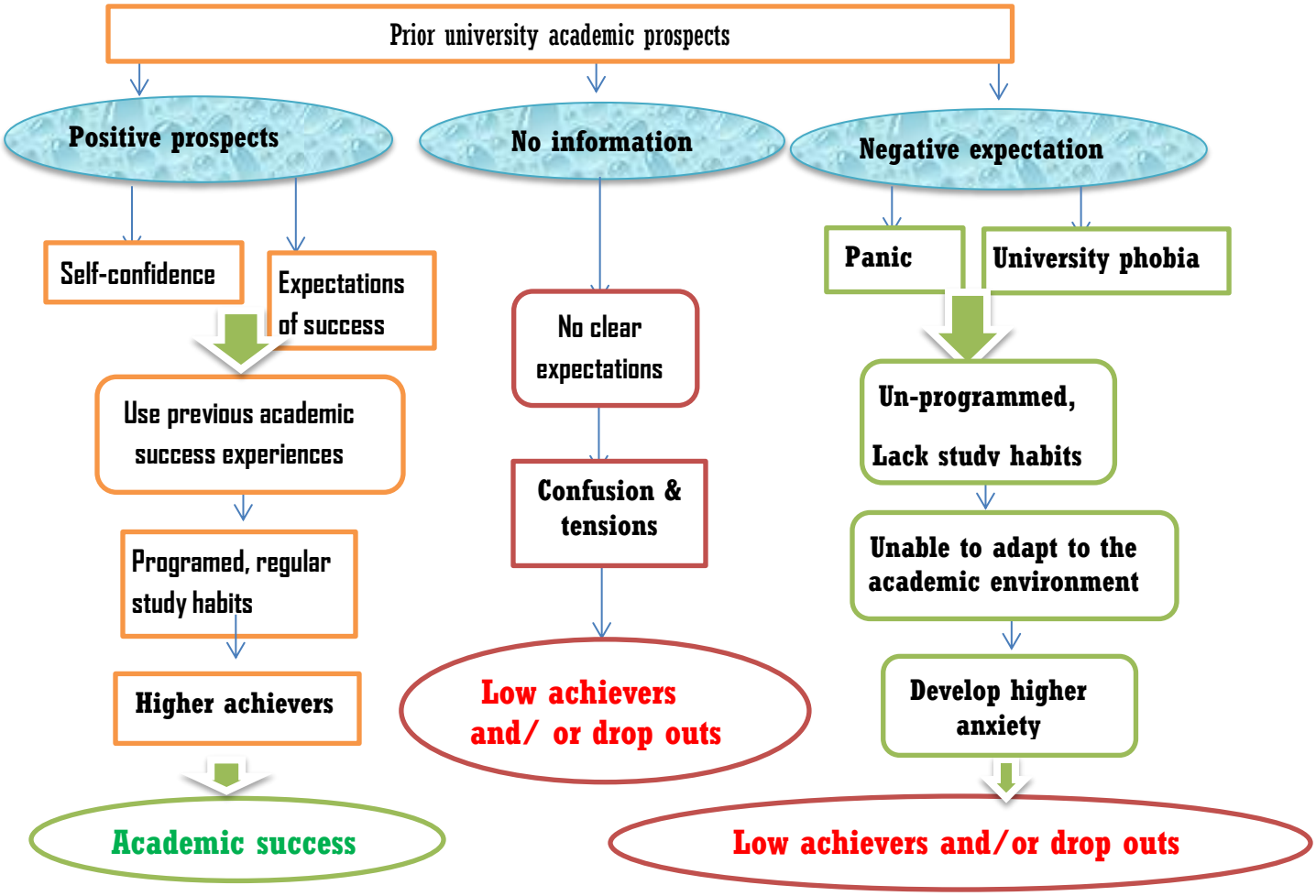


Figure 1: Overview of impacts of diverse prior university prospects on students' achievement

To this end, the main objective of this research was to investigate the correlation between students' prior university prospects and their actual university academic achievements. This helps to identify the correlation between what students imagine and expect university learning to be and their actual academic achievements in order to take the necessary corrective actions before students experience sufferings and becoming victims of the mismatch.

