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School Location and Gender as Correlates of Students' Academic Achievement in Economics

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ABSTRACT This study examined the relationship between school location and gender as correlates of students' academic achievement in Economics. The population of the study comprised of all Senior Secondary School 1 and 2 students in Ogun state, Nigeria. Six hundred and forty (640) students selected through stratified random sampling method constituted the sample for this study. A descriptive research design was adopted. Two instruments were used; student questionnaire on school location (SQSLG) and Economics Achievement Test (EAT) to collect data, with a Cronbach Alpha index of 0.76 and Kurd Richardson (KR 20) a co-efficient of r=0.873 respectively. The results generated were collated and analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC), and Inferential statistics of T-test. Findings showed that schools located near border towns and places of economic interest distract students' attention. The researchers therefore concluded that in the future schools should not be located close to places of economic interest.

INTRODUCTION

The location of a school determines to a large extent the level of students' achievement. Orji (2013) opined that school location implies urban-rural setting. Urban schools are those schools in the municipalities or schools found within the towns and rural schools are those located in the villages or semi- urban areas. Economics, just like any other subject is influenced by the area in which the school is cited. This affects both the teachers and the learners alike. For instance, a school located in a serene environment such as the Government Reserved Area (GRA) and the ones beside motor parks, noisy environment and commercial nerve centers and border towns cannot be compared in terms of suitability for learning. Hence, the location of a school determines the academic performance of a student. Fredrick (2011) viewed school location as one of a major factor that influences student's academic achievement in some subject areas. He opined that parents look at such factors as the location of schools (urban or rural) and the distance to the school before enrolling there wards. Distance of school from home, noisy environment and other variables are capable of hampering effective teaching and learning, to this end Owoeye and Yara (2011) noted that many parents were of the opinion that students whose schools are cited in towns perform better than their colleagues in village schools.

Researchers have found out that boys and girls exhibit different patterns, while girls pay attention to efforts in explaining their performances boys on the other hand are exhibit the pattern of luck and ability as a factor that determines their performance. Thus differences in gender have been found to be a motivation for their functioning and academic achievement. Further research has shown that girls acknowledge success and failure not as a result of efforts but ability, while boys attribute success to efforts to boost their self- image (Smith et al. 2002).

The differences in the educational attainments of boys and girls are broadly attributed to biological cause and / or to culture and stereotypes. In the words of kleen (2004), differences in academic achievement of boys and girls are as a result of culture, biological functions and stereotype. Studies carried out by (Okebukola 1993; Jiboku 2008) revealed a dwindling performance of women in education which could be attributed to gender inequality in education. This low performance in Nigeria particularly could be attributed to the educational conditions in which the girl –child is expected viz- a – viz the boy-child and the traditional and cultural responsibilities of men and women which differs that influences the upbringing of the male and female child. Bisong (2006) in her study concluded that curriculum planners already exhibit bias towards the girl or woman who is seen as fragile and needed protection.

Gender according to (Samtrock 2005) prescribes sets of role behaviors expected of male and females in their thinking, actions and feelings. According to the social cognitive theory, the adolescent's gender development is based on adolescents' observation and copying of other's behavior, also by rewards and punishments of gender-approach and gender-inappropriate behavior.

Yang (2010) defines gender as social attributes and opportunities related with being male or female and the relationship between men and women, boys and girls as well as those between men and women that are socially constructed and are learned through the process of socialization. Olubunmi (2011) concluded that, gender differences are intolerable hence it would be right and proper to treat boys and girls in schools differently due to their natural predispositions.

Parents, administrators, educators, psychologists and counselors have expressed great concern over the academic achievement of students in secondary schools especially in social sciences. The dwindling performance of students in Economics is of a major concern to those in social science education (Aknyele 2011; Ariyo 2006; Eryilimaz 2004). Pandey (2008) asserted that, academic achievement is a function of the students' performance in subjects learnt in school which accounts for their growth and development of knowledge in educational situation where teaching and learning takes place as influenced by factors such as environment, culture, health opportunities, exposure, training, motivation, methods of teaching, school location, physical abilities, individual differences among others.

