Adversity Quotient (AQ) and Academic Performance of Selected Students in MSU Marawi City

Abstract

Adversity Quotient (AQ) is the ability to surmount life’s adversities, whether academic, career or personal-social in nature. The study aimed to describe and correlate the AQ and academic performance of third-year and fourth-year students in Mindanao State University (MSU). It was hypothesized that college students who thrived in a university of multicultural population were persons high in AQ as they were high in academic performance. AQ was measured using the internally reliable Adversity Response Profile-Revised and academic performance was measured by the cumulative grade point average. The respondents were selected through quota sampling. The results revealed that the AQ and academic performance were positively correlated with each other. However, only one of the four components of AQ, the Origin and Ownership (O²), was shown to have significant relationship with academic performance. These findings suggest that the variance in the academic performance of college students would be better explained by the tendency of one to take responsibility for life adversities and not by the entire AQ as a construct itself. This insight is significant to educators, guidance counselors, and parents to nurture in students personal efficacy and self-regulation to facilitate academic success.

Keywords: adversity quotient (AQ), academic performance, college students, MSU Marawi City, descriptive-correlational

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Introduction

Adversity Quotient (AQ) is defined as the ability to surmount life’s adversities, and to turn every challenge into opportunities for personal success (Stoltz, 1997). Current literatures are in the idea that it is a success factor in the management discipline, particularly in personnel and human resource management. The underlying idea is that the people who are adequate in responding to adversities in the workplace are also the people who tend to succeed and bring positive organizational outcomes. In a study conducted by Lazaro-Capones (2004), for example, AQ and job performance of selected middle managers working in the government agencies in Manila were found to be significantly correlated. In another study conducted by Paramanandam and Shweta (2013), AQ and job satisfaction of managers working in the textile industry in India were also found to have a significant correlation. Moreover, Bukhari, Saeed, and Nisar (2011) explored the moderating role of AQ on the relationship between psychological contract breach and employees’ work outcomes. They found that AQ exerted an influence on the said relationship, which implied that high-AQ employees were likely to face challenging situations in organizations as compared to those low-AQ employees.

In the field of education, AQ has also gained some scholarly attention. Its role and impact on the job performance of educators were studied, particularly those of administrators and school principals (Williams, 2003) and those of professionals teaching in the special education curriculum (Santos, 2012).

In general, the concept of AQ can be used as framework to understand and predict success, which may include success in career (job performance) and in personal-social functioning (positive attitudes and satisfaction). Along with this idea, AQ can also be used to understand and predict academic achievement or scholastic success. Several studies have already been conducted around this conceptualization. However, the findings from these studies tend to be differing and inconsistent. On one hand, there were studies which asserted that AQ and academic achievement were not related, and that one did not affect the other (e.g., Sia, 2001; Anik& Lydia, 2006; Priska, 2010; Indah, 2010; and Arstity, 2012). On the other hand, there were studies conducted which asserted that AQ and all its components showed positive relationship with academic achievement (e.g., Yodsakun&Kuha, 2008; HiiJuan, 2009; D’Souza, 2006; and Cura&Gozum, 2011). Moreover, there was also a study which claimed that AQ positively correlated with academic performance, but only weakly (e.g., Rizqon, 2009), and another study which emphasized that only one component of AQ, the Control construct, had negatively influenced the academic achievement of students (Kiki, 2011). In a recent study by Matore, Khairani, and Razak (2015), AQ was found to contribute only 0.9% changes in the variance of academic achievement score among Malaysian polytechnic students.

Considering the disparities in the current literature about AQ and academic achievement, this study was initiated in the hope to strike clarity, and more importantly, to describe the relationship between AQ and academic performance among a specific group of college students, the third-year and fourth-year college students in a multicultural university context. In a study conducted by Shen (2014), it was pointed out that AQ varied significantly with age and seniority. That is, students in the higher academic levels tended to score higher on AQ compared to students in the lower academic levels. Also, in another study conducted by BU Xiangui and colleagues (2007), the AQ levels of students from an ordinary university were lower compared to students from a university with many setbacks for students.

Taken in other words, this study was designed to address the knowledge gap of understanding the relationship between AQ and academic performance in a specific group of students in a unique context; that is, among third-year and fourth-year college students in a university setting of diverse cultures, languages, religion, among others such as the Mindanao State University (MSU) in Marawi City.

Framework Of The Study

The theory of Adversity Quotient by Paul G. Stoltz served as the framework of this study. Stoltz (1997) assumes that people possess an instinctual drive to ascend, which causes people to engage in adaptive behaviors and productive activities. The command to ascend is imperative and inevitable for everyone.

Adversity Quotient (AQ) is the measure of how people ascend despite obstacles, of how they respond to adversity. This may be equated to the ability to withstand and surmount life problems and challenges. This is comprised of four CO2RE dimensions, namely Control, Origin and Ownership, Reach, and Endurance (Stoltz, 1997).