2. Methodology

This study was designed to pursue mixed method: quantitative and qualitative research approaches to collect and analyze data. The research project was planned to follow correlational study method to investigate how students' prior university prospects are associated to their actual university academic achievements.

Population, sampling methods and sample-size

The study comprised 150 students out of 603 total potential student populations who were attending their education at Kotebe Metropolitan University. The students were first year degree freshman students who completed the two semesters' learning, and whose first year cumulative grade point average (CGPA) was determined and communicated to the students. As the research population was organized in groups or strata, stratified random sampling technique was employed to specify proportionate sample size from each stratum. To identify specific representative sample from each stratum or group, systematic random sampling techniques was used.

Briefly, the second year degree student population was grouped into 10 departments and 15 sections. Each section, on average, consisted of 44 students. So, as the target population was grouped into sections, it was decided to employ stratified random sampling techniques.

Next, to determine the sample size to be taken from each section, it was determined to apply the formula: **n/N x Ni**; (Wiersma 1995:292)

Where **n**= Total number of sample wanted- (150 students)

N= Total number of target population- (603)

Ni = the number of each stratum size (44)

Therefore, the number of representative samples being taken from each section was ten (10) students, which were totally 150 sample students. Note that it was decided to avoid every digit for

the sake of escaping fraction numbers. Accordingly, the research included approximately **25%** of the total targeted student population.

Finally, to determine the individual student being taken from each group, systematic random sampling technique was employed. To apply this method, first the complete name list of each group was collected. Then, to decide the specific interval of the individuals being selected from the name lists, the formal **N/n = k** (Ibid) was applied.

Key: **N** = Total population of a group\class

n = the number of sample to be taken from a given group/class

K=a common factor used to determine the interval of individuals in the name list

Data Collection Methods

The study was scheduled to use three methods of data gathering techniques: questionnaires, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and document review. The questionnaire had two types (Open-ended and Close-ended items), which was designed to collect students' opinions regarding their prior higher institution academic performance expectations. The FGD was presented to nine (9) randomly selected group of freshman students. The key purpose of the FGD was to explore in-depth details on some hidden students' tactics and strategies used to achieve their university expectations.

The study also included document review as an instrument to gather data and relevant statistics regarding the sample students' first year academic achievements or cumulative grade point average (CGPA) to cross-check their expectations with their first year academic achievements. By doing so, the research would find out the kind of relationships between their higher institutions academic performance prospects and their actual first year university academic achievements.

Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the responses of the subjects of the study, quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. First, close-ended questionnaire was developed to elicit students' earlier university academic expectations. The questionnaire was filled in by 150 students. Then, a seven point rating scale questions was designed to analyze students' university expectations in comparison with the students' first year university grade achievements. Following this, open-ended questionnaire was

developed to investigate any intervening constrains which may hinder students from their attempts to meet their university expectations and academic success. Then, a set of frequently addressed common themes was sorted out, reorganized and discussed. In addition, a FGD was used to find out further cases.

The data collected through close-ended items and document review were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as counts, frequency and percentage description. The data collected through FGD was described based on thematic analysis. The rating scale question which was used to analyze the correlation between students' prior university prospects and their actual university achievements was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version. The analysis was coupled with the ideas of some scholars cited in the theoretical parts in order to get a clear insight into how prior academic expectations and performances influence students' university academic achievements.

3. Results and Discussion

Results of the Close-ended Questionnaire

Table 1: Responses to whether students had any prior University expectations

Alternatives	No of Respondents	
	Figure	%
1. Yes	89	59.3
2. No	37	24.7
3. I was not sure	24	16

Table 1 shows students' responses to whether they had prior university expectations or not. As can be seen from the table, most of the respondents, that is, 89 respondents out of 150 indicated that they had certain university education performance expectations when they were at high school. In contrast, 24.7% of the respondents indicated that they had no expectations of university education performance. And nearly one-six, that is to say 16% of the students reported that they were not sure whether they had any expectations of university academic performance.