Students' performance at the senior secondary school level in a particular subject is a key element for the future of youths in a nation and also indices of measuring the effectiveness of the school. It shows cases the extent that students, teachers, or instructors have achieved their educational goals and the main indicator for adolescents to learn about their talents, abilities and competences which are vital for developing aspirations.

Good academic performance has been a major source of worry for educationists, parents, policy designers and planners and this has led to series of researches being carried out to determine factors responsible for poor academic performance among secondary school students. Von et al. (2011) were of the opinion that academic achievement is something one does or achieve at school, college or university, in class, in a laboratory, library or field work. According to these researchers, the main objective of the school is the accomplishment of academic distinction by the students and same for the parents who expect their wards to excel academically and this could be achieved in line with the school objectives which place emphasis on sound scholarship.

At the commencement of an activity, students ability to learn varies, which is a function of their previous experiences, personal qualities and social supports. The level of encouragement and support parents and teachers give their students coupled with access to quality learning materials and the right blend of teaching methodologies result in skill acquisition and refinement. Parents' desire for their children serves as an impetus for the improved performance of their wards both directly and indirectly and it is in the light of this that informed the study finding the correlation that exists between gender, school location and academic achievement in Economics.

Research Objectives

Previous researches on student's achievement in Economics at the senior secondary level have not been encouraging. Therefore it becomes highly imperative to carry out a study to find solutions to the factors responsible for this downward trend. Hence, this study investigated the effects of school location and gender as correlates of students' academic achievement in Economics. Specifically, this study explained:

a. The influence of gender on students' academic achievement in Economics
b. The effects of school location on students' academic achievement in Economics
c. Correlation between school location and gender on the student's achievement in Economics.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at < 0.05 significant level

Ho1. Gender is not a significant factor in students' academic achievement in Economics.

Ho2. School location is not a significant factor in students' academic achievement in Economics.

Ho3. There is no correlation between school location and gender on the student's academic achievement in Economics.

Literature Review

Lynn (2004) as cited in Akabogu and Ajiwoju (2015) explained that male students have larger brain size than their female counterparts and such would be expected to have higher average performance in picture vocabulary than their female counterparts. However, Whitney (2006) stresses that female students outperform male students in almost all indices of achievement related to language skills. Based on the different views of different scholars on the issue of gender is language teaching and learning. It is important to state that English language occupies important position in Nigeria education system same as Economics. In line with this, the students in this study were subjected to treatment in order to determine the effect of gender on their academic achievement. Therefore, effects of gender on student's achievement are an important variable in this study.

The poverty of many rural communities (border towns inclusive) reduces parents' capacity to make adequate provisions for their wards and supplement their educational needs with the resources available to jumpstart and increase their desire to learn in the absence of the teacher (Titus 2008). Sheldon (2012) observed further that schools in rural communities are likely to have a preponderance of unqualified teachers a practice that is detrimental to knowledge acquisition. In addition, the remoteness of schools in rural areas makes it almost impossible for education inspectors or quality assurance officers to visit the schools for inspection. Similar to these is paucity of good houses, electricity, potable water and others which affects teachers posting to rural areas and the few teachers available are either seeking for transfer or if forced to stay concentrate on cross border trade as a result of the proximity of their school to border areas.

Closely related to gender variable is school location. School location can be in rural areas where facilities such as qualified teachers, laboratories, conducive learning environment, and social amenities are not available. It can also be seen in urban areas where qualified teachers, conducive learning environment and social amenities are available. However, location according to this study refers to schools in border areas/towns which are predominantly rural areas. Nevertheless, the differences in rural and urban areas indicated the differences in the academic achievement of students in Economics.