Control involves the extent to which one person perceives authority over an adverse event and on how he responds to and handles it. Origin and Ownership relate to the extent to which one person puts rightly and appropriately blame to self for the occurrence of adversity, which leads to remorse, a powerful motivator when properly dealt with (Stoltz, 1997).
Reach is the ability of one person to limit the reach of his problem to the adversity at hand to make it more manageable. That is, it is about isolating an obstacle at hand and addressing it more precisely. Endurance is the ability to perceive rightly that adversities in life are either temporary or permanent (Stoltz, 1997).

These four CO₂RE factors that constitute AQ altogether determine human performance for successful ascent. In this research, academic performance of MSU third-year and fourth-year students was considered as an aspect of human performance, where AQ and the four CO₂RE dimensions may have in one way or another relationship with it.

Statement Of The Problem
This study aimed to describe and correlate the AQ and academic performance of third-year and fourth-year students of the Mindanao State University-Main Campus in Marawi City. The study worked on the null hypothesis that there was no significant correlation between AQ and academic performance, and that there was no significant correlation between each AQ component and academic performance.

Methodology
The study employed the descriptive-correlational research, which was the most appropriate design to use considering the statement of the problem. The locale of the study was the main campus of the Mindanao State University in Marawi City. The main reason for choosing the campus over other higher educational institutions was its multicultural population. It was understood that the university was the melting pot of students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Students attending such a university type were believed to experience greater pressure because of cultural heterogeneity that causes some to persist at a lower rate compared to others (Pender, 2010) and underachieve academically (Whaley, 2011). This fact means that the university posed unique personal-social, academic, and career-related challenges to the students, hence the right persons whose AQ was very meaningful and relevant.

The sample comprised of 94 third-year and fourth-year students who were selected through convenient quota sampling, proportionate to the population per college in the University (35 males, 59 females; 84% was in the age range of 19-21; ethnically and religiously diverse). That is, all fourteen colleges of the University had their representation in the sample. The reason for delimiting the population was that the third-year and fourth-year college students were more experienced compared to younger college and high school students. Previous literatures also pointed out that seniority and age were significant factors to AQ (e.g., Shen, 2014).

The instrument used to measure AQ was the revised Adversity Response Profile that was pre-tested and had internal reliability coefficient of 0.8414. The academic performance was measured using actual data from the University Registrar on each of the respondent’s CGPA (cumulative grade point average), access to which was duly allowed by the respondents when they provided their individual student ID number.

The use of the revised Adversity Response Profile required the respondents to respond to thirty different situations with two questions each. In each question, a certain respondent would encircle a number from 1 to 5 representing his/her response. The scoring would involve counting and adding up responses in specific items to determine four AQ component scores, namely Control, Origin and Ownership, Reach, and Endurance, or the CO₂RE. The sum of the four component scores was the overall AQ score. Every CO₂RE score was interpreted as low (10-25), midrange (26-37) and high (38-50). The overall AQ score was interpreted as low (0-59), below average (60-94), average (95-134), above average (135-165), and high (166-200).

In analyzing the data, frequency distribution and percentage were used to describe the respondents’ level of AQ and academic performance. The Pearson product-moment correlation was also used to correlate the two variables. The respondents’ scores on the individual components of AQ were correlated with their CGPA, as well as the overall AQ score was correlated with the same.

Results And Discussion
The Adversity Quotient (AQ) of Selected Students in MSU Marawi City
The results revealed that majority of the respondents fell on the average range of overall AQ score. Specifically, as shown in Table 1, 62.77% of the respondents had the AQ score within 95-134. This information is difficult to interpret because there were no available norms to compare to. However, it could be said that the third-year and fourth-year college students tended to fare well in facing adversities in life. It could also be said that the respondents had not been exposed to very serious life challenges, problems, and adversities, which were experiences that could develop one to have high AQ. This finding finds support in the study of Shen (2014) that found...
high AQ tends to come with seniority status and accumulated life experiences.

Table 1. *Distribution of Respondents According to the Overall AQ Score*

| Range          | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| 166-200 (High)| 0         | 0          |
| 135-165 (High Average)| 23       | 24.47      |
| 95-134 (Average) | 59       | 62.77      |
| 60-94 (Low Average) | 10       | 10.64      |
| 59 and below (Low) | 2        | 2.13       |
| **Total**     | **94**    | **100.00** |

Looking specifically into the component scores, namely Control (C), Origin and Ownership (O₂), Reach (R), and Endurance (E), the same impression may be derived: the majority of the respondents (65.28%) tended to have midrange scores both in Control (C) and in Origin and Ownership (O₂) (see Table 2), and almost all of the respondents (80.36%) had midrange score for Reach (R) as they had midrange score for Endurance (E) (see Table 3).