What is really surprising is that more or less more than one-fourth (1/4) of the respondents stated that they came to university with no openly assumed university academic expectations. Seemingly,

such students could face more unexpected academic challenges which could expose them to academic stresses and achievement anxieties.

Consistently, in a research findings conducted by Madhu and Grewal (1990), it was substantiated that students' home academic expectations and interests have direct influence on their higher institution academic achievements. This implies that institutions should have a well-grounded system to help students to readjust their expectation. Ellwein, Grave & Comfort (1990), and Sliwak (2010), for instance, remark that higher learning is not only just about how to make use of learners' expectations and resources as an input, but also it is about bridging the gaps that may be created between the students' expectations and the academic tasks.

Table 2: Responses to grades students expected to achieve in their University study

Alternatives	No of Respondents	
	Figure	%
1. Very High	30	20
2. High	62	41.3
3. Medium	30	20
4. Undecided	11	7.3
5. Low	14	9.3
6. Very Low	3	2

Table 2 displays that 30% of the respondents expected to achieve very high grades, while 62% of the respondents expected to achieve high grade in their university study. The table also shows that 30% of the informants supposed to score medium grade in their university study.

However, 7.3%, that is to say, eleven out of 150 students did not have any expectation of the grade they might score in their university study. In contrast, 9.3% of the respondents had low expectations of university academic achievements, while 2% of the respondents reportedly had very low academic achievement expectations.

Stated differently, more than half (61.3%) of the respondents proved that they had positive and significant university academic achievement expectations. Still, one fifth of the students (20%) more or less had constructive expectations to score medium grade. But, more remarkably,

marginally 11.3%, that is to say one-ninth, of the respondents more or less confirmed that they had negative university academic grade expectations. This implies that having low achievement expectations could limit the students' actual academic scores.

Within this context, Miller & Birch (2007) who have summarized that the type of university academic achievement expectations students bring to their allocated university could significantly influence their actual academic performance and achievement scores. They argue that students' earlier university expectations possibly determine the students' academic success or failure. Students with great expectation of more demanding university academics are highly likely to confront the academic challenges to earn better grade than those who had low or no clear academic performance expectations.

Subsequently, it can be inferred that the more the students have very high or high university academic performance and achievement expectations, the higher grade they achieve in their university study. In other words, those students who have higher or high academic achievement expectations could score higher or high grade when compared to those students with lower or low academic achievement expectations (Garmon, 1990).

Table 3: Responses to students' University success strategy

Alternatives	No of Respondents	
	Figure	%
1. Self-Study	66	44
2. Classroom Lecture Note-taking	48	32
3. Peer/Group Discussion	24	16
4. Assignment Works	6	4
5. Classroom Self-reflection	6	4

As can be inferred from Table 3, the majority of the respondents reported that they expected to experience university success through own self-study strategy. In other words, 66 informants out of 150 favored self-study as an approach to achieve significant university academic success. However, nearly one-third of the students, that is, 48 respondents preferred classroom lecture note-taking as a university success strategy, whereas about one-sixth of the students, that is to say, 24

respondents reportedly inclined to prefer using peer/group discussion technique as a means of university academic success strategy. The least number of respondents, that is six students in each of the following cases suggested assignment works and classroom self-reflection as their university academic success strategy.

It is, thus, very essential to underline that the table illuminates three most favoured university academic success strategies. The first is that the highest figure (44%) of respondents confirmed university academics should provide students with enough self-study time. And this finding correlated with the very typical concept of higher institution curriculum which promotes self-study and self-regulated learning practices. As well, the next highest percentage of respondents, which is 32%, reportedly chosen classroom lecture note-taking learning method. On the other hand, 16% of the respondents preferred peer/group discussion as university academic success technique. It implies that if university academic practices give more value to those learning approaches, students will possibly experience progressive academic success.

