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ACADEMIC INTEREST AS CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

*The idea behind the establishment of schools overtime has been to impact knowledge and skills to students. Behind this idea is the goal of enhancing academic achievements among undergraduates in courses that they offer in tertiary institutions. However, observations and the semester academic records from respective departments have shown that while some undergraduates achieve high academically, in some courses offered in tertiary institutions, the academic achievements in courses like GSS 101and CSC 101appear to be on a steady decline. The study therefore looked at academic interest as correlate of academic achievement of undergraduates in Anambra State Public Universities. The public two Universities in Anambra State include: Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli. Correlation survey research design was adopted for this study to help observe the values of variables such as academic interest, in order to examine the relationship existing between this variable and undergraduate's academic achievement in GSS 101 and CSC 101. The Stratified random sampling technique was employed such that all the faculties in each of the two Universities that make up the entire university were recognized as strata. Instrument adopted for data collection is the Students' Academic Interest Scale. The study found a significant positive relationship of r = .148**, P< .01 existing between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in GSS 101 in Anambra State Public Universities; no significant positive relationship of r =. 056, P =.28 exist between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101 in Anambra State; The study therefore recommends that Parents should endeavour to increase their efforts in getting involved in the academic interest of their children, and encourage their children to develop academic interest towards their studies especially the science based ones.*

Keywords: Academic Interest; Academic Achievement; Undergraduate; Public Universities.

Introduction

Interest in academic works is very important and may be seen as an influential and powerful motivational process that may support, quicken and energize learning, guide academic and career trajectories, which are essentials for academic success. Interest in academic works may also be viewed as both a psychological state of attention and effect toward a particular

object or topic and an enduring predisposition to re-engage in studies overtime. Research has also shown that as people pay more attention to information, process information and will remember them, they may tend to engage with studying the information at a deeper level in critical thinking and make connections between old and new knowledge. The National Policy on Education posited the university as the highest level of the Educational Institution and is expected to produce graduates who should be able to manage sensitive positions at higher levels to foster development in the Country.

According to Yusuf, Okanlawon and Oladayo (2020), any meaningful development cannot be recorded except there is proper development of the human resources, which can only be achieved through education. This conforms to Abdu-Raheem's (2015) assertion that formal education is regarded as the major tool for socio-economic development and social mobilization in any society. Thus, any nation hoping to have the lamplight in development needs to emphasis education because it is found to be a way to proper economic development.

In any education system, students are the major role – players, they occupy important positions and is not ruled out that anything that affects the students may have an implication on the general educational system. According to Mushtaq and Khan (2012), schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students. They posited students as the most essential asset for any educational institution. That is to say that the social and economic development of the country is directly linked with the academic performance of students. Hence, in the views of Yusuf, Okanlawon and Oladayo, (2020), for any nation to achieve its educational aims and objectives students have vital roles to play and this could be in the areas of learning through acquisition of knowledge, skills and performance. Furthermore, they stated that the social and economic development of a nation is directly related with students' academic achievement. That is to say that students' academic achievement plays important role in producing quality graduates who will become great leaders and resourceful manpower for the society, invariably having influence on the country's economic and social development.

In the university, success is measured by academic achievement of students based on how well students meet 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' academic achievement in core university courses have the attention of parents, legislatures and department of education (Albert and Dahling, 2016). This goes to show that high priority is being placed on how to make the graduates employable and more productive after the completion of their degree programs in tertiary institutions. Therefore, it is pertinent that efforts should be geared towards maintaining high standards in schools and such standards will be reflected in students' academic achievement.

Academic achievement is attained by a child in a lesson taught, which may include experience, knowledge, skill and the like. The knowledge and skill are measured by students' scores and the good or poor performance does not depend solely on the attribute that one is born with, but his family background, social contacts, teachers and overall climate in his school and assessment procedure (Samson, 2016). This is to say that, academic achievement could be defined as excellence in all academic disciplines, in class as well as in co-curricular activities. Thus, Academic Achievement according to Samson (2016) can be referred to as both curricular and co-curricular performance of students. Hence, academic achievement also indicates the learning outcome of students. Therefore, university students are expected to perform their potentials efficiently, as a result of the impact of learning. Thus, the achievement of students in the classroom and university takes a central role in the academic development of the students. Hence, parents, teachers and school administrators alike take cognizance of the academic well-being of the students. In the same vein, Samson (2016) posited that the yardsticks set by school authorities to measure academic achievement of students, will determine whether a student has achieved well academically in courses offered or not. This goes to show that academic achievement is the culmination of all the activities of the student in the school. Academic achievement for university students is also seen as the extent to which a student has achieved his educational goals. The university measures academic achievement in several ways which include continuous assessment test (C.AT.) and a number of standardized test and examination. Through these, areas of strength and weakness towards a child's academic achievement is determined and evaluated in order to improve on the learning process of the student.