Table 2. *Distribution of Respondents According to C and O₂ Component Scores*

| Control (C) | Ownership and Control (O₂) | Total |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-------|
|             | High (38-50 pts) | Midrange (24-37 pts) | Low (10-23 pts) |
|             | f % | f % | f % | f % |
| High (38-50 pts) | 2 | 16.18 | 4 | 5.56 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6.38 |
| Midrange (24-37 pts) | 6 | 54.55 | 47 | 65.28 | 2 | 16.67 | 55 | 58.51 |
| Low (10-23 pts) | 3 | 27.27 | 21 | 29.17 | 10 | 83.33 | 33 | 35.11 |
| **Total** | **11** | **100** | **72** | **100** | **12** | **100** | **94** | **100** |

Table 3. *Distribution of Respondents According to R and E Component Scores*

| Reach (R) | Endurance (E) | Total |
|-----------|---------------|-------|
|           | High (38-50 pts) | Midrange (24-37 pts) | Low (10-23 pts) |
|           | f % | f % | f % | f % |
| High (38-50 pts) | 10 | 38.46 | 8 | 14.29 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 19.15 |
| Midrange (24-37 pts) | 16 | 61.54 | 45 | 80.36 | 4 | 33.33 | 65 | 69.15 |
| Low (10-23 pts) | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5.36 | 8 | 66.67 | 11 | 11.70 |
| **Total** | **26** | **100** | **56** | **100** | **12** | **100** | **94** | **100** |

These consistencies in four component scores offer a significant insight. In the literal sense, the respondents tended to not have varying component scores, and that they tended to cluster around midrange score. Stoltz (1997) asserted that there were people who tend to have extreme scores. That is, they may be very high in one component score and very low in others. This was not observed among the participants, in as far as the data outlined in Table 2 and 3 are concerned.

The Academic Performance of Selected Students in MSU Marawi City

Table 4 outlines the academic performance of the respondents based on their CGPA. It can be noticed that almost three quarters of the sample (72.34%) had good to very good academic performance, whose CGPA ranged from 2.49 to 1.50. This implies that majority of the respondents were very satisfactory in their studies.

In addition, this observation is interesting because this somehow tells in advance the relationship of AQ and academic performance. As the majority of the respondents had average AQ, they also had midrange performance in their academics.

Table 4. *Distribution of Respondents According to Academic Performance*

| CGPA         | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 1.00 – 1.49 (Excellent) | 2 | 2.13 |
| 1.50 – 1.99 (Very Good) | 29 | 30.85 |
| 2.00 – 2.49 (Good) | 39 | 41.49 |
| 2.50 – 2.74 (Satisfactory) | 9 | 9.57 |
| 2.75 – 3.00 (Fair) | 8 | 8.51 |
| 3.01 and below (Low) | 7 | 7.45 |
| **Total** | **94** | **100** |

The Relationship between AQ and Academic Performance

Table 5 outlines the information on the correlation between each CO₂:RE score and academic performance, as well as the correlation between overall AQ and academic performance. It can be seen that all these factors have weak positive correlations with academic performance. And, among others, only the O₂ score significantly correlated with academic performance at alpha 0.05.

Table 5. *The Correlation Coefficients of CO₂:RE and AQ with Academic Performance*

| AQ and Scores | CO₂:RE Scores | Correlation Coefficients | Interpretation |
|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Control (C)   | 0.0385        | Positive Weak            |                |
| Origin and Ownership (O₂) | 0.2230* | Positive Weak            |                |
| Reach (R)     | 0.1181        | Positive Weak            |                |
| Endurance (E) | 0.0466        | Positive Weak            |                |
| Adversity Quotient (AQ) | 0.1465 | Positive Weak            |                |

*Significant at alpha 0.05

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The information of the correlation between CO$_2$RE scores and academic performance, and between AQ and academic performance offers two major insights that are supported by current literatures. First, students with high AQ may have high academic performance, but not in all instances. The other way of thinking may also be true: students with high academic performance may have high AQ, but this could not be observed in all people in all situations due to their insignificant weak positive correlation. This is backed up by Rizqon (2009), who also asserted that there is only weak positive correlation between AQ and academic performance. This gives an implication that academic performance is a complex construct, making it difficult to predict, in as far as AQ alone is concerned.

Second, the variance in academic performance of the respondents could neither be explained adequately by AQ nor by its component scores, except O$_2$, due to the latter’s significant correlation with academic performance. This is backed up studies which found that the O$_2$ component of AQ significantly correlated with certain positive outcomes and attitudes, such as organizational resilience (Ng, 2013) and perceived academic control (Fishman, 2012).

**Conclusions**

Based on the major findings, several conclusions were drawn. First, the AQ of third-year and fourth-year college students in MSU, amidst the multicultural nature of the educational institution, was on average. Second, the academic performances of the respondents were fairly high, ranging from good to very good. Third, the AQ explains only a very minimal role in the variance of academic performance among third-year and fourth-year college students. Lastly, the ability to determine the true origin of adversities and the ability to take rightful responsibility to them may have significant roles in shaping academic success, hence yielding information for educators, guidance counselors, and parents to develop such abilities among college students.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. AQ remains as a potential success factor in predicting academic achievement. However, it is recommended that other perspectives in the investigation between the two variables should be explored, such as adding qualitative data to complement AQ and CO$_2$RE scores;
2. A further study may be conducted which shall adopt a more systematic way of sampling and/or a wider scope; and
3. Educators, guidance counselors, and parents may develop in the students the skills related to self-regulation and personal efficacy so that they know when to blame the self for certain life adversities and failures, and that they are careful on what specific actions to take in addressing such challenges.

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