In view of that university academic practices should demand students more of independent and self-reliant learning practice. More to the point, Students may exert great energy to achieve better academic success when they get opportunities to interconnect their expectations to the classroom learning activities. Thus, "Higher education institutions need to provide students with opportunities for personal reflections and support for their learning needs at all levels so that they can develop realistic, progress-enhancing self-awareness." (Brown, Armstrong and Thompson (1998: 70). In addition, they remark that *"*For a variety of reasons, giving students responsibility for managing their own learning is becoming an increasingly popular trend with in higher education." (PP. 9-10).

Results of the Rating Scales

One of the ultimate objectives of the research was to compare the students' prior university performance expectations and their actual achievements to determine the type of relationship between the students' earlier university academic expectations and their actual achievements.

For that reason, the respondents were asked a seven item questions related to their academic performance and achievement expectations they had before joining the university. The questions were prepared with four rating scales to test the students' self- induced expectations. Then the

respondents' achievement expectation was calculated and their responses were compared with their actual academic achievement (**CGPA**) using SPSS software. The students first year CGPA was collected from the university registrar office.

Correlations

		Expectation of Students	Performance or Achievement of students
Expectation of Students	Pearson Correlation	1	.989**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	99	99
Performance or Achievement of students	Pearson Correlation	.989**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	99	99

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

Regression

Variables Entered/ Removed [a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Expectation of Students [b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Performance or Achievement of students
b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.989[a]	.979	.978	.07352

a. Predictors: (Constant), Expectation of Students

b. Dependent Variable: Performance or Achievement of students

ANOVA [a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.968	1	23.968	4433.746	.000[b]
	Residual	.524	97	.005		
	Total	24.493	98			

c. Predictors: (Constant), Expectation of Students

Dependent Variable: Performance or Achievement of students

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.193	.037		5.208	.000
	Expectation of Students	.784	.012	.989	66.586	.000

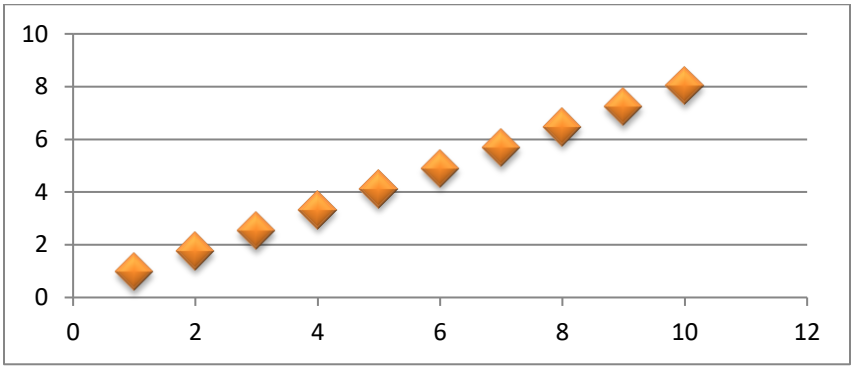
1. Magnitude = 0.989
2. Strength = Very high correlation
3. Direction = Positive
4. Coffs. Determination = 0.979
5. Prediction = Y=(0.784) x + 0.193
6. Significance = The correlation is significant at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed)

As can be seen form the analyzed data, the correlation coefficient between students' university performance expectations and academic achievement is **r= 0.989.** This shows that there is a very high or strong correlation between the two factors: expectations and achievement. The correlation is also positive with a coefficient of determination $\mathbf{R^2 = 0.979.}$ This implies that approximately **98%** of changes in academic achievement accounts for the same magnitude of changes in expectations. Thus, students' university expectation has highly and significantly great impact on their academic achievement.

