

Investigation into Factors Affecting Students' Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions as Expressed by Undergraduates

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Abstract

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. Two hundred (200) undergraduates were randomly selected from four (4) randomly selected universities in Osun state. A structured questionnaire entitled Factors Affecting Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (FASAPQ) which had four sections was developed and validated. Frequency counts, simple and percentage and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to analyse the data collected. The findings of the study show that age had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. The findings also revealed that the peer group had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. The results also supported the idea that learning environment had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the difference in the students' across institutions perception on factors affecting the academic performance of students in tertiary institutions was found insignificant ($F_{(3,196)} = 1.138, p > 0.05$). Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: the school counsellors should be organizing orientation programmes for new undergraduates to get them familiar with the new environment and to understand the university.

Keywords: academic performance, higher education,

Introduction

Education is the major key to economic and technological advancement of any nation. It is also a means of reducing the present high level of poverty among the populace as well as improving their lifestyles. In recognition of the importance of education in development of an individual and the society at large, the federal Government of Nigeria through its National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) in 1977, 1981, 1998 (revised in 2004) spelt out how education can be utilized to bring about the necessary transformation. Based on the national education policy, the university which is the highest level of the educational institution is expected to produce graduates who should be able to manage sensitive positions at higher level to foster development in the country (Onoyase, 2014). It is a general consensus that any meaningful development cannot be recorded expect there is proper development of the human resources, which can only be achieved through education.

Therefore, formal education is regarded as the major tool for socio-economic development and social mobilization in any society (Shittu, 2004). Also, every nation hoping to have bright future needs to emphasise education because it is the only

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way to proper development (Abdu-Raheem, 2015). Furthermore, Yusuf and Al-Banawi (2013) noted that education must be considered as a worthwhile investment in modern economies, because there is strong and positive correlation between economic activity and education in explaining economic growth. In the same vein, Asiru (2014) stated that education is a catalyst to the development of individuals, society and the nation. It was also opined by Dagbo (2014) that education is a veritable tool for social growth, development and interaction of all elements in the society for its economic, social and political well-being. Education plays crucial and indispensable roles in human development in all ramifications of life. In any education system students are the major role-player, they occupy an important position and anything that affects the students will have an implication on the general educational system.

According to Mushtaq and Khan (2012), schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students. Students are most essential asset for any educational institution. The social and economic development of the country is directly linked with students' academic performance. Therefore, for any nation to achieve its educational aims and objectives students have a vital role to play in the areas of learning that is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and performance. Basically, the social and economic development of a nation is directly related with students' academic performance. The students' performance (academic achievement) plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leaders and resourceful manpower for the country thus responsible for the country's economic and social development (Ali et.al, 2009).

In educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance or how well a student meets the standards set by the government and the institution itself. As the world has become a global village, and the competition in the world of work requires high competence in all fields of study, therefore, the importance of students doing well in school has caught the attention of parents, legislatures and government education departments (Albert & Dahling, 2016). High priority is being placed on how to make the graduates employable and more productive after the completion of their degree programs.

Statement of the problem

Some years back up to early 80s, graduates from Nigerian Universities were very sound academically and could excel in various spheres of life, and they were able to contribute immensely to the development of the nation. But in the recent time, the performance of students at different levels of education (including the university) has reduced drastically and the situation has become worrisome to all stakeholders in educational sector. Employers of labour often do not consider the graduate to be employable. They were often referred to as 'half-baked' graduates, because after graduating they still must undergo series of training to be able to perform up to the required standards and be productive. This trend continues to pose a lot of challenges to the institutions of higher learning as their competence continues to be questioned. Based on this premise, this study sought to investigate factors affecting students' academic performance in tertiary institutions as expressed by undergraduates in Osun state.

Research questions

1. Does age influence students' academic performance in tertiary institutions?
2. Does peer group influence students' academic performance in tertiary institutions?
3. Does learning environment influence students' academic performance in tertiary institutions?
4. Does students' perception of factors affecting academic performance of students in tertiary institutions differ across institutions?