How much knowledge of Economics a citizen acquires will determine their ability in solving economic problems and making of rational decisions concerning the society. There is therefore need for the students to acquire basic knowledge and skills in Economics. The effects of school location and gender on academic achievement of students in economics brings into focus the objectives or rationale for the teaching of economics in senior secondary schools in Nigeria. These objectives are stated as follows:

1. To furnish students with the basic principles of Economics necessary for useful living and higher education;
2. Preparation of students for prudent and effective management of scarce resources;
3. To raise students respect for the dignity of labour, appreciation of economic, socio- cultural values of our own society; and
4. Acquisition of practical knowledge to proffer solutions for the Nigerian society and possibly South Africa as developing countries and the world at large (Adu and Galloway 2015).

From the above highlighted objectives, a fundamental question comes to mind, why do we study Economics? Adu and Galloway (2015) put forward the following reasons;

1. To enables students understand and appreciate various government policies where choices have to be made such as probably how to spend more money on free education and therefore provide less employment opportunities.
2. Providing students with basic skills for analyzing Economic problems thereby preparing them better for positions where economic decisions have to be made.
3. It helps government to promote growth and development hence improving the quality of life of the citizens.
4. Knowledge of Economics is useful to analyze fascinating patterns of socio- economic behavior.

5. The study of Economics is useful to understand and alter the inequalities in the distribution of income and opportunities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted ex-post facto research design with the population comprising of students in year1 and year 2 of senior secondary school in Ogun state, south west Nigeria. These students were obtained from eight (8) classes from the sixteen (16) schools in the border towns of Ogun state that were purposely sampled. Purposive and stratified sampling methods were used in selecting the sample for the study which was 640 out of the total population.

Variables Used

Independent Variables

There are categories of independent variables, which is school location and gender. They are

School location at 2 levels:
A. border zones/areas
B. non- border zones areas and
Gender at 2 levels:
a. Male
b. Female.

There is only one dependent variable in this study, that is,

a. Students' academic achievement in Economics.

Instrument

Two self-developed research instruments were used for this study. They were student questionnaire on school location and gender (SQSLG) and Economics Achievement Test (EAT). The SQSLG consisted of twenty (20) items while the Economics Achievement Test consisted of forty (40) objective questions.

Data Collection

The data is collected using the following questionnaires

Students Questionnaire on School Location and Gender (SQSLG)

The instrument which was developed by the researcher comprised of three (3) sections.

Section A sought for the following information from the respondents, name of school, location of school, class, age, sex and type of family. Sections B consisted of indices on distance of school while Section C sought information on male and female level of participation which the respondents responded to using a modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D).

Validity and Reliability of SQSLG

The instrument for this study was validated by ensuring that specialists in the field of social science education at the university level perused it for corrections. The validity of the instrument was ensured by trial testing it eight (8) public secondary schools located in Ogun state border towns. Cronbach Alpha was used to estimate its reliability which was put at 0.76.

Economics Achievement Test (EAT)

The instrument which was developed by the researcher consisted of forty (40) multiple choice items. Areas covered includes: basic concepts and tools for economic analysis, population, and production, laws of demand and supply, and importance of agriculture.

Validity and Reliability of EAT

The instrument was validated by ensuring that it was handed over to specialists in the field of Economics Education and highly experienced teachers of Economics in secondary schools for their inputs. Kuder Richardson (20) was used to estimate the reliability value of r=0.873.

Analysis of Data

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and T-test were used to analyse the data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the academic performance of the students the researcher drew up a forty (40) multiple objective questions in Economics and below is the table showing the performance of the students.

Table 1 revealed that 43.5percent of the students failed their Economics test, they scored less than 16 out of 40 which is equivalent to less than 40percent; 14.7percent of the students scored between 16 to 19 which is equivalent to 40 to 49 percent; 13.8 percent scored between 20 to 23 which is equivalent to 50 to 59 percent; 22.2 percent scored between 24-27 which is equivalent to 60-69 percent and 5.8 percent of the students scored above 27 marks which is equivalent to 70 percent and above. The mean performance of the students in the test is 17.46 which is equivalent to 43.8 percent. This implies that the students' performance is below average.