Stated differently, students with higher earlier university performance expectations could earn significantly better achievement in their university overall grade scores than that of students with low university performance expectations. Feasibly, this is in agreement with Purkey & Novak

(1996) who have documented that students who have greater expectations do not only envisage the need to work hard at higher institutions but also they are confident in themselves to achieve higher grades in their studies. These students are often ready to confront most of the academic challenges due to that they have already made higher expectations about higher institution academic demands. They further argue that there are some specific features which distinguish those students from others. "They usually pay attention in class, do their work with care, finish what they start, and expect success from their efforts*."* (PP. 116-117).

On the other hand, the analysis also illustrates the prediction or regression line. It reveals that each change in expectation results in a counter change in the performance. The regression line can be given (*mathematically*) by **Y= 0.784 x + 0.193**. Graphically, it is put as follows:



Graph 1: University expectations vs. actual university academic achievement

As can be seen from Graph 1, if students set higher or high prior university performance expectations, they will possibly achieve better grades and vice versa. In view of this point, the analyzed data implies that while high achieving students have high university expectations, low achieving students have low university performance expectations. Hence, the data analysis shows that students' actual academic achievement directly correlated with their earlier university prospects. It would appear that earlier university performance expectations could positively influence students' actual academic achievements. In other words, students with significantly better academic performance expectations could earn higher scores in comparison to those students who anticipate low university academic performance.

Generally, the correlation between the two factors: expectations and achievement is found to be **0.000 at P < 0.05** (two-tailed). As the results verify, though the magnitude of differences between

students with high achieving and low achieving expectations possibly vary, the students' earlier academic prospects or expectations correlated with their actual academic results. One of the implications of this finding is that the more students develop very high or high university performance expectations and perceptions, the more they become high achievers.

Results of Students' Responses to Open-ended Items

This section of the study dealt with important findings which were identified from the students' responses to the open-ended questions. The students were first provided with multiple choice questions to express their earlier university educational performance expectations and their academic achievements. Then, they were provided with a four scale rating questions to compare their previous higher education expectations and their first year academic achievements. Following that, they were provided with open-ended questions in which they were requested to explain the main intervening factors that influence them not to meet their university performance expectations and academic success.

As the students' reports confirm, many of the respondents encountered significant barriers to meet their prior academic expectations. The following cited responses are presented to exemplify the actual reactions of the students. "I expected to get better support and advice from university instructors when I joined a university. I was highly eager to listen to their advice. Yet, I received little support when I have been in this university."

In the same way, the other respondent stated this case as follows: "I, for example, suffered a lot to try to adapt myself to the demands of the new academic environment. It was, perhaps, due to lack of information center and the support of guidance and counseling office. Some instructors are always busy, but it is for their own life*."*

In particular, some of the respondents reported their prior expectations and what they in reality encounter regarding university classroom learning as follows: "Personally, I am very disappointed in many of my university classes. Many of my instructors are usually in hurry. I feel that some of them sometimes forget our presence because they often just keep on talking either to themselves or to the board."

Likewise, another respondent put this point as: "When I was at high school, I expected that university classes were more of about exchanging academic understandings that students collected from library and outside classroom studies and readings. However, I now find that it is a sharp reversal of my previous expectations*."*

There are also reports in which some respondents felt different in the cases in which some university instructors became unfamiliar to use the early classes. And this in turn influenced the students to develop the same culture of missing the beginning classes of a semester. To illustrate the case, a respondent stated as:

> What shocks me most is that it is really beyond my expectations to experience that both instructors and students disregard the beginning classes. Many of them often miss one complete school week of the beginning of each semester of an academic year. At this time, the majority of the students and teachers do not go to class. Even if very few teachers may sometimes do the unexpected, I mean go to class; they often waste the periods talking either about themselves or unrelated issues. And that is one segment of the culture of university life which I had never expected.

Seemingly, some respondents were not happy with the way some instructors handle the classroom teaching-learning practices. Some respondents, for example, criticized that some instructors gave more attention to mass practices at the expense of individual learning potentials. To illustrate the case, a respondent exemplified the matter as:

> You asked me whether my previous university academic performance expectations come true in my university life or not. My obvious answer is '**No, No, No… NOT!** You know way, here in university academic practices, the common classroom learning activities are set to demand some sort of mass academic performances. Believe me; no time is given to individual qualities.