Methodology

The researchers employed descriptive survey research type for the study. Undergraduates of Osun State universities in Nigeria formed the population for the study. Four universities in Osun South-West, Nigeria, were randomly selected for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting two hundred undergraduates from the four universities. Thus 200 undergraduates formed the participants for the study. A self-developed questionnaire entitled Factors Affecting Academic Performance Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the participants. The instrument is a four-point Likert-scale-type of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' with the value of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. It has two sections, the first section is for collection of demographic data of participants, while the second section comprises of items on factors affecting academic performance. The instrument was given to experts in the field of educational psychology as well as test and measurement in order to establish face and content validity of the instrument. Split half reliability method was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability co-efficient was calculated and value of 0.83 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using percentage and frequency count and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical methods.

Table 1. Institution – gender cross-tabulation of the students

Institution	Gender				Total	
	Male		Female			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Obafemi Awolowo University	22	11.0	28	14.4	50	25.0
Osun State University	12	6.0	38	19.0	50	25.0
Joseph Ayo Babalola University	25	12.5	25	12.5	50	25.0
Oduduwa University	24	12.0	26	13.0	50	25.0
Total	83	41.5	117	58.5	200	100.0

Table 1 presents the school - gender cross-tabulation of the students. It shows that 41.5% (83) of the students are males while the remaining 58.5% (117) are females. The table also reveals that each university represented 25% (50) of the participants.

Table 2. Age distribution

Age	Frequency	Percent
18 years and below	48	24.0
19 - 24 years	119	59.5

25 - 30 years	31	15.5
31 years and above	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 shows the age distribution of the students. It shows that 24% (48) of the students are 18 year old and below, while 59.5% (119) are between the ages of 19 and 24. The table also shows that 15.5% (31) of the students are between the ages of 25 and 30.

Results

Research question 1: Does age influence students' academic performance in tertiary institutions?

Table 3. Influence of age on students' academic performance

S/N	Items	SA			D	ean	.D
1	Students below eighteen years perform better in class.	96 48%	9 4.5%	5 2.5%	0 %	.26	86
2	Students below eighteen years assimilate faster in class.	61 30.5%	00 0%	6 8%	.5%	.10	73
3	The younger a student is the better the academic performance.	67 33.5%	5 2.5%	0 0%	%	.06	83
4	Older students are more committed to learning than the young ones.	61 30.5%	7 3.5%	9 9.5%	3 .5%	.88	92
5	Age has no influence on academic performance.	82	0	7	1	.92	.10

		41%	5%	8.5%	5.5%		
Total =						.04	89

Key: S – Significant (2.50 - 4.00), N.S – Not Significant (1.00-2.49)

Table 3 shows that 82.5% (165) of the students agreed that students below eighteen years performed better in class, while 80.5% (161) of them responded that students below eighteen years assimilated faster in class. It can equally be seen that 76% (152) of the student’s opinion that the younger a student is the better his/her academic performance, while 64% (128) of them supported that older students were more committed to learning than the young ones. The table also reveals that 66% (132) of the students responded that age had no influence on academic performance. However, based on this analysis, with a weighted mean of 3.04, it indicated that age had influence on students’ academic performance in tertiary institutions.

Research question 2: Does the peer group influence students’ academic performance in tertiary institutions?

Table 4. Influence of peer group on students’ academic performance

S/N	Items	SA			D	ean	.D
6	My friends encourage me to work hard at school.	89 44.5%	5 7.5%	3 .5%	.5%	.35	67
7	My friends influence my academic work positively.	82 41%	00 0%	6 %	%	.31	66
8	I spend most of my time in school with friends discussing academic work/revising for examination.	61 30.5%	11 5.5%	3 1.5%	.5%	.14	71
9	Peer group in school can influence student’s intellectual development.	98 49%	7 3.5%	5 .5%		.42	63

10	I engage in academic discussion with my friends.	75 37.5%	05 2.5%	6 %			.26	69
Total =							.30	67

Key: S – Significant (2.50 - 4.00), N.S – Not Significant (1.00-2.49)

Table 4 presents the analysis of peer group influence on students’ academic performance in tertiary institutions. It can be seen that 92% (184) of the students opined that their friends encouraged them to work hard at school, while 91% (182) of them responded that their friends influenced their academic work positively. It can equally be seen that 86% (172) of the students responded that they spent most of their time at school with friends discussing academic work / revising for examination, while 92.5% (185) of them supported that peer group in school could influence student’s intellectual development. The table also reveals that 90% (180) of the students opined that they engaged in academic discussion with friends. Therefore, based on this analysis, with weighted mean of 3.30, it can be concluded that peer group had influence on students’ academic performance in tertiary institutions.

Research Question 3: Does learning environment influence students’ academic performance in tertiary institutions?

