



The Influence Of Students' Attitude Towards Economics As A Course Of Study On Academic Performance In University Of Lagos, Lagos State

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ABSTRACT

The decline in students' academic performance in Economics as a course of study in the last decade is worrisome. This study therefore seeks to investigate influence of students' attitude towards Economics as a course of study on academic performance in the University of Lagos. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and made use of a sample of One hundred and twenty (120) undergraduate students randomly selected from Economics Education cohort, Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Akoka. A self-developed questionnaire of 34 items was used to collect information from the students after its validity and reliability ($r=0.68$) were determined with the use of split half method. The data collected were analysed using Mean, Standard Deviation, and Simple Percentage while Chi-square, independent t-test and One-way Anova statistical tools were used to analyse three

hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance using (SPSS) testing program. The study revealed that there is significance influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on academic performance. Both male and female students have almost the same attitude towards economics as a course. Also, the attitude of students towards economics as a course is the same at different academic levels. In the light of the study's results, the researchers presented a number of recommendations and proposals the most important of which are: Ministry of education should organize orientation programmes against wrong attitude of undergraduate students towards economics as a course in order to improve their motivation and academic performance. Since gender does not affect the attitude of students towards economics as a course, teaching and learning of economics as a course should be done freely among the students of different sexes. Seminars and symposiums should be organized by university management for Economics department, Faculty of Education about the prospects of the course to motivate them towards academic excellence.

Keywords: Student's Attitude, Economics, Academic Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Student beliefs and attitudes have the potential to either facilitate or inhibit learning (Yara, 2009). Many factors could contribute to student's attitude toward studying science and social sciences (Economics). Several studies (including Wilson 1983; Soyibo, 1985; Berg 2005; Adesoji, 2008) report that students' positive attitudes to science correlate highly that in general, the attitude of Nigeria students towards the basic sciences and social sciences tend to decrease in the order, Biology, Economics, Physics and Mathematics. Defiane (1995).

Halladyna and Shanghnessy (1982) and Adesoji (2008) identified a number of factors relating to students attitude to science and social sciences (Economics) such as; teaching methods, teacher attitude, influence of parents, gender, age, cognitive styles of pupils, career interest, social view of science, social implications of science (Economics) and achievement. The studies suggest that there is a relationship between attitude and methods of instruction and also between attitude and achievement; and that it is possible to predict achievement from attitude scores.

Attitude is a tendency which is attributed to individuals and creates ideas, feelings and behaviours about a psychological object in an orderly manner (Çetin, 2006). According to Oncul (2000) cited in Kara (2010), attitudes which cause individuals to always behave in the same way to people, objects, events and foundations are constant and unchangeable beliefs, feelings and tendencies. While the positive attitudes serve a better comprehension of the nature of learning for the learners, it also makes the students more open to learning, increases their expectations from learning process and reduces their anxiety levels. For instance, students having positive attitudes towards reading take more advantage of the advance organizers. Achievements of the students developing negative attitudes go down (Güngör & Açıkgöz, 2006). The desire of learning interpenetrates people. However, it is important that the intrinsic motivators of the learner, such as the learners' sense of wonder, high expectations, desire of sufficiency, support this process (AçıkgözÜn, 2007). It is necessary to be eager and in need of learning in this process.

According to Keeves (1992), attitudes towards science and social sciences, economics inclusive are, in general, highly favoured, indicating strong support for science and the learning of science. There is also consistency across countries and age levels within a country in the average level of attitude towards economics and general science. However, in countries where a high level of technological and industrial development had been achieved, the findings showed that attitude towards science were more neutral. Generally, boys held more favourable attitude towards science, the findings concluded. Kempa and Dude (1974) reported that pupils' interest in science is associated with their achievement in science. Collaborating these reports, Olatoye (2001) found that students attitude towards economics have significant direct effect on student achievement in the subject. Adesokan (2000) asserted that in spite of the recognition given to economics among the science subjects, it is evident that student still show negative attitudes towards the subject there by leading to poor teaching performance and low enrolment.

