

Factors Militating Against Students' Academic Performance As Perceived By Undergraduates Of Delta State University, Abraka.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to identify the factors militating Against Students' Academic Performance in Delta State University, Abraka. Five research questions and five hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The "factors militating Against Students' Academic performance Questionnaire" (FMASAPQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.81 was administered on 270 students in 200 and 300 levels in the faculties of law, management Sciences and Sciences, randomly selected from the three campuses of the university. 240 students returned their copies showing 89.9% retrieval rate. The Z-test statistics was employed to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and the findings revealed that romantic relationship, lack of interest in learning, low self-concepts, poor study habit and wrong choice of career are factors militating against the academic performance of undergraduates. Based on the findings, recommendations were made.

INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, education is the key to economic and technological advancement, a means of alleviating poverty among the populace as well as ameliorating their lifestyles. In recognition of this, the federal Government of Nigeria has through its national Policy on Education in 1977, 1981, 1998 (and revised in 2004) spelt out how education can be utilized to bring about the necessary transformation. Admittedly, the university which is the apex of the educational system is expected to produce graduates who should be able to man vey high and sensitive position so that the laudable objectives can be realized.

Sadly enough, in recent time the products of this citadel of learning can no longer compete favourable with their counterparts from other parts of the world. The reason for this is not far fetched. It is simple that the quality of education has fallen. To buttress this point, Esu (2006) opined that there is a near national outcry on the poor quality of Education in Nigeria. Also, commenting on this, Ige (1997) noted that the scripts of some undergraduates in one of the national's universities were unreadable and far beyond comprehension. As a lecturer in Delta State University, the writer has observed that some students find it difficult to take notes during lecture and also many are unable to have a firm grasp of material taught even after repeated explanations by the lecturer. The aim of this research therefore, is to find out the factors militating against students' academic performance in Delta State University, Abraka.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Five likely factors have been identified and these include romantic relationship. Lack of interest in learning, low self-concept, poor study habit and wrong choice of career.

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

Seeing students of the opposite sex walking hand-in-hand and caressing is now a common place thing in some Nigerian Universities. While undergraduates are involved in this type of relationship, they are faced with the choice of either concentrating in their school work or spending time with the significant other. And if the relationship is exclusive (and not just casual dating), it can go a long way to affecting the performance of the students concerned. In a study conducted by Quatman, Sampson, Robinson and Watson (2001) among High School students in California, the relationship between dating and academic achievement, academic motivation,, depression and self-esteem was examined and the result showed a relationship between dating more frequently and lower academic performance. Kopfler (2008) also undertook a research to find out the effects of romantic relationship on the Academic performance of undergraduate students of Loyola University, New Orleans. No significant relationships were found between the two variables of grade point average and involvement in a romantic relationship. Infact students involved in relationship were motivated more to perform academically and faced higher stress level in meeting deadlines.

LACK OF INTEREST IN LEARNING

The research has observed certain behaviour among undergraduates of Delta State University which depict that many of them are not interested in academic work. These deviant behavior include deliberate lateness to lectures, absenteeism, inattentiveness in class, paying colleagues to do assignments for them, unwillingness to acquire textbooks and other reference material useful for their study and engaging excessively in uneducative activities at the detriment of their studies. To buttress these points, Oyensusi (2008) has this to say:

“Most students in this generation are frivolous in their approach to learning. They are just not as interested in having a sound education as listening to the latest pop album or watching the latest, move from Hollywood”.

Also commenting on this, Abdul (2004) noted that a good number of students are not interested in education because they do not see the need for it and have therefore developed negative attitude towards it.

LOW SELF-CONCEPT

“I am useless”. “I don’t think I can make it in life”. “There is nothing in my brain”. “No matter how well the lecturer teaches, I can never pass a statistics course”. The above statements which are often made by students portray the negative evaluation they have of themselves and this to a great extent has affected their performance. Denga (1987) supported this viewpoint by stressing that people who see themselves as “worthless”, bad and undesirable have negative or poor self-concept and that such individual withdraw and expend little efforts towards their academics. Continuing, he said that this attitude adversely affects their endeavours in life

POOR STUDY HABIT

An important skill a learner should possess is effective method of studying and once this is acquired, the student will perform well in his /her school work. Corroborating this fact, Blue (1996) emphasized that there is no magic formula for excelling in tests, written or oral assignments but studying hard which requires handwork. Again, Rimfat (2006) enumerated poor reading habits to include reading aimlessly without a planned time-table, rote learning and inability to study in a group.

Geleto (2008) carried out a research on Factors Affecting Students’ Academic Performance in Higher Education in Ethiopia and the result indicated that students who started reading for examination from the beginning of classes or early after classes began, performed far better than those who started reading for examination after examination dates have been scheduled. Medahunsi (1985) carried out a research to find out the problem areas of undergraduates’ students in Nigeria. He used 1,200 undergraduates of six Nigerian Universities and found that lack of effective study techniques, was the problem most seriously affecting the academic achievement of undergraduates.