Table 5. Influence of learning environment on students’ academic performance

S/N	Items	SA			D	ean	.D
11	Poorly equipped department and central libraries have effect on academic performance.	107 53.5%	7 8.5%	3 .5%	.5%	.44	68
12	Students will not participate well when classroom are overcrowded.	98 49%	0 5%	0 %	%	.42	64
13	Absence of relevant texts in the school library impacts negatively on academic performance.	79 39.5%	4 7%	5 2,5%	%	.25	71

14	Poor internet source does not encourage student to learn.	75 37.5%	8 9%	0 0%	.5%	.11	84
15	Lack of conducive accommodation has negative effect on students.	90 45%	5 7.5%	5 2.5%	0 %	.23	85
16	Adequate health facilities for students aid students' academic performance.	100 50%	8 9%	0 0%	0 %	.38	71
17	Inadequate electricity supply has negative effect on students' academic performance.	79 39.5%	7 3.5%	9 4.5%	.5%	.20	78
18	Extents at which library facilities are available for use affects students' academic performance.	84 42%	3 1.5%	0 5%	.5%	.24	76
19	Presence of relaxation centre within the school environment affects students' academic performance.	60 30%	8 9%	6 3%	6 %	.91	92
20	Lack of conducive classroom has negative effect on students' academic performance.	102 51%	3 1.5%	5 .5%		.44	63
Total =						.26	75

Key: S – Significant (2.50 - 4.00), N.S – Not Significant (1.00-2.49)

Table 5 shows the analysis of the influence of learning environment on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. It can be seen that 92% (184) of the students opined that poorly equipped department and central libraries had effect on academic performance while 94% (188) of them responded that students would not participate well when classrooms were overcrowded. It can equally be seen that 86.5% (173) of the students responded that the absence of relevant texts in the school library negatively impacted academic performance, while 82.5% (165) of them also agreed that lack of conducive accommodation had a negative effect on students' performance. The table also reveals that 89% (178) of the students supported that adequate health facilities for students aided students' academic performance, while 83% (166) of them responded that inadequate electricity supply had a negative effect on students' academic performance. Further, it can be seen that 83.5% (167) of the students supported the idea that the extent at which library facilities were available for use affected students' academic performance, while 92.5% (185) of them opined that the lack of conducive classrooms had a negative effect on students' academic performance. Hence, it can be concluded, based on the analysis of a weighted mean of 3.26, that learning environment had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions.

Research question 4: Does students' perception of factors affecting academic performance of students in tertiary institutions differ across institutions?

Table 6. Summary of analysis of variance on the difference in students' perception of factors affecting academic performance across institutions

Source: Institution	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	87.655	3	29.218	1.138	.335	Not significant
Within Groups	5034.220	196	25.685			
Total	5121.875	199				

*Denote significance at $P < 0.05$

Table 6 presents the result of the difference in the perception of students of factors affecting academic performance of students in tertiary institutions. The result shows that students' perception does not differ across institutions ($F_{(3,196)} = 1.138, p > 0.05$). This implies that the perception of students on factors affecting academic performance of students in tertiary institutions does not significantly differ across institutions. This means that their perception is independent of their institutions.

Discussion of findings

One of the findings of this study as shown in the analysis of influence of age on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions revealed that the majority of the undergraduate students agreed that students below eighteen years assimilated faster and performed better in class. It was equally observed that a large percentage of the students opined that the younger a student was the better was his/her academic performance, although older students were more committed to learning than the young ones. These results of the findings are in line with the findings of Ukueze (2007), Hakimi, Hejazi & Lavasani (2011), Heirany et al.

(2013) and Adeyemi & Adeyemi (2014). that age has significant influences on academic performance of students However, the results of the findings contradicts the finding of Kaur, Chung and Lee (2010), as well as Ebeunuwa-Okoh (2010) that age does not significantly contribute to academic performance of university students in distance learning. This difference of results may be connected with the fact that those students were pursuing distance learning, while our research, as well as in Ukueze (2007), Hakimi, Hejazi & Lavasani (2011), Heirany et al. (2013) and Adeyemi & Adeyemi (2014) studies were held in a regular school setting.