Aire & Oke (2001) says that emotional problems are difficulties associated with inability of a child to maintain psychological equilibrium when in academic environment. A student who cannot concentrate due to emotional problems will not perform well academically. Ogunmakin (2001) contributed that good study habits walk hand in hand with good academic performance. Therefore student's method of studying has been identified as major problem students are confronted with today. He says students do not follow proper studying methods which include (SQ3R) Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review methodology, summarizing note-taking and self-questioning and many more when having personal reading. Hussain (2000) agrees that lack of basic cognitive skills, which include perception of good success reasoning faculty, creativity and many more are responsible for poor study habits. Darwin (2011) says that drive, goals or needs of learner usually prompt learner to action. He says an individual's belief and ideologies have direct consequences on thing that motivates such individual. A student who has goals will be motivated to study well which will lead to academic success that is his or her dream.

Cardelle-Elawar & Nevin, (2003) described academic performance as the conscious and purposeful use of one's cognitive skills, feelings, and actions to maximize the learning of knowledge and skills for a given task and set of conditions. Schunk (2004) viewed it as an individual's ability to set goals, evaluate his or her own performance, and adjust behaviours flexibly to achieve those goals in the context of ongoing feedback. Successful students show a commitment to maximize learning from educational experiences, monitor their progress, and make adjustments in their efforts when necessary to accomplish their goals (Ainley, 2006; Ainley & Patrick, 2006; Miller & Brickman, 2004). Many researchers have discussed the different factors that affects the student academic performance in their research. There are two types of factors that affect the students' academic performance. These are internal and external classroom factors and these factors strongly affect the students' performance. Internal classroom factors includes students competence, class schedules, class size, text books, class test results, learning facilities, homework, environment of the class, complexity of the course material, teachers role in the class, technology used in the class and exams systems. External classroom factors include extracurricular activities, family problems, work and financial, social and other problems. Research studies shows that students' performance depends on many factors such as learning facilities, gender and age differences, etc. that can affect student performance (Hansen & Joe, 2000). Harb and El-Shaarawi (2006) found that the most important factor with positive effect on students' performance is student's competence. If the students have strong positive attitude, it increases their performance.

Travis, Charles & Susan (2015) argued academic achievement should be a direct result of attaining learning objectives and acquiring desired skills and competencies. They posited that academic achievement is a threshold assessment—it captures a student's ability to meet performance criteria. In this way, grades are intended to measure learning or knowledge; in other words, they are proxy measurements intended to capture attainment of learning objectives and acquisition of skills and competencies. They found it conceptually helpful to separate academic achievement from the attainment of learning objectives and acquisition of skills and competencies because its nature as a proxy and because it is almost always referenced in an aggregate form (grade in a course or GPA).

Choi (2005) described successful completion of course activities by students as ultimately improving students' academic achievement. While it is true in this instance Choi uses the term 'success' to refer to completion of course assignments and the term 'academic achievement' to describe GPA, both terms refer to traditional measures of academic performance (i.e. grades and GPA). Like Choi (2005), Parker et al. (2004) defined success as academic achievement (GPA). Travis, Charles & Susan (2015) found that academic performance in the form of academic achievement, accomplishment of learning objectives, and acquisition of skills and competencies were the most frequently measured aspects of academic success. Moreover, they posited that academic performance was measured most frequently of all. Academic achievement is almost entirely measured with grades and GPA. This is unsurprising since grades and GPA measures are by far the most readily available assessments for institutions. The accomplishment of learning objectives and the acquisition of skills and competencies can be measured at the course, program, and institutional level. GPA tops the list as most often used measurement of academic success accounting at 54.8% making academic performance the most commonly assessed aspect of cognitive domain within the empiric pieces reviewed by previous researchers like Travis, Charles & Susan (2015).

In the field of education and psychology, learning has been discovered all over the world to be a highly complex problem. Over the years, researches on factors that influence academic performance of students have attracted the interest of not only researcher but concerns of teachers (lecturers), counsellors, psychologist and school administrators as well.

