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## **Depressed Economy and Deviant Behavior among some Selected Nigerian Students**

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### **Abstract**

The incidence and accounts of current global economic happenings around the world is marked by several challenges, with the high cost of living being a prominent issue affecting people worldwide. Narrowing it down to local economy outlook of Nigeria, this research delved into perceived effect of depressed economy on undergraduate students, the deviant behaviours caused by the depressed economy and the coping mechanisms adopted by the students in addressing the depressed economy. A quantitative survey research method was adopted with the use of structured questionnaires carried out in Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-iwoye, Ogun state among Social Science Faculty students, with a sample size of 357 respondents selected through the Taro Yamane formula. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS. The findings indicate that students face significant financial challenges, such as difficulty affording school fees, deteriorating living conditions, and increased transportation costs. These economic pressures affected the affordability of essential items like food and groceries. The findings draw attention to how the financial stress and limited economic opportunities contribute to the adoption of deviant behaviours such as gambling, cybercrime, transactional relationships etc., among students. Engaging in online classes to reduce transportation costs and reducing non-essential spending appear to be top on the coping mechanisms adopted by students in response

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to economic challenges. The study then concluded that there is significant correlation between economic hardship and the rise of deviant behaviours among students.

**Keywords:** Depressed Economy, Students, Deviant Behaviour, Nigerian Economy.

## INTRODUCTION

The economy, as a social institution, plays a vital role in shaping the structure and functioning of societies. It encompasses the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services at national, continental, and global levels, influencing how individuals interact and organize themselves. According to Marx, the economy, or the mode of production, forms the substructure of society, which in turn shapes and influences the superstructure, including other social institutions. The economy is a major determinant of a nation's standard of living, life expectancy, and global standing (Lawanson & Umar, 2021). During periods of economic prosperity, key indicators such as employment rates, consumer spending, and business investments tend to rise, reflecting robust economic growth, low unemployment, and increased business activity. This positive cycle of growth and development is often associated with periods of high GDP growth (Pham-Truffert, Metz, Fischer, Rueff & Messerli, 2020; Chen, Kumara & Sivakumar, 2021).

Conversely, a depressed economy is characterized by prolonged downturns in economic activity, marked by high unemployment, negative GDP growth, and a sharp decline in productivity. A depressed economy typically lasts for three or more years and leads to substantial decline in economic output, bankruptcies, reduced trade, falling currency values, and rising inflation rates (Guttmann & Guttmann, 2022). Other symptoms include poverty, homelessness, stock market declines, and elevated rates of personal and business bankruptcies (Eid Balbaa, 2020).

On a global scale, the current economic landscape faces significant challenges, with the high cost of living emerging as a critical issue. The World Economic Outlook reported an uneven recovery, driven by financial sector instability, high inflation, and geopolitical events such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic severely disrupted global economies, with inflationary pressures, supply chain breakdowns, and increased government spending contributing to the rising cost of goods and services, thereby eroding individual purchasing power (Free & Hecimovic, 2021). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global economy contracted by 3.5% in 2020, illustrating the gravity

of the crisis (IMF, 2021). Geopolitical tensions and trade disputes among major economies further create uncertainties, undermining global trade and investment flows and threatening overall economic stability (IMF, 2022).

In the United States, inflationary pressures have escalated, diminishing consumer purchasing power and raising concerns about economic stability. Rising costs in housing, healthcare, energy, and education have exacerbated the financial burden on American households (Dadush, 2023). Similarly, in sub-Saharan Africa, the region's economic growth is expected to slow to 2.5% in 2023, down from 3.6% in 2022 (Awolaja, Onakoya & Akinola, 2024). The region faces a multifaceted crisis, including climate change, corruption, political instability, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of which have contributed to escalating debt levels and economic stagnation. Approximately 462 million people in the region continue to live in extreme poverty, underscoring the need for sustainable economic solutions ((Eid Balbaa, 2020).

Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer and economy, exemplifies the economic challenges confronting developing nations. Despite its wealth in natural resources, Nigeria has experienced high poverty rates and prolonged economic depression. During the late 20th century, Nigeria's economy prospered due to an oil boom in the 1970s and early 1980s, which led to significant growth in government revenues, infrastructure development, and living standards (Brown, Elenwo, & Johnbull, 2022). However, the collapse of oil prices in the 1980s, coupled with resource mismanagement, triggered a severe economic downturn. In the past decade, Nigeria experienced two recessions, in 2016 and 2020, with a 1.8% contraction in GDP in 2020 marking its steepest decline since 1983 (Samuel, Odo, Atewologun, Adeyeye, & Olaegbe, 2021). The country's overdependence on oil, coupled with poor governance and widespread corruption, has perpetuated its economic challenges (Emmanuel, 2023). Volatility in global oil prices has led to revenue shortfalls, fiscal instability, and rising external debt, while systemic corruption and mismanagement have further stifled economic growth and deterred foreign investment (Oladejo & Adenuga, 2021).

The consequences of Nigeria's economic difficulties are profound, with widespread unemployment, poverty, and a deterioration in living standards. As the economy continues to falter, access to essential services such as healthcare and education has become increasingly limited, deepening socio-economic inequalities (Adewusi, Ogunyemi & Aluko, 2017; Oladejo & Ijimayowa, 2024). This economic instability has also contributed to a mass exodus of young Nigerians seeking better opportunities abroad. The ongoing economic crisis in Nigeria affects all sectors of society, including students. As participants in the economic system, undergraduate students are directly impacted by the country's economic conditions. According to Oladejo and Oseni (2024), students engage in economic activities such as saving, purchasing, and selling goods and services, often within the context of higher education institutions. The economic downturn has had a noticeable effect on students' lifestyles, education, and financial well-being. Many students have reported significant financial strain as a result of rising costs and limited resources.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the Nigeria's economy downturn and the experiences of higher education students, by examining the nation's economic woes and its impacts on personal struggles faced by undergraduate students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Nigerian economy is currently grappling with severe challenges, characterized by persistent currency devaluation, escalating inflation, low GDP growth, high unemployment rates, and a sharp increase in the prices of essential commodities, all of which have led to widespread hardship for its citizens (Samuel et al., 2021). The effects of these economic difficulties are evident in the daily lives of many Nigerians. Numerous businesses have been forced to shut down, transportation costs have soared, and a significant portion of the population is struggling to afford basic necessities.

One of the foremost issues contributing to the current economic crisis is the rising inflation rate, which has become a significant concern due to its erosion of the purchasing power

of individuals and households. As the prices of essential goods and services continue to rise, many Nigerians find it increasingly difficult to meet their basic needs, leading to a marked decline in their standard of living (Emmanuel, 2023).

Additionally, the continuous depreciation of the Naira against major foreign currencies remains a critical concern. The devaluation of the Naira has exacerbated economic hardship, particularly in a country where consumption of imported goods far exceeds local production and exports. The declining value of the Naira has significantly affected both domestic and international trade, making imports more expensive and further contributing to the rising cost of living (Obidike & Abiria, 2020).

Another factor aggravating the economic crisis is the removal of fuel subsidies by the Nigerian federal government. Although this policy measure may be seen as necessary for addressing fiscal imbalances, it has led to a surge in fuel prices. This increase has had a direct impact on transportation and energy costs, resulting in higher prices for food and other essential commodities. Consequently, the removal of subsidies has placed an additional financial strain on a population already struggling with widespread poverty.

Despite these economic challenges, education remains a crucial asset for Nigeria, and it is imperative that the nation prioritizes the protection of its educational standards. The current economic depression should not be allowed to compromise the quality of education at the tertiary level, as this would hinder the development of innovative and capable minds needed to uplift the nation. In light of this, the present study aims to examine the impact of perceived depressed economy on students in Olabisi Onabanjo University, determine the influence of depressed economy on deviant behaviours and identify coping mechanisms adopted by undergraduate students at Olabisi Onabanjo University in response to Nigeria's depressed economy.