Another finding of this study showed that a high percentage of undergraduates agreed that their friends encouraged them to work hard at school, which influenced their academic work positively. The findings also revealed that the majority of the students spent most of their time at school with friends discussing academic work / revising for examination, which influenced their intellectual development. It was, therefore, concluded, based on this analysis, that the peer group had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. This result is in agreement with the findings of Korir and Kipkemboi (2014) and Ryan (2007) who found peer influence to have positive influence on academic performance

Moreover, on the analysis of the influence of learning environment on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions, the result showed that the majority of the undergraduate students responded that poorly equipped department and central libraries had an effect on academic performance and that students would not participate well when classrooms were overcrowded. It was equally observed that a large percentage of the students responded that the absence of relevant texts in the school library and the lack of conducive accommodation had a negative impact on student academic performance. It was also found that the majority of the students supported that inadequate health facilities and electricity supply in tertiary institution would have a negative effect on students' academic performance. It was further observed that inadequate library facilities and the lack of conducive classrooms had a negative effect on students' academic performance. This claim is in tandem with the findings of Lizzio, Wilson and Simons (2002), Karemera, Reuben and Sillah (2003), as well as Hard and El-Shaawari (2006). That discovered that poor school facilities have significant influence on academic performance of students.

Furthermore, the result as revealed in the analysis of the difference of factors affecting academic performance of students in the perception of students across institutions, the results showed that students' perception did not differ across institutions on factors affecting academic performance of students in tertiary institutions.

Conclusions

From the results of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: Age had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. The study revealed that the younger the age, the better the academic performance of undergraduate students. Also, the study revealed that the peer group plays an important role in the academic performance of undergraduate students. They form a critical part of the environment of school and they create and maintain a culture separate from the home and adult community in which individual peers were raised. Based on the findings of the study, learning environment had influence on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions, this is an indication that learning environment is an essential key factor in determining academic achievement of students. Finally, the findings of the study revealed that perception of students of factors affecting academic performance do not significantly differ across institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations were made:

- The school counsellors should be organizing orientation programmes for new undergraduates to get them familiar with the new environment and understand the university life
- The school counselors should always consult the students on the kind of friends they keep and spend most of their time with.
- School authority and government should be more committed and willing to provide facilities that will create effective learning environment.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY, OSOGBO

IPETU-IJESHA CAMPUS

FACTORS AFFECTING STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE QUESTIONNAIRE (FASAPQ)

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the factors affecting students’ academic performance in tertiary institution as expressed by undergraduates in Osun state. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: consisting section A, B, C and D.

This instrument is strictly for the purpose of research. You have therefore been chosen to respond to the questionnaire with sincerity of the heart. All information provided will only be used for academic purpose and will be kept confidential.

SECTION A

Demography Information of the Respondent

Name (optional):

Name of Institution:

Note: please tick (✓) in the appropriate box

Sex: Male () Female ()

Age: 18years and below () 19-24years () 25-30years () 31years and above ()

SECTION B:

Kindly tick (✓) in the appropriate column

SA- STRONGLY AGREE A- AGREES SD- STRONGLY DISAGREE D-DISAGREE

S/N	Items on effect of age on students’ academic performance (EASAP).	SA	A	D	SD
1	Students below eighteen year perform better in class.				
2	Students below eighteen year assimilate faster in class.				
3	The younger a student is the better the academic performance.				
4	Older students are more committed to learning from the young ones.				
5	Age has no influence on academic performance.				

SECTION C

S/N	Items on effect of peer group on students' academic performance (EPGSAP).	SA	A	D	SD
6	My friends encourage me to work hard in school.				
7	My friends influence my academic work positively.				
8	I spend most of my time in school with friends discussing academic work/revising for examination.				
9	Peer group in school can influence student's intellectual development.				
10	I engage in academic discussion with my friends.				

SECTION D:

S/N	Items on effect of learning environment on the students' academic performance (ELESAP)	SA	A	D	SD
11.	Poorly equipped departmental and central libraries have effect on academic performance.				
12.	Students will not participate well when classroom are overcrowded.				
13.	Absence of relevant texts in the school library impacts negatively on academic performance.				
14.	Poor internet source does not encourage student to learn.				
15.	Lack of conducive accommodation has negative effect on students.				
16.	Adequate health facilities for students aid students' academic performance.				
17.	Inadequate electricity supply has negative effect on students' academic performance.				
18.	Extents at which library facilities are available for use affect students' academic performance.				
19.	Presence of relaxation centre within the school environment affects students' academic performance.				
20.	Lack of conducive classroom has negative effect on students' academic performance.				