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**INFLUENCE OF PRESCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND STUDENTS ATTITUDE
ON ECONOMICS EDUCATION STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN
UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of preschool and students' attitude on academic achievement of Economics education students of University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The design of the study is Ex-post facto research. A total population of One hundred and fifteen (115) undergraduate students which comprised of forty-one (41) first-year students, twenty (20) 200level students, twenty (20) 300level students and thirty-four (34) final year students of Economic Education student of University of Nigeria for 2017/2018. A researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Influence of Preschool and Students Attitude Scale (IPSA) and Students CGPA from the first year to fourth (final) year were the two instruments used for the study. Two research questions were answered using descriptive statistics and hypothesis tested at 0.5 level of significance using the t-test. The results show that preschool had no influence on the academic achievement of students in Economics whereas student's attitude had a significant effect on their academic achievement. Based on the finding's recommendations were made.

Keywords: Preschool experiences; students' attitude; academic achievement

Introduction

Education is a channel to a better, strong and reliant Economy. Education takes various forms and these forms are characterized by a peculiar level, conditions,

organization, structure, in which learning takes place, functionality, the applicability of knowledge, skills and attitude acquired and level of certification obtained. Educational processes could thus be informal, non-formal or formal United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO, 2011). An Education is said to be formal, when it is organized in a setting with set objectives or goals in the form of curriculum & course outline as the case may be. Education is said to be informal when learning occurs unconsciously at any place and time without a set objective. These processes (formal & informal education) can be influenced by several factors like emotions, attitudes, interest, physical facilities, economic and so on. Amongst these factors, the researchers investigated the influence of preschool experiences and students' attitudes, on Economics Education Students Achievement in the University of Nigeria.

Preschool is a period in a Child's life that proceeds attendance at elementary school. Pre-school is the first entry in the formal education journey of a child. This is designed to facilitate the development of the child's mental, physical, emotional, linguistic and social growth of the child (Mwaba, 2016). This period is assumed to be the foundational stage of knowledge acquisition and as such, adequate attention should be given to the child, attention geared and directed towards positivism in academics. Early childhood is the most active stage in life where the brain develops most and at a greater pace (Tassew, 2011). As such, Serpell (2011) stresses the need for increased public investment in Early Child Development (ECD) as a strategy for sustainable national development of which preschool seems to be the foundation. At the preschool which is early childhood is a period of human life in which the quality of development is likely to have significant long-term consequences for individual life and society. As such specifiable types of interventions can reliably influence the quality of development in early childhood in a positive direction. On these premises, the researchers explore the influence of the preschool experience of a child as translated in their attitude and their academic achievement.

Attitude is a psychological concept that has to do with the way one's reaction to an object or situation which can be positive or negative. The way an individual thinks feels and behaves towards an idea or object shapes that individuals' attitude. (Dauda, 2016). Therefore, a students' insight on a subject matter, what goes on in the instruction process and the feedback from the instruction forms the basis of students' attitude to the subject, Economics. Attitudinal life of students according to Chang (2005), is affected by an individual's interest, ability and needs. More so, Kubiak (2013) argues that if attitudes towards a subject and school are positive, student's achievement will definitely be good. Conversely students with negative attitudes to learning, who also believes that school and learning have no effect on their success in life as well as their academics with undoubtedly fail in academics (Candeias, Rebelo & Oliveira, 2010).

These students with negative attitudes towards educational activities according to Awang, Jindal-Snape & Barber, 2013 are found to exhibit challenging behaviours including anti-social and off-task behaviours. Studies abound on the influence on students' attitude on academic achievement, some believe it influences academic achievement while others disagree, the present study tends to add to the inconclusive findings as it affects Education Economics students.