However, it is pertinent to point out that the trend record of low achievement is not limited to other educational levels but also rampant among students of tertiary institutions. This has been a subject of major concern to educational planners, administrators, stakeholders in education, the students themselves and the researchers. A study conducted by Adeyemi and Adeyemi (2014) revealed that a total number of 39 students of the Niger state owned University, (Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida University), Lapai were expelled from the institution over poor academic achievement, while two others were expelled for examination malpractices.

On the other angle, academic interest is triggered by specific or appealing stimuli in the learning environment. Academic interest is said to be enhanced through the manipulation or modification of certain aspects of the Learning environment and contextual factors such as teaching strategies, task presentation and structuring of learning experiences (Kpolovie and Joe, 2014). Interest is a feeling of curiosity or concern about something that makes one's attention turn towards it. Personal interest towards certain activities develops slowly and tend to have long-lasting effects on a person's knowledge and values, whereas situational interest is an emotional state that

is evoked suddenly by something in the immediate environment and that have only a short-term effect on an individual's knowledge and values (Adekunle and Femi Adeoye, 2016). Adekunle and Femi-Adeoye (2016) further stated that situation interest is aroused as a function of the interestingness of the content and context and partially under the regulation of teachers.

However, it is important to consider students' academic achievement and their level of interest in learning. According to Rugutt & Chemosit(2015) the ability to work independently on projects, discussing coursework with other students, studying with other students may be attributed to interest in learning. They further state that students' academic interest plays a key role in their academic achievement. Since the school faculty provides the student with learning environments, it can be understood that there are benefits of web-based learning for students. However, Ezike (2018) and Babu (2019) have indicated positive relationship between students' academic interest and their academic achievement in learning. It is obvious that the use of educational technology afford the learners greater anonymity and opportunities to practice a range of generic skills (for instance, management of self, others, task, information) and hence could increase their academic interest.

Meanwhile, it is understood that Academic Achievement is the goal of students or learners in a given situation. The students are expected to achieve optimally in their academic pursuits by developing the interest in any given course. Although studies have suggested that academic interest is triggered or enhanced through the manipulation or modification of certain aspects of the learning environment and contextual factors (Kpolovie & Joe, 2014), how these factors play out among the undergraduate students in public universities requires an empirical examination. This is because the students have limited time for their studies and need the academic interest. This study therefore sets out to determine the relationship between academic interest and academic achievement of students in Anambra State Public Universities.

Purpose of the Study

1. Relationship between Academic Interest and Academic Achievement of Undergraduates in GSS 101 in Anambra State Public Universities.
2. Relationship between academic interest and academic achievement of Undergraduates in CSC 101 in Anambra State Public Universities.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the relationship between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in GSS 101 in Anambra State Public Universities?
2. What is the relationship between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101 in Anambra State Public Universities?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in GSS 101.

2. There is no significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101.

Review of Related Literature

The study is linked to behavioural learning theory propounded by B.F Skinner in 1957. The theory states that behaviours are learned from the environment, and says that innate or inherited factors have very little influence on behaviour. Behaviourism or the behavioural learning theory is a popular concept that focuses on how students learn. Behaviourism focuses on the idea that all behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment. In the classroom, the behavioural learning is transferred from teachers to learners from a response to the right stimulus. Students are passive participants in behavioural learning as teachers give them the information as an element of stimulus response. This theory relates with the present study and has the following educational implications: that behavioural learning theory is key for educators because it posits how students react and behave in the classroom, and suggests that teachers can directly influence how their students behave. The theory also expresses the aspect of academic interest of students which is a certain way of behaviour as it bothers on students' academic achievement.

According to Ghulam (2013) the standard of education besides other factors depends upon achievement motivation of students. The performance in education is reflected through the academic achievement motivation of students. Theories of achievement motivation, including traditional expectancy-value approaches have been intrapersonal in nature. Some students are dishearten and not motivated due to the complications of the study system and other things, which they cannot solve themselves or with the help of internet or with some friends, they need some proper guidance, they don't know the complications of Module System, Recognition of their Grads, how to learn, subject choice, chose the topic of thesis etc. When they discuss their requests and problems with a study advisor, then they come to know about many possibilities and solutions of their problems. Then they are going to be motivated to do that task in well manners, and that is a big step to success in their study.

