

Age and Marital Status as Predictors of Undergraduate Students' Academic Achievement in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Aims: To determine marital status and age as predictor of undergraduate students' academic achievement in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Study design: Ex-post facto research design.

Material and Method: The sample for the study was 632 100 level students selected using simple random sampling technique of balloting without replacement. The data collected were pre-existing results of 100 level students on Use of English retrieved from the respective departments. Data collected was analyzed using simple regression analysis.

Results: The findings of the study revealed that marital status of the undergraduate students had R^2 change of 0.000. This indicates that marital status had the predictive power of 0.00 percent for undergraduates' academic achievement in Use of English course. Also, at 1 df numerator, 631 df denominator and P value = .05 level of significant, the calculated F value = 0.85 is less than the critical F value = 3.84. Therefore, marital status of the university undergraduates is not a significant predictor of their academic achievement in Use of English course taught in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Similarly, age of the undergraduate students had R^2 change of 0.020. This indicates that age had the predictive power of 2.00 percent for undergraduates' academic achievement in Use of English course. Also, at 1df numerator, 631df denominator and P value .05, the calculated F value = 14.06 and is greater than the critical F value of 3.84. This implies that age of university undergraduates is a significant predictor of their academic achievement in Use of English course.

Conclusion: Based on the analysis, it was concluded that age of university undergraduates is a significant predictor of their academic achievement in Use of English course in tertiary institutions. It was also deduced that marital status of undergraduates is not a significant predictor of their academic achievement in tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Age, marital status, undergraduate, students, academic achievement, tertiary institution.

1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, academic achievement among undergraduates represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments, specifically in school, college, or university (Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger & Wirthwein, 2014). The academic achievement of students at all levels in educational institutions in Nigeria has become an issue of heated debate, attracting criticisms from all and sundry. In the light of this growing challenge, guidance programmes and counselling strategies have incessantly been initiated in schools, targeting the improvement of students' academic achievement.

Academic achievement is a product of education or learning which is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment. Academic achievement is an educational goal that is achieved

by a student, teacher, or an institution over a certain period (Ifedioramma, 2018). It is an obvious fact that students who achieve high grades are more likely to be employed, have stable employment, earn higher salaries, be less dependent on social assistance, and less likely to engage in criminal and unwholesome activities. Undergraduate students are students who do not yet have first degree, but are studying to earn one (Dave, 2015). This definition is in line with this study in the sense that students in their first year to final year in Universities in Nigeria and are still aspiring to obtain their first degree.

Marital status, age, gender and faculty of study are some demographic features that could come into focus in the context of predictors of academic achievement of undergraduate students. For instance, a research carried out by Habibollah, Rohani, Tengku, Jamaluddin and Mallan (2009) revealed that various variables such as family influences, gender and age are correlates of academic achievement in Europe. That notwithstanding, there could be similar cases in Nigeria which is yet to be empirically established. Undoubtedly, marital status of an individual denotes whether a person is married or single. Being married involve being in a legal union with either somebody with an opposite sex or same sex (Frances, 2015). It is generally observed that married students in higher education of learning could be faced with the challenges of diminished financial resources, assumptions of new roles and responsibilities, reorganization of routines and schedules as a result of marital status, as these conditions are not conducive for attaining good academic achievement. Since it is perceived that married undergraduate students must cope with the multiple responsibilities of work at home and study, it may be more challenging for them to provide and maintain a supportive learning environment for themselves (Lasode & Fesyisola, 2014).

The second aspect of marital status is singleness. It is a state of one not being married or having a partner (Hornby, 2010). It must be stressed that singleness is a life stage when humans become more sophisticated in their notions of friendship and life style in general. It has been observed that factors such as, bad company, cultism in school, corrupt social activities like night club and unhealthy friendship with the opposite sex disrupt the academic achievement of the undergraduate students which contribute to the act of truancy among students. This implies that when a student gets involved in acts such as being absent from school, he or she may not have time to concentrate on his or her studies, thereby having negative impact on that student's academic achievement.. Similarly, Amori, Anne and Janetta (2011), noted that the presence and negative impacts of friends are not just limited to married undergraduate students but to all students in general not minding their age or marital status.