## **Literature review**

Economic downturns have been closely associated with increased stress and financial strain, which can lead to a variety of deviant behaviors, including criminal activities, as coping mechanisms. In times of economic depression, social and psychological stressors are exacerbated, contributing to higher rates of criminal activity. Ogunyemi, Adenuga and Lawal (2019) notes that economic downturns create "a breeding ground for criminal activities", as individuals face difficulties in meeting their basic needs. This is particularly evident in Nigeria, where economic instability and widespread poverty have been linked to high crime rates. Akinyemi and Akindutire (2019) emphasize the impact of economic hardship on criminal behavior in Nigeria, arguing that poverty and unemployment significantly increase the likelihood of engaging in illegal activities. The scarcity of legitimate economic opportunities pushes many individuals towards illicit means of survival, including theft, fraud, and drug trafficking.

Corman and Mocan (2016) similarly found a positive correlation between economic hardship and deviant behaviors among college students. During economic downturns, students are more likely to engage in riskier behaviors such as excessive drinking, drug use, and casual sexual activities as a means of coping with financial stress (Oladejo & Oseni, 2024). This phenomenon, describes how individuals resort to deviant behaviors to alleviate the stress caused by economic hardship.

In Nigeria, the economic situation has also been linked to a rise in gambling activities among undergraduate students. Jack and Ibekwe (2018) argue that economic downturns create conditions in which individuals are more likely to engage in gambling as a way of seeking quick financial gains or as an escape from economic difficulties. The growing popularity of online betting platforms, which provide easy access to gambling opportunities, further fuels this trend (Bosun-Arije, 2019). Additionally, the prevalence of cybercrime among Nigerian youth, including students, has been directly linked to the country's economic challenges. Adegbola and Akande (2020) explain that the high unemployment rate and limited job opportunities have driven some students to engage in cybercrime as a means of generating income. This is

compounded by the widespread availability of internet access and the relative ease of participating in cybercriminal activities such as email scams and online fraud (Adegbola, 2018).

One prominent economic challenge faced by Nigerian undergraduate students is the rising cost of tuition and other educational expenses. Adebayo (2023) highlights that the rapid increase in tuition fees has made it increasingly difficult for students from low-income backgrounds to afford higher education, leading to significant financial strain and stress. Ojo and Fasina (2019) further note that limited access to financial aid exacerbates the economic burden on students, particularly those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

In response to these challenges, Nigerian undergraduate students have adopted various coping mechanisms to manage their financial situation. Adeyemi and Akinwale (2020) identify part-time employment as a common strategy for supplementing income and covering educational expenses. Additionally, Ogunmakin and Agboola (2017) emphasize the importance of family support networks, with many students relying on financial assistance from parents or relatives to navigate economic difficulties.

Entrepreneurial activities have also emerged as a popular coping strategy among Nigerian undergraduate students. Oladejo and Ijimeyowa (2024) observe that students often engage in small-scale businesses, such as selling goods or offering services online, to generate income and achieve financial independence. Furthermore, online freelancing platforms provide additional opportunities for students to earn money remotely further mitigating the economic hardships they face.

## **Theoretical framework**

Theoretical framework is a systematic guide that researchers use to establish a basis for their work by presenting relevant knowledge within a particular school of thought. For this research work, Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping will be employed in order to provide a comprehensive explanation on the coping strategies and the depressed economy among undergraduate students.



## **The Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping**

The Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping is a seminal psychological framework that has been widely recognized and applied to understand individuals' responses to various stressors, including significant socio-political events. This theoretical framework, developed by psychologists Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, provides a comprehensive lens through which to understand the dynamic relationship between individuals and their environment, especially in high-stress situations such as socio-political and economic changes. This theory provides a framework for understanding how undergraduate students cope with the stresses induced by a depressed economy. This model posits that stress is a result of the interaction between an individual and their environment with emphasis on cognitive appraisal and coping strategies as key components.