In case of standard base orientation of an individual the achievement quality will be measured in a way, if one is at that moment better or worse than at an earlier point of time. The motivation of achievement related behavior deserves attention, and that comes with proper study guidance. The students with low academic achievement motivation are confronted with some problems, like lack of proper information about study systems, about learn strategies etc. And thereby they should be determined with a new beginning and thereby the motivation of achievement-related behavior obviously attention to study guidance. To improve academic achievement motivation, factors have to be identified affecting these

characteristics adversely. Their identification may lead towards remedial measures to identify factors having negative effect on academic achievement motivation. And that negative factors are due to lack of study guidance services. Ezike (2018) conducted a study on classroom environment and academic interest as correlates of achievement in senior secondary school chemistry in Ibadan South West Local Government area, Oyo State, Nigeria. The study adopted the correlational research design. Four hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level significance. The sample for the study comprised of 208 SS II students from ten randomly selected public secondary schools in Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. The instrument for data collection were classroom environment students' questionnaire, students' academic interest scale and chemistry achievement test with reliability coefficients of r = 0.85, r = 0.76 and r = 0.81 respectively. The statistical tool used for data analysis was Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis. The findings of this study revealed among others significant relationships between classroom environment and academic achievement, students' academic interest and achievement in Chemistry. However, classroom environment better predicted achievement than students' academic Interest. Result showed significant relationships between classroom environment and students' academic interest and achievement in Chemistry. Composite contribution of classroom environment and academic interest was found to be significant. However, classroom environment better predicted achievement than students' academic interest. The study concludes that the predictor variables are active correlates of achievement in Chemistry. The study recommends that hands should be on deck in providing conducive school and classroom environments for learning, teachers and parents should create activities that will help develop and sustain interest of the students. The study further concludes that governments at all levels should make funds available for this purpose and ensure that befitting classrooms, laboratories and workshops are constructed. Since the success of the students is linked with the students' homes, parents and teachers should create activities that will help to develop and sustain the interest of students.

Ezikes' study is related to the present as it examined classroom environment and academic interest as correlates of achievement in senior secondary school chemistry, an adopted similar statistical tool as that which be adopted for use in the present study. However, the study differs from the present study because it determined the relationship of only one variable (academic interest) and one subject (chemistry), nevertheless, the present study is set to determine the correlation between academic interest, and academic achievement among undergraduates in Public Universities in Anambra State.

Archin and Yanney (2020) conducted a study to determine the relationship between student interest in mathematics and their academic performance using Agogo State College as study area in the Asant Akim North District. Three research questions guided the study. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The study

was carried out among SHS students of the school under study. The target population was 670. However, 200 students were sampled using proportionate stratified sampling. The instruments used for the study were questionnaire which was self-prepared and self-administered and secondary data (document review). The findings from the study showed among others that, most students do not have interest in mathematics; the students believe that mathematics has relevance in one's life one's academics; and also a high or strong relationship exists between students' interest in studying mathematics and academic performance and it is in a positive direction. It was recommended that students should seek counseling on mathematics so as to increase their interest in studying mathematics whiles the curriculum developers should make the teaching and learning of mathematics practical and activity-oriented. More so, teachers should be motivated so that they may assist students in teaching and learning mathematics skills to increase students' interest in studying mathematics to foster high academic performance. This study is related to the present study as it focused on the relationship between students' interest in mathematics and their academic achievement. However, the study differs from the present study in terms of study design, sample drawn for the study, statistical tool for data collection and the subject of interest (Mathematics). Based on these dis-similarities, there is limitation in generalization of the findings, hence the lacuna which the present study is set to fill.

In the same vein, Essien, Akpan and Obot (2015) examined students' interest in social studies and academic achievement in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. One hypothesis was formulated to direct the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of seven hundred and fifty-three (753) students was randomly selected for the study. The instruments for data collection were the Students' Interest in Social Studies Questionnaire (SISSQ) and Social Studies Achievement Test (SOSAT) developed by the researchers were subjected validation by experts in measurement and evaluation. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through the split-half reliability method and its associate Spearman Brown prophecy formula. Pearson product moment correlation analysis was adopted to test the hypothesis at. 05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed among others that students' interest in social studies significantly relate to their academic achievement in the subject. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that teachers/facilitators should explain all subject matter in a way that each student can comprehend in order to arouse their interest in the subject among others. This study relates with the present study through the similarity in the variables studies. The content coverage of the reviewed study focused on students in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, and adopted the Ex-post facto research design. This content differs from the present study, the present study will adopt the correlation survey research design and will be conducted in among tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Research Method

Correlation survey research design was adopted for this study because it seeks to observe the values of variables such as academic interest in order to examine the relationship existing between the variable and undergraduate's academic achievement in GSS 101 and CSC 101. Anambra State is the area of study. Anambra State is located in the South East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. The state capital is Awka and its major commercial cities are Onitsha and Nnewi. The overall population of the study is the total of 2,380 first year undergraduate regular students from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,Uli and Igbariam campus and 9,321 first year undergraduate students from Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka, making up the total of 11, 701 first year undergraduate students' population for the entire study, as at 2022/2023 academic session (Source: GSS Unit and Admissions Unit). The Stratified random sampling technique was employed such that all the faculties in each of the two Universities that make up the entire university were recognized as stratas. Interestingly, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka has exactly the same number of faculties with Chukwumeneka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Uli and Igbariam. In view of the existing faculties, the study adopted a simple random sampling to select five faculties in each of the two Universities. For each of the selected faculties, two departments were chosen using a simple random sampling. The sample size of this study, which is a total of 383 Undergraduate regular students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is derived from the calculations offered by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) at 5% error margin and 95% confidence level. The instrument used in the study is the Students' Academic Interest Scale developed by Althoff (2010).