The term study habit refers to the way in which students' study either systematically, efficiently or inefficiently. In line with the above assertions, it can therefore be deduce that good study habit will definitely yield positive academic performances and achievement and also inefficient or poor study habit leads to academic failure.

In Nigeria many factors have been highlighted to influence the ability of students to cultivate effective and efficient study habit. Such factors include; state of health, motivation, anxiety and state of mind, conducive and suitable environment for studying, availability of textbooks and well-equipped libraries. In a research carried out by (Nuthana & Yenagi, 2009) the causes of poor academic performance among Nigerian students were thoroughly examined. In which some of the factors identified include; low student's intellectual ability, achievement motivation, lack of goals, low self-esteem, low socio-economic status of the family, poverty and poor study habit as a major factor.

Gender and Academic Performance

Gender involves the psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of being male or female (Ewumi, 2012). A gender role is a set of expectations that prescribes how females or males should think, act and feel. Ewumi (2012) noted the importance of personality in terms of traits and contexts rather than the personality traits alone. Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity. Charles-Ogan (2014) posited that adolescents' gender development is influenced by their observation and imitation of others gender behaviour, as well as by rewards and punishments of gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behaviour. He stressed the fact that parents and siblings influence adolescents' gender roles.

Charles-Ogan (2014) noted the results of students on study habit as a function of gender have been very interesting and illuminating though findings have differed from one study to another. In the study carried out by Morahan (1999) he found out that male and female tend to differ in the ways in which they study. He found out that the male student took up courses that had logic and sciences while female student were attracted to simpler courses. In a study on Age and gender difference on study habit, Ossai (2012) found that female students are better in study habits such as time scheduling, concentration, listing, note-taking and reading. Although trends in international Mathematics and science study (TIMSS-2003) cited in Amatobi and Amatobi (2013) found no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in Mathematics achievement, they however observed difference between boys and girls in terms of their attitude to the subject. Salami (2013) studied the impact of biological gender on study habits, found that females are generally shown to be more ethical such as frequency of attending lecturers and seeking academic assistance, missing class tests and assignments duration of study, adherence to timetable and note-taking and as such try to avoid negative consequences of behaviours such as cheating. In comparison to men, women's greater sense of duty and responsibility in the roles they occupy as study, daughter and friend may lead to a better understanding of the expectations placed on them and as such have better study habits than men (Salami, 2013). According to David, Ball and Reay (2003) studies on gender issues in parental achievement in student choices higher Education found out that female students' relative to male students may develop and maintain closer relationship with their teachers which allow them to learn the study habits. Experience has shown that female student relative to male student tend to develop the courage to seek academic assistance and even counselling from their teachers. This partly explains why cases of dropout and membership of secret cults is higher among the male students in Nigerian schools (Charles-Ogan, 2014).

Empirical evidences abound that show the impact of gender on students' academic performance. Kolawole (2007), Afuwape & Oludipe (2008) found out that there are significant differences in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills of students in respect of gender while other researchers have provided reports that there are no longer distinguishing differences in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skill achievements of students in respect of gender (Arigbabu, A.A. & Mji, A. 2004; Bilesanmi-Awoderu, J.B., 2006). McCoy (2005) posited that gender among other factors was found to be significant contributors to student performance.

In 2011, Al-Mutairi examined the association of some factors such as gender with the student performance. The study indicated that gender plays a significant role in determining students' performance. In the same year Garkaz (2011) tested student gender in the Islamic Azad University and reached the same conclusion which revealed that gender affects students' academic

performance and that female students have better academic performance than male students. Sarwar and Sarwar (2012) investigated students' performance in University of Punjab, Pakistan by testing students' gender as a parameter to determine the relationship between gender and students' performance.

Many studies have shown that girls perform better in school than boys in all major subjects (Epstein 1998; Wong 2002) and that they graduate from high school with higher grade point averages (GPAs) than their male peers (Perkins, Kleiner, Roey, & Brown, 2004). Chambers and Schreiber (2004) study found that girls showed better performance than boys in certain instances.