In addition, other respondents narrated related responses to the question as follows: "Some of our instructors are always in hurry just not to be late for their portion and that is their goal. I hope you understand me. As there is no time for students to share their experiences and expectations, I am not able to exercise something which is my own*."*

What is equally attention-grabbing is that there were respondents who felt that participating in co-curricular activities could assist the actual academic success. It would seem that some respondents had good high school club experiences that they missed in their university learning, and this was reported as something beyond their expectations. For instance, one of the respondents detailed this case as:

> It was beyond my expectations to see that there are no academic focused clubs in the university. So, we do not get co-curricular academic environment, where we, for example, participate in English, culture, art or drama, math or biology, etc. study clubs. Were we provided such opportunity, we could stretch out our self-learning practices and experiences.

The students' responses to the open ended-questionnaire were reviewed carefully and the frequently reported issues as barriers to the students in their attempts to meet their university academic expectations were reorganized and redistributed to the respondents to rank the difficulty level of each identified intervening factors. In other words, after the first data were collected and common and key themes were identified, the identified problems were stated in complete sentences form and redistributed to the respondents in order to rank the problems in the order of their difficulty level.

Accordingly, the common problems, as reported by the students, are listed down from the most to the least influential factors that intervened in the students' attempts to meet their university performance expectations and academic success.

Table 4: Major factors intervening students' attempts to achieve academic success

Factors	Number	%
1. Lack of enough self-study time due to random and scattered distributions of periods	87	58
2. Absence of tutorial support	82	54.7
3. Lack of information on how to study in a university	79	52.7
4. Due to inadequate guidance and counseling support	71	47.3
5. Lack of regular study habits	70	46.7
6. Absence of instructors advice and follow-up	68	45.3
7a. Absence of professional and sufficient Library services	67	44.7

7b. Absence of updating reserved academic materials in the periodical section	67	44.7
7c. Some instructors repeated class missing	67	44.7
8. Dorm-mates' and/or classmates' pressurize me not to study	58	38.7
9. Failure to quickly adapt to the new academic environment	50	33.3
10. Absence of interactive teaching practices	47	31.3
11. Being assigned in a department I didn't expect to study	35	23.3
12. Insufficient classroom opportunities to express own ideas	33	22
13. My own poor classroom attendance	17	11.3

Table 4 demonstrates that the most powerful intervening factors that hinder the students' effort to meet their academic expectations to achieve better score is lack of enough study time. More than half, which is 58%, of the respondents proved this issue as the most serious factor. The second challenging problem as reported by the informants is the absence of tutorial support to the students. Nearly 55% of the respondents claimed this issue as the factor that constraints their university academic performance efforts. The third equally influential case is that about 53% of the students confirmed that they lack information on how to study in a university. Stated differently, it would highly likely that many students were challenged to succeed in their academics due to the fact that they did not get enough self-study time, tutorial support and information on how to study in a university.

Seventy-one (71) out of 150 respondents complained that they lack adequate guidance and counseling support, whereas seventy (70) respondents seemingly substantiated that they failed to meet their academic expectations due to lack of regular study habits. It would mean that students might not develop a regular and programmed study practices. Much more related to those points is that sixty-eight students (45.3%) indicated that the absence of instructors' advice and follow-up was one of the constraints that restricted their attempts to achieve their university expectations and academic success.

Significantly, the same number of students, closely 45%, rated three constraints, namely absence of qualified and sufficient library consultants, absence of updating reserved academic materials in the periodical section and some instructors repeated class missing as potential and challenging cases impeding their efforts to meet their university expectations and achievements.