In application of the theory in a depressed economy, undergraduate students are likely to experience heightened financial pressures, uncertainty about future employment, and an increased burden to succeed academically despite limited resources. According to the model, students first engage in primary appraisal, where they assess whether the economic conditions pose a threat to their well-being. If perceived as a threat, they proceed to secondary appraisal, evaluating their resources and options to manage the stressor.

Moreover, coping strategies, as outlined by Lazarus and Folkman, are divided into problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches. Problem-focused coping involves actions aimed at addressing the root cause of stress. For students, this could include seeking part-time employment, applying for scholarships, or cutting down on non-essential expenditures. These strategies aim to alleviate financial strain directly, thereby reducing the stress associated with economic hardship. Besides, emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, aims to manage the emotional distress resulting from the economic situation. According to Oladejo and Adenuga (2023), students might engage in activities that promote relaxation and mental well-being, such as exercise, social support, or engaging in hobbies. Cognitive restructuring, a key component of emotion-focused coping, enables students to reframe their perspectives, fostering resilience by

focusing on positive aspects of their situation, such as the development of financial management skills.

However, the effectiveness of these coping strategies is influenced by personal and contextual factors which include social support networks, individual resilience, and access to resources. A supportive environment, both at home and within the academic community can significantly bolster students' capacity to cope with economic stress. Additionally, universities can play a pivotal role by providing financial aid, counseling services, and career guidance to help students navigate the challenges posed by a depressed economy.

Therefore, Lazarus and Folkman's model describes the dynamic connection between cognitive appraisal and coping strategies, while portraying how undergraduate students can effectively manage the stress of a depressed economy through a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms. This approach not only addresses immediate financial concerns but also promotes long-term emotional resilience.

## **Methodology**

This study was descriptive in nature and the study area was Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-iwoye main campus. The population consisted of undergraduate students of the Faculty of Social Sciences. The total population was 3287 and Taro Yamane's formula, aiming for a 5% (0.0025) error margin and 95% confidence level was used to calculate the sample size giving a total of 357. The study employed stratified sampling techniques and simple random sampling technique. The sample size was stratified across the six departments in the Faculty, and then simple random sampling technique was used to select undergraduates as the population of the study. The major research instrument used was questionnaire which was appropriately moderated. The data was later analyzed with the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21.0.

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This section presents the findings of the study and the analysis from the data collected from respondents which focuses on the depressed economy and deviant behaviour among

undergraduate student of Olabisi Onabanjo University. In the analysis both descriptive and analytical form were used. Throughout the investigation, a total of three hundred and fifty-seven (357) online form questionnaires were disseminated and administered to the participants.

#### *Analysis of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents*

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the socio-demographic variables of the sample, including sex, marital status, age, religion, departments, and academic levels etc. of the 357 respondents. The frequencies and percentages were presented for each category within each variable. Table 1 reveals the gender distribution which is relatively balanced, with males comprising 52.9% of the respondents and females accounting for 47.1%. This suggests a nearly equal representation of both genders in the study. Age distribution indicates that nearly half of the respondents are within the range of 21-25 years of age (47.0%), followed by those within 26-30 years (31.4%). The younger age group (16-20 years) comprises 20.2%, with a minimal proportion (1.4%) exceeding 31 years.

In terms of religious affiliation, the majority of respondents are Christians (44.5%), with Muslims representing 32.2% and others (including non-religious and various minority faiths) making up 23.3%. Marital status data shows a significant majority of single respondents (84.9%) compared to a smaller proportion of married individuals (15.1%).

The distribution across academic departments highlights a diverse range of fields, with Mass Communication (21.8%) and Political Science (18.5%) being the most common, followed by Sociology (17.4%), Economics (16.0%), Psychology (14.3%), and Geography (12.0%). Level-wise, most respondents are in their 200 level (34.7%), with 100 level students comprising 17.4%, 300 level at 26.6%, and 400 level students at 21.3%.