In the teaching-learning process, both the teacher and the learners must be active. The learner learns through some activities while the teacher does all he or she considers necessary to make learning possible. For any society to be equipped with the basic knowledge and skills that will enable it to better appreciate the nature of economic problems, and how to make rational economic decisions, such a society must depend on the accumulated knowledge of economics, which the citizens possess. For many years, educators and researchers have debated over which variables influence student achievement. A growing body of evidence suggests that schools can make a great difference in terms of student achievement and a substantial portion of that difference attributable to teachers (Adu 2012).

Fennema & Frank (1992) agreed that teacher's knowledge of the subject matter is an indicator of teachers' teaching effectiveness. Eggen & Kauchak in Adediwura & Tayo (2007) sub-divided teachers' knowledge of subject matter into categories: knowledge of content, pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge. Ball & Bass (2000) had earlier explained that knowledge of Mathematics and Economics itself (knowledge of subject matter) should go further than the specific content of the discipline to the knowledge of how to teach, present mathematical and economic concepts and that of selection and use of instructional media and resources. Muijs & Reynolds (2002) posited that the teaching effectiveness of the teacher is hampered if he/she is not well versed in the contents to be taught. A teacher who has a deep understanding of the concept to be taught is more likely to use unambiguous language; their presentation is likely to be more coherent and they would offer clearer explanation than those with a weaker background, (Uya, 2008). Adu (2012) in his finding on importance of Economics teachers' knowledge of subject contents, affirm that effective teaching that can lead to better achievement by the students and provide a positive attitude. This depends on the teachers' confidence and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter.

The study of Economics enables a student to understand the nature of the complexity of the economic activities in which he is only a very small part; It enables students to understand and appreciate various government policies where choices have to be made such as probably to spend more money on free education and therefore provide less employment opportunities; the study of Economics provides the students with basic skills for analysing Economic problems thereby preparing them better for positions where economic decisions have to be made; the study of Economics helps a government to promote growth and development therefore improving the quality of life of the citizens; knowledge of Economics is useful to analyse fascinating patterns of socio-economic behaviour; the study of Economics is useful to understand and alter the inequalities in the distribution of income and opportunities (Adu, 2012).

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study:

1. There is no significant influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on academic performance.
2. There is no significant gender difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course.
3. There is no significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course on academic levels.

METHODOLOGY

The total population for the study comprises of 44,602 undergraduate students in University of Lagos, Akoka while the target population for the study comprise of all four hundred and eighty (480) undergraduate students (male and female) in the Department of Economics, faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Akoka. A sample of one hundred and twenty undergraduate students formed the sample of this study. The random sampling technique was used for the study. This sampling was suitable because it ensured homogeneity of the sample. One hundred and twenty (120) undergraduate students, was selected from the faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria.

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. This design is relevant because it is good in providing wide scope for obtaining information for the purpose of the study.

Instrumentation

A self- structured questionnaire was designed in two major sections. Section "A" deals with personal information of the respondents on their age, gender, religion, while Section "B" contains twenty items to elicit response from the respondent. Section B was divided into two sub-scales.

The response format for the instrument was a modified 4-point Likert attitudinal scale type of Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

There is no significant influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on their academic performance.

Relationship between students' attitude towards economics as a course and their academic performance.

Variables	N	df	PX^2	$calX^2_{tab}$	Decision
Students' Attitude towards Economics as a Course Academic Performance	102	63	0.05	750.27	79.1 H_{01} : Rejected

From table, the calculated Chi-Square value is 750.27 and the tabulated value is 79.1 at 0.05 significant level with 63 degrees of freedom. Since, the calculated Chi-Square value of 750.27 is greater than tabulated value of 79.1, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on their academic performance is

rejected, while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implied that, there was a significant influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on their academic performance. It simply implied that academic performance was related to students' attitude towards economics as a course.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant gender difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course.

An independent t-test table showing the gender difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course.

Internet Addiction	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit
Male	53	50.09	5.52	100	1.35	1.98
Female	49	51.47	4.72			

$p < 0.05$, $df = 100$, $t\text{-crit} = 1.98$

Table shows that the t-calculated value ($t\text{-cal} = 1.35$) is less than the t-critical ($t\text{-crit}; 1.98$) given 100 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated value was less than the critical value, consequently the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in the students' attitude towards economics as a course was accepted while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant gender difference in the students' attitude towards economics as a course was rejected. This means there is no significant difference between male and female attitude towards economics as a course.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level.