38.7% of the respondents addressed that their dorm-mates' and/or classmates' discouraged them when they wanted to study, while 33.3% reported that they suffered hard in their attempts to quickly adapt to the new academic environment. On the other hand, a total of about 76.6% of the respondents complained that problems that were possibly linked to the institution including absence of interactive teaching practices, compulsory departmental placement and lack of sufficient classroom opportunities to express own ideas were reportedly potential barriers to achieve their expected academic success. However, 11.3% of the respondents admitted their own repeated class missing contributed to their failure to meet their academic expectations.

It follows that university learning requires a clearly set system of studying habits. Unless students are well-oriented about the how, when and where to study, they may achieve little academic success in a random and unplanned study habits. Students may develop the habit of studying their notes or reading materials in a library, dorm or somewhere else just when the actual exam time is closer. Yet, Weiten and Lloyd (2007) point out that students could experience regular academic achievements when they develop a stable and time-tabled study habits in the process of learning.

Moreover, Weiten and Lloyd (2007) also note that students who miss classes repeatedly are likely to score poor grades. They, for example, illustrate the consequence of poor class attendance by citing the research findings conducted by Lindgren (1969). It has been documented that many of the students who scored "grade average of C or below," were students who had poor class attendance, whereas most of the students who were successful, that is, those who achieved "grade average of B or above," were found to be students who respect their class attendances.

Results of Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

The result of the FGD repeats the issue that many students had little secured regular and self-study time. Most of the daily classes' were tight and unevenly distributed in all the learning days. Even worse is that there were occasions in which students were demanded to attend classes at weekends. It has been found that though the rate of differences in having classes on Saturday's and Sunday's varies from faculty to faculty, there has been greater pressure on the natural science students' self-study time. The result of the students' responses to the questionnaires also confirmed that students were under great pressure to attend classes throughout the school days.

Outstandingly, it has also been found that there exists ethno-linguistic and/or religious affiliation groupings formed by some university students. Though such groupings appear more of elusive, the members do have a hidden talk-time and talk-zone where they usually discuss how to help each other especially during exam times. What is more surprising is that cheating during exam time in order to benefit any member of the group does have even little shame on anyone of the partners in the group. Quite shockingly, the 'actor' or 'actress' involved in such situation became saluted as 'a life-safer' and so praised that every member was so eager to learn from his or her lessons.

In addition, it would seem highly likely that some students develop the misconception that passing the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate (GESLCE) and joining a university guarantees their ability and potential to easily handle university academic practices. Yet, they faced tough and more challenging learning tasks and activities and so, they could develop academic anxiety and stress.

As to the FGD findings, some groups of students rather thought that they have had the right to getting a passing mark or grade (i.e. '**C'**). It is with no surprise that students who had such perspectives may have blocked their academic expectations. Tragically, such students' academic expectations could possibly be inadequate and they became reluctant to study due to that they felt that they owned the right to earn a survival grade.

4. Conclusion

This study was designed to analyze the relationship between students' prior university prospects and their actual university academic achievements. It was meant to determine whether the relationship between students' prior university prospects and their actual university academic achievements is statistically significant or not. The results reveal that students' prior university academic prospects and their actual university academic achievements are strongly correlated constructs.

There is statistically significant relationship between students' prior university expectations and their actual academic achievements. Results confirm that students' prior university prospects determine their academic success or failure in their university study. Those with strong and positive prospects are more likely to be higher achievers compared to those with low or no prior university education academic expectations.

Most notably, students with little or no awareness about university academic requirements, study habits, strategies, learning behaviors, and those who are already low performers in their previous school experiences could be highly vulnerable to academic failure and even drop outs. It can, therefore, be concluded that students' earlier university prospects or academic expectations are found to have big impact on new entry students' academic behaviours. Universities should be proactive to minimize the potential discrepancies between students' earlier university prospects or expectations and their actual university academic requirements. It has been suggested that as students' prior university prospects are found to be one of the potential predictor of students' university academic success, universities need to prepare awareness raising and consultancy programs focusing on university academic practices, requirements, study habits and strategies. More importantly, there should be an official office working on student university life, study habits, and academic success strategies.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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