Leila and Zohre (2015) investigated the extent of the difference of social growth, school girl's first grade base with and without a history of preschool of Golden City area (Zarin Shahr) from the perspective of preschool teachers and parents in educational 2013-2014. The present research method because of a lack of intervention was evaluated in descriptive. Therefore, in order to 80 students, simple random sampling approach was selected (40 students has a history of preschools and 40 students preschool with no history of). The tools used include social development, questionnaire the questionnaire was self-confidence and academic achievement through the questionnaire validity. Coefficient of Cronbach's alpha was calculated 0.80, respectively. In this study to analyze the data from the two levels of descriptive and inferential statistics are used. In descriptive statistics, the percentage of frequency level frequency, mean and standard deviation statistical analysis and variance analysis method was used. The study revealed a significant difference in the academic achievement of the students with a history of Preschool and those with no history of preschool.

Umoinyang (2004) investigated the relationship that exists between the students' attitude and their achievement in Mathematics. The population for the study is 229 students randomly selected from six (6) secondary schools in Abak Local Government of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The instruments used for the research are researcher-developed questionnaire and a proforma used to gather the Students Achievement which was gotten from their end of term examination and attitude. Findings from the result reveal that there exists a positive correlation between students' attitude towards Mathematics and their achievement in Mathematics. This points to the fact that attitude to school or the subjects can be related to academic achievement. This agrees with the report of Camilus(2011) that students' attitude plays a significant role in their achievement in Agricultural Science.

Statistics show over the years, that academic achievement of students in Economics Education in the University of Nigeria Nsukka has been consistently poor. This poor academic achievement can in part be attributed to some students' erroneous perception of Economics as just a theoretical subject, with little calculations, while in secondary school. This mindset is quickly stunned when they get to higher institutions because Economics becomes much more quantitative and calculations. This in a way alters the students' initial state of mind, thus affecting their emotional readiness towards the study of Economics. Some of these students' loose interest in the course,

others become sad and/or lack fulfilment, while some dropout or change course altogether.

These in a way render them unready to undertake studies in such a course and in turn contribute to the poor achievement of Economics/Education students as witnessed over the years. It has also been reported that most students of the Department of Economics Education, originally did not enter the course as their first choice during their JAMB entry examination but found themselves doing the course because they could not meet up with cut off marks for their dream courses. Thereby leaving them with no choice than to manage the available when the desirable is not available. Students of these nature approach the course with little or no interest and contentment. This is likely to contribute in no small measure to their poor achievement in the course.

It is an opinion in some quarters that a student who is not emotionally ready to take a course of study has a high tendency of performing poorly in his or her academic pursuits. The emotional instability might be caused by different variables. It is on these premises that the present study specifically investigated the following:

1. influence of Economics Education students' attitude on their academic achievement
2. Influence of pre-school experiences on Economics Education students' academic achievement.

The following research questions guided the study namely:

1. What is the influence of students' attitude on their academic achievement?
2. What is the influence of students' pre-school experiences on their academic achievement?

Methodology

The study adopted the Ex-post facto research design. According to Nworgu (2014), this design deals with non-manipulative independent variables example sex, socio-economic status among others which the researcher attempts to link some already existing effects or observations to some variables as causative agents. Thus, the researcher deemed it appropriate to use this design to determine how such independent variables as students' preschool experience, attitude and gender influence students' academic achievement.

The area of the study is Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Nsukka has an area of 1,810 km² and a population of 309,633 as at the 2006 census (Ugwuanyi, Obiora & Ibuot, 2015). The rationale for this choice is based on the fact

that Nsukka is home to the University of Nigeria Nsukka, where there are Economics/Education students that can be used as respondents for this research.