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in GSS 101 in Anambra State Public Universities?

Table 1: Pearson r on undergraduates' academic interest and academic achievement in GSS 101?

Source of variation	N	Academic interest r	GSS 101	Remarks
Academic interest	379	1.00	1.00	Very low Relationship
GSS 101	379	0.01	0.01	

The data in this table shows that very low relationship of 0.01 exists between academic interest and undergraduate students' academic achievement in GSS 101.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101 in Anambra State Public Universities?

Table 2: Pearson r on academic interest and undergraduates' academic achievement in CSC 101.

Source of variation	N	Academic interest R	CSC 101	Remarks
Academic interest	379	1.00	.06	Very low Relationship
CSC 101	379	0.06	0.01	

The data in this table reveals that very low relationship of 0.06 exists between academic interest and undergraduates' academic achievement in CSC 101.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in GSS 101.

Table 3: Summary table of Pearson Moment Correlation of Academic Interest and Academic achievement in GSS 101

Variable	N	R Value	P value	Remark
Academic Interest	379	.148**	.004	Significant

Correlation: Academic Achievement in GSS 101

** p<.01, * P< .05 (.01 to .05 is significant (sig), any figure above .05 is not significant (NS)

This showed that a significant positive relationship is existing between academic interest and academic achievement in GSS 101 of undergraduates in Anambra State Public Universities at r = .148, P= .01. This implies that as academic interest is increasing, academic achievement in GSS 101 will be increasing and verse versa. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement in CSC 101 of undergraduates in Anambra State Public Universities was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101.

Table 4: Summary table of Pearson Moment Correlation of Academic Interest and Academic achievement in CSC 101

Variable	N	R Value	P value	Remark
Academic Interest	379	.056	.278	NS

Correlation: Academic Achievement in CSC 101
** p<.01, * P< .05 (.01 to .05 is significant (sig), any figure above .05 is not significant (NS)

This showed that a positive relationship is existing between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101 in Anambra State Public Universities but not significant at r = . 056, P =.28 (see table 5 above). This implies that relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement in CSC 101 of undergraduates in public universities is positive but not significant. The null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement in CSC 101 of undergraduates in Anambra State Public Universities was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The finding revealed that a significant positive relationship exist between academic interest and academic achievement in GSS 101 of undergraduates at r = 139, p<.01 This finding is related to Ezike, (2018) and Babu, (2019) which indicated that positive relationship between students' academic interest and their academic achievement in learning existed. This means that as academic interest is increasing, academic achievement in GSS 101 will be increasing and as academic interest is decreasing, academic achievement in GSS 101 will be decreasing. This showed that undergraduates relate better to Arts and Humanities courses better than science courses. This means that undergraduates have better academic interest when it comes to humanities course like GSS 101 which may be as a result of teaching method which do not involve formulas or calculations in learning and how interesting, the content or context of the course is (Kpolovie and Joe, 2014; Adekunle & Femi-Adeoye, 2016). Based on this finding, a significant positive relationship may not be possible between academic interest and academic achievement in physical science courses like physics, mathematics and computer sciences.

The finding from the correlational analysis collected from the field for this study revealed that no significant positive relationship exist between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101 at r = .061, p>.05. This finding is related to some extent to Ezike, (2018) and Babu, (2019) which indicated that there is positive significant relationship between students' academic interest and their academic achievement in learning. This means that positive relationship exist between academic interest and academic achievement of undergraduates in CSC 101 but not significant. This confirmed that undergraduates relate better to humanities courses like GSS 101 than science courses like CSC 101. This means that undergraduates do not have better academic interest when it comes to science course like CSC 101 which may require formulas and calculations in learning, and may not be interesting as a result of the content and context of the course (Kpolovie and Joe, 2014; Adekunle & Femi-Adeoye, 2016)..

Conclusion

The study established that the significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement in GSS 101 of undergraduates is significant while there is no positive significant relationship existing between academic interest and academic achievement in CSC 101 of undergraduates. The findings of this present

study strengthened past studies in relationship among academic interest, and academic achievement. Finally, the study provided an overview of the relationship between the variables and undergraduates academic achievement in Anambra state of Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

1. Parents should endeavour to increase their efforts in involving in academic interest of their children in order to assist their children to achieve their academic goals.
2. Parents and teachers should encourage their children and students to develop academic interest towards science based courses.

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