WRONG CHOICE CAREER

Through her interaction with students, during individual counseling, the investigator (who is currently the Acting Director of the Students’ Counselling Centre, Delta State University) has discovered that the low academic performance of some students is traceable to wrong choice of career that have been imposed on them by their parents. Onoyase (1995) pointed out that parents exert much influence on their children in their choice of career. Continuing, she said that students who are pushed into reading wrong courses perform poorly because such careers are at variance with their abilities and interests. Still on wrong choice of career, Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2006) opined that:

“a number of Nigerian parents including the “educated”, out of sheer ignorance of their children’s abilities, aptitudes and interest, impose their career choice on their wards and force them to offer subjects/courses that are related to such careers”.

And when this situation occurs, according to Mezieobi and Mezieobi, the students’ performance are adversely affected.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Younger students

These are students whose age range form 17-24 years.

Older Students

These are undergraduates who are 25 years and above.

Romantic Relationship

This is sexual friendship between students of the opposite sex.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Some decades ago, many graduates from Nigerian Universities were very sound academically and were able to excel in various spheres of life; thereby contributing immensely to the development of the nation. Presently, the performance of students at different levels of education (including the university) has dwindled tremendously and the situation has become worrisome to all stakeholders in education. Products of our educational system can no longer compete with graduates form other parts of the world. The problem of this study therefore is to investigate the factors militating against students’ academic performance in Delta State University, Abraka.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Five research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. Is there any difference between male and female students in their perception of romantic relationship as a factor militating against academic performance?
2. What is the difference between 200 and 300 level students in their perception of lack of interest in learning as a factor militating against academic performance?
3. Is there any difference between older and younger students in their perception of low self-concept as a factor militating against academic performance.
4. What is the difference between law students and science students in their perception of poor study habit as a factor militating against academic performance
5. Is there any difference between management science students and science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating against academic performance?

HYPOTHESES

Five hypotheses were formulated for the study. They are as follows:

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference between male and female student in their perception of romantic relationship as a factor militating against academic performance.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference between 200 300 level students in their perception of lack of interest in learning as a factor militating against academic performance.
- Ho₃: There is significant difference between older and younger students in their perception of low self-concept as a factor militating against academic performance.
- Ho₄: There is no significant difference between Law students and science students in their perception of poor study habit as a factor militating against academic performance.
- Ho₅: There is no significant difference between management science students and science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating against academic performance.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURE

This research is a case study. The population comprised all the 200 and 300 level students in the faculties of Law, Management Sciences and Sciences of Delta State University, Abraka, for the 2007/2008 academic session. The instrument tagged “Factors Militating Against Students’ Academic Performance Questionnaire” (FMASAPQ) with a reliability of 0.81 was administered on a total of 270 students randomly selected from (the number met in class) in the three campuses of the University. 240 students returned their copies showing 89.09% retrieval rate. The questionnaire was made up to two sections; section A contained questions on biographic data such as sex, age, department, faculty and campus, while section B consisted of 18 items indicative of factors militating against academic performance of students. The instrument was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the department of Counseling Psychology, Delta State University and found suitable for use.

The researcher utilized the Z-test statistics to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study have been reported in five tables as follows:

Research Question one

Is there any difference between male and female students in their perception of romantic relationship as a factor militating against academic performance?

Hypothesis one

There is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception or romantic relationship as a factor militating academic performance.

Table 1

Difference between male and female students in their perception or Romantic Relationship as a factor militating Against Academic performance.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Z cal	Z Critical	Significant level	Decision
Male	122	13.57	8.30	1.19	1.96	0.05	N.S
Female	118	12.36	7.63				

Table I above showed a difference in the mean perception of male and female undergraduates concerning romantic relationship as a factor militating against academic performance. The difference in the means is not significant because the calculated Z-value of 1.19 is lower than the critical Z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance/ therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and

female students in their perception of romantic relationship as a factor militating against academic performance is accepted.

Research question two

What is the difference between 200 and 300 level students in their perception of lack of interest in learning as a factor militating against academic performance?

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference between 200 and 300 level students in their perception of lack of interest in learning as a factor militating against academic performance.

Table 2

Difference between 200 and 300 level students in their perception of lack of interest in learning as a Factor Militating Against Academic performance

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Z cal	Z Critical	Significant level	Decision
200 level students	121	12.23	8.57	0.09	1.96	0.05	N.S
300 level students	119	12.13	8.76				

The data on Table 2 revealed a difference in the mean perception of 200 and 300 level students regarding lack of interest in learning as a factor militating Against Academic performance. This is so because the calculated z-value of 0.09 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis is retained.