The *total population* is one hundred and fifteen(115) Economics Education students consisting of *forty-one (41) first-year students, twenty (20) 200level students, twenty (20) 300 level students and thirty-four (34) finalist of the University of Nigeria for 2017/2018 session.* from the first year to final year which is quite manageable, such that no sampling was done and all the students were used for the study. The instrument used for the study is questionnaire which consists of two sections, section A which obtain demographic data about the respondents while section B, comprising of two clusters. Cluster A is made up of six items sought information on students' attitude and cluster B which is made up of four items sought information on preschool as school readiness variables influencing Economics Education Students Academic achievement. The two clusters are rated on a four-point scales of SA, A, D and SD. To the answer research question one, a student's attitude is regarded as 'good' if the number of entries on the student that scored 'A or SA' were $\leq 50\%$ and 'Poor' if the number were less than 50%. A similar rule was used in research question two, whereby the Student's Pre-School experience was regarded influential when 'influential' when the number of entries the student was scored 'A or SA' was $\leq 50\%$. The instrument was face validated by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, namely, Education/Psychology unit, Science Education unit and Social Science Education unit. Their suggestions and criticism helped to develop the final draft of the instrument. The draft was trial tested to ascertain its reliability using twenty Economics/Education students from The Nsukka College of Education, outside the study area. A coefficient of internal consistency was established for the instrument using Cronbach alpha as 0.90. The data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level using t-test statistic.

Results

Research Question One

What is the influence of students' attitude on their academic achievement?

Table 1: Influence of students' attitude on their academic achievement

Students attitude	Number of students	Student mean CGPA	Standard deviation
Good	76	3.5	0.61
Bad	12	3.5	0.60

Table 1 showed that seventy-six (76) Economics education students demonstrated a good attitude while fifteen (15) Economics education students

portrayed a bad attitude, based on their responses. The results showed that students with good attitudes had mean CGPA of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 0.6072 while students' who portrayed bad attitude had a mean CGPA of 3.2 and a standard deviation of 0.6120. The results showed that students with a good attitude are within the Second Upper-division (2:1) while students with a bad attitude are within the class of 2:2 lass (Second class lower division). This implies that a student's attitude influences their academic achievement.

Research Question Two: What is the influence of students' pre-school experiences on their academic achievement?

Table 2: Influence of students' pre-school experiences on their academic achievement

Students Preschool experience	No of students	Students mean CGPA	Standard deviation
Significant	79	3.5	0.65
Non-significant	12	3.5	0.60

Table 2 showed the influence of preschool experiences on students' academic achievement was significant among 86.8% Economics Education students and non-significant in 13.2% of students. The results further showed that both the students' who had influential and uninfluential pre-school experiences, had a mean CGPA of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 0.63 0.60 respectively. This implies that student's pre-school experience had no influence on the academic achievements of the students given that both categories of students were within 2:1 Class (Second class upper).

Discussion of findings

Influence of students' attitude on their academic achievement

Data on Table 1 indicated that economics students' attitude does influence their academic achievement. The results showed that students with good attitudes had a mean CGPA of 3.5 (2:1, second class upper) and a standard deviation of 0.6072 while students' who portrayed bad attitude had a mean CGPA of 3.2 (2:2, second class lower) and a standard deviation of 0.6120. Experts and some literature agree that attitude is a significant factor that affects the academic achievement of students. Otekunrin (2014) noted that students' attitude has an influence on the achievement of students in agricultural science.

Influence of students' pre-school experiences on their academic achievement.

With respect to research question two, data presented in Table 2 show that 79 Economics education students had influential pre-school experience while thirteen 13 had uninfluential pre-school experience. The results revealed that students with

uninfluential pre-school experience had a mean CGPA of 3.5 (second class upper) and a standard deviation of 0.6335 while students' who had the uninfluential pre-school experience had a mean CGPA of 3.5 (second class upper) and a standard deviation of 0.6029. Therefore, the student's pre-school experience had no influence on their academic achievement. Conversely, Leila and Zohre (2015) showed that there is a significant effect on academic achievement of elementary school girl's with pre-school and those with no preschool experience. Additionally, Taiwo (2002) in a study surveyed three school subject and found that pupils with pre-school education experience performed much better than those with no preschool experience.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of school readiness on academic achievement of Economic Education students of the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The study concludes that Economics Education students pre-school readiness for school have an influence on their academic achievement.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendation was made to improve students' school readiness and attitude in the course of studying Economics education in the University.

1. Guidance and counselling services should be provided by school management where students' mind can be prepared and their attitude to school rightly placed.
2. Seminars and symposiums should always be organized by university authorities to advise and encourage students on the importance of associating with good friends and peer groups while undergoing a university programme, as this can affect their academic performance.

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