Regarding financial support from parents or guardians, 37.0% of the respondents receive allowances monthly, while 24.3% get them weekly. A notable 25.8% receive allowances quarterly, and 12.9% do not receive any financial support. Allowance varies in amount, with the largest group (28.6%) receiving between #5,001 and #10,000, followed by 24.9% getting

between #10,001 and #20,000 while 20.2% received between #20,001 and #30,000 with a smaller percentage receiving higher amounts.

This data provides a clear picture of the demographic and economic characteristics of the respondents, which denotes their diverse backgrounds and financial circumstances.

**Table 1: Analysis of the Respondents' Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Female	168	47.1
	Male	189	52.9
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>	16 - 20	72	20.2
	21 - 25	168	47.0
	26 - 30	112	31.4
	>31	5	1.4
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Religion</b>	Christianity	159	44.5
	Islam	115	32.2
	Others	83	23.3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	54	15.1
	Single	303	84.9
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Department</b>	Sociology	62	17.4
	Mass communication	78	21.8
	Psychology	51	14.3
	Geography	43	12.0
	Economics	57	16.0

	Political Science	66	18.5
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Level</b>	100 level	62	17.4
	200 level	124	34.7
	300 level	95	26.6
	400 level	76	21.3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>How often do you receive allowance from parents/guardians</b>	Weekly	87	24.3
	Monthly	132	37
	Quarterly	92	25.8
	Never	46	12.9
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Allowance Received from parents/guardians</b>	< #5,000	44	12.3
	#5,001 - #10,000	102	28.6
	#10,001 - #20,000	89	24.9
	#20,001 - #30,000	72	20.2
	#30,001 - #40,000	24	6.7
	> #40,000	26	7.3
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

### Analysis of the Research Objectives

To examine the depressed economy and deviant behaviour among undergraduate student of Olabisi Onabanjo University, descriptive statistical tools was used such as mean, percentage, and frequencies. The variables were gauged using a nominal scale, specifically, the 5-point Likert-type rating scale. This Likert scale spans from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree," 2 to "Disagree," 3 to "Undecided," 4 to "Agree," and 5 to "Strongly Agree." These values will be multiplied by the response frequencies, and the resulting a mean values will be calculated. A

mean of 0.01 - 1.80 will interpreted as "Strongly Disagree," a mean of 1.81 - 2.60 will indicate "Disagree," a mean falling between 2.61-3.40 signified "Undecided," a mean ranging from 3.41-4.20 will denote "Agreement," and a mean of 4.21-5.00 will represent "Strongly Agree."

#### *Research Objective one*

The first objective was to examine the impact of perceived depressed economy on students in Olabisi Onabanjo University

Table 2 offers a detailed analysis of the impact of the perceived depressed economy on undergraduate students at Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU). The data portrays significant challenges faced by students due to the current economic conditions. The mean values of the responses indicate a general agreement on the adverse effects of the economic downturn. Students find it increasingly difficult to afford school fees, with a mean response of 3.56, suggesting that the majority struggle with tuition costs. Living conditions have also deteriorated, as reflected by a mean of 3.64, indicating that economic hardships have substantially affected students' daily lives. The cost of transportation to the campus has seen a notable increase, with the highest mean of 4.15, underscoring that this is a critical issue for many students.

Moreover, stress and anxiety levels have risen significantly, with a mean of 3.46, showing that economic pressures are taking a toll on students' mental health. Affordability of essential items, such as food and groceries, is another major concern, evidenced by a mean of 3.91. This indicates that many students are struggling to meet basic needs, which further compounds their stress.

Additionally, educational expenses beyond tuition, such as books and supplies, are also a significant burden, with a mean of 3.64. The sense of hopelessness among students is voiced, with a mean of 3.41, reflecting the emotional and psychological strain caused by the economic situation. Anger towards the economic conditions is common, as shown by a mean of 3.66, indicating frustration and dissatisfaction among the student body.