Research Question three

Is there any difference between older and younger students in their perception of low self-concept as a factor militating Against Academic performance.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant difference between older and young students in their perception of low self-concept as a factor militating Against Academic performance

Table 3

Difference between older and younger students in their perception of low self-concept as a factor militating Against Academic performance.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Z cal	Z Critical	Significant level	Decision
Older students	60	7.87	5.51	0.12	1.96	0.05	N.S
Younger students	180	8.08	22.15				

An inspection of table 3 showed that there is difference in the mean perception of younger and older students as regards poor self-concept as a factor militating against academic performance. But the difference is not significant as the calculated z-value of -0.12 is less than the critical z-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between older and younger students in their perception of low self-concept as a factor militating against academic performance is accepted.

Research Question Four

What is the difference between Law students and Science students in their perception of poor study habit as a Factor Militating Against Academic performance?

Hypothesis Four

There is no significant difference between Law students and science students in their perception of poor study habit as a factor Militating Against Academic performance.

Table 4

Difference between Law students and Science Students in their perception of poor study habit as a factor militating Against Academic performance.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Z cal	Z Critical	Significant level	Decision
Law students	80	10.53	3.43	0.39	1.96	0.05	N.S
Science students	81	10.31	3.62				

The result on table 4 has indicated a difference in the mean perception of law students and science students concerning poor study habit as a factor militating against Academic performance. The difference in the mean is not significant because the calculated z-value of 0.39 is lower than the critical z-value of 1.96 at 0.05

level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between law students and science students in their perception of poor habit as a factor militating Against Academic performance is accepted.

Research question five

Is there any difference between management science students and science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating against Academic performance.

Hypothesis five

There is no significant difference between management Science students and science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating Against Academic performance.

Table 5

Difference between management Science Students and science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating Against Academic performance.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	S.D	Z cal	Z Critical	Significant level	Decision
Management science students	79	10.81	3.13	1.95	1.96	0.05	N.S
Science students	81	9.68	4.18				

Table 5 revealed a difference in the mean perception of management science and science students regarding wrong choice of career as a factor militating against Academic performance. However, the difference is not significant because the calculated z-value of 1.95 is lower than the critical z-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between management science and science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating against academic performance is retained.

Discussion

The investigation has revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception of romantic relationship as a factor militating against academic performance. This finding is inline with the study of Quatman, Sampson Robinson and Watson (2001) which revealed that there is a relationship between dating more frequently and lower academic performance. The result is however at variance with the study of Kopfler (2008) which showed that students who were involved in relationship were motivated more to perform academically.

The present study has also found out that there is no significant difference between 200 and 300 level students in their perception of lack of interest in learning as a factor militating against academic performance. This finding lends credence to Abdul (2004) who opined that a good number of students are not interested in education as they fail to see the need for it and consequently they have developed negative attitude towards learning.

Furthermore, the result has indicated that there is no significant difference between older and younger students in their perception of low self-concept as a Factor militating Against Academic performance. It supports the view of Denga (1987) who stated that people who see themselves as “worthless” bad, and undesirable” have negative or poor self concept and that such individuals withdraw and expend little efforts towards their academic work and that this attitude adversely affects their endeavours in life. Another finding of the study has pointed out that there is no significant difference between law students and science students in their perception of poor study habit as factor militating Against Academic performance. This agrees with the research of Geleto (2008) which indicated that students who started reading for examination from the beginning of classes or early after classes began performed far better than those who started reading for examination after examination dates are scheduled.

The last finding of this study states that there is no significant difference between management science students and Science students in their perception of wrong choice of career as a factor militating against Academic performance. This agrees with Onoyase (1995) who noted that parents exert much influence on their children as regards the choice of career and that when students are forced into reading courses which are at variance with their abilities and interest, they perform poorly.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn is that if the identified factors militating against the performance of undergraduates can be addressed, then the performance of students will improve tremendously and the individuals in particular and the society at large will benefit immensely.

COUNSELING IMPLICATIONS

An implication of this study is that counselling centres are inevitable in universities. Therefore there is the need for University Administrators, State and Federal Government to come to this realization and make funds available for the purchase of necessary materials and equipments so that counsellor in such centres can perform their duties effectively.

1. It is recommended that the Students' Counseling Centre in Delta State University, Abraka should on a regular basis organize seminars on personal-social Guidance (especially on aspects bothering on relationship of students with the opposite sex) and clearly emphasize its negative effect on their academic work.
2. In addition to the lecture method, lecturers of Delta State University should take to other teaching methods that will make learning interesting to students.
3. Counselors in the centre should use the Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) to help students in eliminating self-defeating thoughts and statements that interfere with their study and also encourage them to develop positive self-concept.
4. Seminars and workshop on effective Study habit should be organized every semester for students of Delta State University, Abraka so that they can study regularly and excel in their academic work.
5. Parents are to be enlightened on the need to allow their children to take to careers that match their abilities and interests so that they can enjoy their academic endeavours. This could be in form of workshop or seminar organized specially for sandwich students. (who are parents).
6. During orientation programme, fresh students of Delta State University should be made to visit the Students' Counseling Centre so that they can familiarize themselves with it and avail themselves of its services when the need arises.

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