Findings from this table is in line with Titus (2014) assertion that student's performance in Economics as a subject is on a decrease especially for students whose schools are located close to border towns.

Hypothesis 1: Gender is not a significant factor in students' academic achievement

Table 2 revealed that there is a significant relationship difference between male and female students' in their academic achievement performance (t=3.486: degree of freedom = 638: p < .05).This implies that gender has a significant influence on the students' academic performance. Therefore, H_o rejected. The mean score shows that male students scored higher (18.68) than female students (16.65).

A study carried out by the US department of education in the year 2000, found out that boys performed a little better than girls in mathematics and science, conclusively the girls were far superior students, earning better grades and were significantly better than boys in reading corroborating the views of Akagbogu and Aijowu (2015) who explained that male students have larger brains than their female counterparts, and the male students would have higher performance in picture vocabulary than their female counterparts.

Hypothesis 2*:* School location is not a significant factor in students' academic achievement in Economics.

Table 3 revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between school location and students' performance (r=0.178: p < .05). Therefore, H_{o2} is rejected. The positive relationship shows that students whose schools are located in serene environment such as Government Reserved Areas (GRA) and housing estates have high academic performance in comparison to those those there schools are cited near border or places of economic activities (Titus 2014), Ariyo (2006). Alokan (2010) had a contrary finding in his study; he asserted that student's poor performance is not a function of gender (sex), neither school location problems that predict outcomes in school performance. On the other side of the spectrum are the views of Owoeye and Yara (2011) they explained that

Table 1: Students performance in economics test

Score (over 40)	*Score in %*	*F*	*%*	*Mean Score*	*Standard deviation*
0-15	< 40%	278	43.5		
16-19	<40-49	94	14.7		
20-23	<50-59	88	13.8	17.46	7.27
24-27	<60-69	142	22.2	(43.8%)	
28 and above	70 and above	38	5.8		

Source: Field work (2008).

Table 2: Summary of t-test showing differences between male and female students in their academic performance

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*	*t*	*df*	*P*	*Remarks*
Students' Performance (score)							
Male	256	18.68	7.05	3.486	638	.001	significance
Female	384	16.65	7.32				

Source: Field work (2008).

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC)

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard deviation*	*r*	*P*	*Remarks*
Students' Performance (score)	640	17.46	7.29	.178	.005	significance
School Location	640	13.55	3.16			

Source: Field work (2008)

students from rural areas (border zones) perform better than their urban colleagues, which implies that school location is not a significant factor in determining student's academic achievement in Economics.

Hypotheses 3. There is no correlation between school location and gender in the students' achievement in Economics.

Table 4: Summary of correlation between school location and gender

		Gender	*School location*
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	3.486
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.178
	N	640	640
Location	Pearson Correlation	3.486	1
	Sig (2 tailed)	.178	
	N	640	640

Table 4 showed that there is no correlation between school location and gender as determinant of students' academic achievement in Economics. According to Dada (2008), he was of the opinion that there is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students in social studies in Ekiti state which is contrary to the views of Titus (2008). Alokan (2010) from his study found out that gender (sex) and school location have no effect on school performance.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the location of the school near border area has effects on the student's academic achievement and also that gender has an insignificant effect on student's performance. Therefore, the government should ensure that schools were not cited near markets or place of economic interests.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With reference to the above findings, the study recommended among others that while establishing schools in the near future, it should not be close to border areas and in case of already established ones should be converted to full boarding schools where the student's activities can be closely monitored and restricted. Boys and Girls are given equal educational opportunities, parents to check and monitor the types of friends their wards associate with and that government must ensure proper funding and equipping of schools with relevant and current instructional materials with motivation and prompt payment of teachers salary.

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