Overall, the grand mean of 3.68 suggests adverse impacts of the depressed economy on various aspects of students' lives.

**Table 2: The Impact of the perceived depressed economy on undergraduate students of OOU**

	Item	Original Scale					Mean
		SA	A	N	D	SD	
<b>1</b>	The current economic situation has made it difficult for me to afford school fees.	104	107	61	54	31	<b>3.56</b>
<b>2</b>	The current economic situation has impacted my living conditions	105	121	52	56	23	<b>3.64</b>
<b>3</b>	The economic downturn has increased the cost of transportation to the campus.	146	157	26	19	9	<b>4.15</b>
<b>4</b>	The current economic situation has increased my level of stress and anxiety.	89	108	71	57	32	<b>3.46</b>
<b>5</b>	The current economic situation has affected my ability to afford essential items such as food and groceries.	137	119	48	37	16	<b>3.91</b>
<b>6</b>	The economic situation has impacted on my ability to cover educational expenses.	102	116	65	56	18	<b>3.64</b>
<b>7</b>	The current economic situation has made me to become more hopeless	89	101	67	68	32	<b>3.41</b>
<b>8</b>	I always feel angry whenever I think about this economic situation	105	118	64	49	21	<b>3.66</b>
	<b>Grand Mean = 29.43/8 =3.68</b>						

***Field Survey 2024***

***Research Objective Two***

The second objective was to determine the influence of depressed economy on the prevalence of deviant behaviours among undergraduate students at Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU). Table

3 reveals a marked prevalence of various forms of deviant behaviour caused by the depressed economy with significant implications for both individual students and the broader campus environment. Among the behaviours listed, skipping classes emerges as the most common, affecting 44% of the respondents. In addition, gambling ranks as the second most prevalent deviant behaviour, reported by 34.7% of the respondents, followed by substance abuse as reported by 31.7% of the respondents. Furthermore, cybercrime is noted by 27.4% of respondents, suggesting that some students are engaging in illegal online activities; transactional sex, though less common, affects 21.8% of the respondents, highlighting a desperate measure some students may resort to in the face of severe financial constraints; gang fights and violent crimes, such as stealing and rape, are reported less frequently but still point to a troubling undercurrent of violence and criminal behavior within the student body with a cumulative 14.8% of the respondents exhibiting such behaviour.

Overall, the data indicates a significant correlation between economic deprivation and various forms of deviant behaviours.

**Table 3: Deviant behaviors exhibited by undergraduate students of oou due to depressed**

S/N	Deviant Behaviours	Frequency	%
1	Transactional Sex	78	<b>21.8%</b>
2	Gambling	124	<b>34.7%</b>
3	Cybercrime	98	<b>27.4%</b>
4	Substance Abuse	113	<b>31.7%</b>
5	Gang Fights ( Gangsterism)	43	<b>12.%</b>
6	Stealing	2	<b>0.6%</b>
7	Rape	8	<b>2.2%</b>
8	Skipping Classes	157	<b>44%</b>

economy.

*Field Survey, 2024*



### *Research Objective Three*

The third objective was to identify the coping mechanisms adopted by undergraduate students of Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU) in response to economic challenges. The data from the table shows a variety of strategies employed by students to manage increased living and educational expenses. The highest mean score of 4.05 indicates that a significant number of students engage in online classes to mitigate the effects of increased campus bus fare inflation. This suggests a pragmatic approach to reducing transportation costs by leveraging digital platforms for their education. Additionally, students have notably reduced their non-essential spending, with a mean score of 3.75, reflecting a conscious effort to prioritize essential expenses over discretionary ones. Moreover, seeking part-time jobs or additional income sources also emerges as a prevalent coping strategy, with a mean score of 3.63. This indicates that many students are actively seeking ways to supplement their income to cover increased costs. Similarly, reducing the number of days they attend school each week, with a mean score of 3.61, highlights another practical measure taken to minimize transportation and related expenses. The adjustment of spending habits and adoption of a more frugal lifestyle, reflected in a mean score of 3.76, further underscores the students' efforts to manage their limited resources more effectively. Social support from friends and family also plays a crucial role, with a mean score of 3.43, indicating that many students rely on their social networks to navigate financial difficulties. Overall, the grand mean of 3.71 suggests that students are actively adopting a range of strategies to cope with the economic challenges they face. These measures, from leveraging technology for education to altering spending habits and seeking additional income sources, highlight the resilience and adaptability of the students in managing their financial burdens.