Age is also considered to be a predictor of academic achievement of students, which has played a significant role in the promotion of education in Nigeria and the world at large. Age is defined as an individual's development measured in terms of the year's requisite for development of an average individual (Gibbon & Waldman in Ifediora, 2018). The age of an individual as it increases, usually affects the various developmental changes, hence determines a lot about how an individual relates with other people in a learning environment affecting aspects of human thinking and performance. Observation has shown that older students tends to be withdrawn and as a result do not fully participate in academic

activities such as group discussion among students (Thomas & Daniel, 2008). This highlights the importance for understanding the relationship between age and academic achievement, however, limited empirical evidence exists.

Considering that the academic achievement of students are often dependent on demographic features such as marital status and age, it becomes essential to investigate these variables as predictors of academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English course taught in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In view of the limited empirical evidence, the aim of the study was to explore;

1. Marital status as a predictor of academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institution.
2. Age as a predictor of academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institution.

1.1 Research Questions

1. How does marital status predict academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?
2. How does age predict academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

1.2 Hypotheses

1. Marital status is not a significant predictor of academic achievement of undergraduate students in use of English in tertiary institutions.
2. Age is not a significant predictor of academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institutions.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. An ex-post facto design according to Nworgu (2015) is the type of design in which data are collected after the event or phenomenon under investigation has taken place and for which the researcher does not have control over the variables of interest and cannot manipulate them. The population for the study consisted of 7,077 (4077 male and 3000 female) 100 level students across 14 faculties in selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Multistage sampling technique was used in selecting the sample for the study. Firstly, disproportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select tertiary institutions in Nigeria, these institutions were stratified based on geo-political zones in the country. Secondly, simple random sampling technique was used to select 14

faculties from the tertiary institutions sampled. Finally, proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to select 632 (450 male and 182 female) 100 level students from the respective faculties..

Data relating to age and marital status of students was collected using the demographic questionnaire. While data relating to academic achievement in Use of English was pre-existing results of 100 level students on Use of English course, this was retrieved from the respective departments in the tertiary institutions sampled. At P value .05, data collected was analyzed using simple regression analysis. The analysis was computed using a software programme SPSS 23.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: How does marital status predict academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

Hypothesis 1: Marital status is not a significant predictor of academic achievement of undergraduate students in use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Result presented in table 1 reveals that marital status of the undergraduate students had R^2 change of 0.000. This indicates that marital status had the predictive power of 0.00 percent for undergraduates' academic achievement in Use of English. Also, at 1 df numerator, 631 df denominator and $P = .05$ level of significant, the calculated F value 0.85 is less than the critical F value of 3.84. Therefore, marital status of the university undergraduates was not found to be a significant predictor of students' academic achievement in Use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

This finding is consistent with Bitrus, Apagu and Hamsatu (2016) where they found that marital status did not significantly predict academic performance in colleges of education in North eastern Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study is also supported by the study of Ekundayo (2010) which found that marital status and gender had no statistical significance influence on academic performance of students. This finding implies that university students irrespective of their marital status and gender could have a higher academic performance.

Research Question 2: How does age predict academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria?

Hypothesis 2: Age is not a significant predictor of academic achievement of undergraduate students in Use of English in tertiary institutions in Nigeria

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|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|-----|------|-------------|
| Age | 0.148 | 0.022 | 0.020 | - | - | 2.00 | 14.06 | 631 | 3.84 | Significant |
| | | | | 5.234 | 0.148 | | | | | |

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, it was concluded that age of university undergraduates was a small but statistically significant predictor of their academic achievement in Use of English in tertiary institutions. It was also deduced that marital status of undergraduates is not a significant predictor of their academic achievement in tertiary institutions.

Consent

As per international standard or university standard, students' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

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6. COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

7. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

This study was carried out in collaboration with the authors. Author AA designed the study and wrote the protocol, Author ICD managed the literature searches. Author LI wrote the first and second draft of the manuscript, performed the statistical analysis and managed that analysis of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript before submission

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