One-way Analysis of Variance of the influence of students' academic level on their attitude towards economics as a course.

Students' Academic Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
100 level	22	51.3636	5.00043
200 level	24	50.4583	6.37235
300 level	16	48.4375	4.38130
400 level	40	51.5250	4.61873
Total	102	50.7549	5.16929

ANOVA						
Internet Addiction						
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Between Groups	120.193	4	30.048	1.130	0.347	Reject H0
Within Groups	2578.679	97	26.584			
Total	2698.873	101				

$p < 0.05$, $df = 4$ & 97 , critical $f = 2.48$

Table shows a calculated f-value of 1.130 as the significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level. This calculated f-value is not significant since it is less than the critical f-value of 2.48 given 4 and 97 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance; thereby the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level was accepted while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level was rejected. This implies there is no significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis which states that there is no significant influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on their academic performance is rejected, while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This implied that, there was a significant influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on their academic performance. It simply implied that academic performance was related to students' attitude towards economics as a course.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Lilian K.Y. research on "A Study of the Attitude, Self-efficacy, Effort and Academic Achievement of CityU Students towards Research Methods and Statistics" who concluded on attitude and academic performance that attitude is related to academic achievement. It was found that attitude is moderately and positively correlated with academic achievement.

This finding is corroborated by the findings of Bakar (2010) who proved that students who possessed a positive study attitude were more likely to demonstrate higher academic performance than those who had a less positive attitude towards studies. In addition, the research also showed that 98.7% of the underachievers tended to possess a less favourable attitude towards their studies. This finding is consistent with the findings of Olatoye (2001) who found that student's attitude towards economics have significant direct effect on student achievement in the subject. This finding is also corroborated by the findings of Adesokan (2000) who asserted that in spite of the recognition given to economics among the science subjects, it is evident that student still show negative attitudes towards the subject there by leading to poor teaching performance and low enrolment.

Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis which states that there is no significant gender difference in the students' attitude towards economics as a course was accepted while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant gender difference in the students' attitude towards economics as a course was rejected. This means there is no significant difference between male and female attitude towards economics as a course.

The finding agreed with the findings of Omirin (1999) and Adebule (2002) who found that there was no significant difference between the rating of male and female students of some instruments developed for measuring attitude and anxiety toward mathematics respectively. Student variable that has attracted considerable attention is sex according to Alonge (1985). Studies ranged from how sex affects the selection of science courses in school to rating of attitude scale and to cognitive and non - cognitive performance. Daramola (1992) found that both male and female students

received equal encouragement to use fully their intellectual gifts. He asserted that gifted girls do not differ from gifted boys in study behaviour, and other cognitive tasks.

This finding is in contrast with the study carried out by Barnes, McInerney & Marsh (2005) who found that boys were perceived to have more positive attitude towards learning Chemistry which is a science subject, than girls. However, the finding of this study agrees with the findings of Wimer, Ridenout & Place (2001) which found that boys and girls showed the enthusiasm for Mathematics in elementary years.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level was accepted while the alternate hypothesis which states that there is significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level was rejected. This implies there is no significant difference in students' attitude towards economics as a course based on academic level.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that: there is significance of students' attitude towards economics as a course influence their academic performance. Both male and female students have almost the same attitude towards economics as a course. Also, the attitude of students towards economics as a course is the same at different academic level.

The following recommendations were arrived at based on the conclusion of this study:

1. Ministry of education should organize orientation programmes against wrong attitude of undergraduate students towards economics as a course in order to improve their motivation and academic performance.
2. Since gender does not affect the attitude of students towards economics as a course, teaching and learning of economics as a course should be done freely among the students of different sexes.
3. Seminars and symposiums should be organized by university management for Economics department, Faculty of Education about the prospects of the course to motivate them towards academic excellence.

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