**Table 4: Coping mechanisms adopted by undergraduate students of OOU**

	Item	Original Scale					Mean
		SA	A	N	D	SD	

<b>1</b>	I seek part-time jobs or additional income sources to cover increased fare and living expenses.	102	114	65	58	18	<b>3.63</b>
<b>2</b>	I have reduced my non-essential spending	114	126	47	53	17	<b>3.75</b>
<b>3</b>	I engage in online classes to cushion the effect in the hike of campus bus fare inflation.	147	132	39	27	12	<b>4.05</b>
<b>4</b>	I have reduced my numbers of days in week to go school	98	126	52	57	24	<b>3.61</b>
<b>5</b>	I rely on social support from friends and family	93	105	57	67	35	<b>3.43</b>
<b>6</b>	I have adjusted my spending habits and try to live a more frugal lifestyle	113	126	53	48	17	<b>3.76</b>
	<b>Grand Mean = <math>22.23/6 = 3.71</math></b>						

### ***Field Survey 2024***

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings from the field survey on the depressed economy and deviant behaviour among undergraduate student of Olabisi Onabanjo University revealed valuable insights into the impact of the depressed economy and coping mechanisms related to these economic crises. The result from research objective one unveils the impact of the perceived depressed economy on undergraduate students at Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), which portrays significant challenges. The finding indicates that economic hardship is adversely affecting various aspects of students' lives, ranging from affordability of school fees, living conditions, to transportation costs. These findings align with studies by Aristovnik, et al, (2020) which highlight that economic recession causes high inflation rates which reduces purchasing power, financial

instability and exacerbate poverty. Besides, the rising levels of stress and anxiety among students, reflect the psychological impact of economic downturns noted by Browning et al. (2021), who ascertained that increased stress, anxiety, and depression are due to financial worries.

Additionally, in terms of deviant behaviours, the findings from the second research objective shows the prevalence of deviant behaviors among OOU students. The high frequency of skipping classes and engagement in gambling suggests that economic pressures are leading students to prioritize immediate financial gains over academic commitments, similar to findings by Price (2022), who reported increased gambling activities among financially stressed students. The substantial incidence of substance abuse and cybercrime underscores a troubling trend where students resort to illegal or harmful behaviors as coping mechanisms, echoing the patterns observed by Oladejo and Oseni, (2024) in their study.

Moreover, the last research objective on the coping mechanisms adopted by students in response to economic challenges shows that engaging in online classes to reduce transportation costs and reducing non-essential spending were more pragmatic which aligns with strategies documented by Price (2022), on the increased reliance on digital platforms and frugal living among students during financial hardships. Seeking part-time jobs and adjusting spending habits further reflect the adaptive measures students take to manage financial burdens, similar to findings by Ogunmakin and Agboola(2017) on student coping strategies during economic downturns.

Overall, the data from OOU underscores the profound impact of Nigeria's depressed economy on undergraduate students, manifesting in financial hardships, increased deviant behaviors, and diverse coping strategies.

## **Conclusion**

The study concluded that there is a significant correlation between economic hardship and the rise of deviant behaviours such as gambling, cybercrime, transactional relationships etc., among students. The findings draw attention to how the financial stress and limited economic

opportunities contribute to the adoption of these behaviours as coping mechanisms. By addressing these factors, the university can help mitigate the adverse effects of a depressed economy on student behavior, fostering a more supportive and resilient academic environment.

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