

Entry Qualifications, Study Habit and Self-Concept as Correlates of Academic Achievement among University Undergraduates in South West, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated Entry qualifications, study habit and self concept as correlates of academic achievement among the university undergraduates in South West Nigeria. A sample of seven hundred and fifty (750) students comprised of three hundred and seventy five (375) males and three hundred and seventy five (375) females were selected through stratified sampling technique from the five purposively selected conventional universities in the south west Nigeria. An inventory tagged "Entry Qualifications Proforma (EQP)" and Questionnaire tagged "self concept inventory and study habits inventory" Were used to collect the data. Multiple regression (Backward solution) were used in the data analysis. The result showed that 61% of the variability in academic performance among the university undergraduates in South West Nigeria accounted for the linear combination of the six variables (SSCE, UME, ND, NCE, Study habit and Self concept) that formed the independent variables. NCE and ND: the qualifications for direct entry shows potent prediction while both study habit and self concept exhibited negative contributions to the academic performance of the university undergraduates. While SSCE showed very low and positive contribution, UME exhibited negative contribution to the prediction which justify the introduction of post-JAMB examination by the university authority. Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that NCE and ND or their equivalents should be made the basic qualifications for admission of candidates into the university programme to complement the admission of candidates with good and genuine Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and University Matriculation Examination (UME) results in order to improve the qualify of academic performance of university undergraduates. Concerted efforts should be made by the Nigerian university authorities toward resuscitating good and genuine reading habit culture and self concept among the university undergraduate students which will invariably minimized the low quality output of Nigeria undergraduate's product.

Keywords: Undergraduate, Entry Qualifications, Study habit, Self Concept, Prediction and Academic Achievement

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Introduction

The decline in the standard of education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. It was revealed recently that there is an alarming depletion in the tertiary education in Nigeria according to the world ranking of the university education. Equally, it should not be surprised to any sound and intellectually responsive Nigerian that no Nigerian University made the five hundred (500) top rated universities while the University of Cape Town did (Uniport News, 2007). The poor state of education in Nigeria is also confirmed through educational analysis recently conducted in Nigeria, whereby forty Nine (49) percent of teaching force is said to be unqualified (NEEDS, 2005).

However, it is well known for sometime now that, Nigerian Universities have been subjected to untold criticism for producing low quality graduates which Okebukola (2006) corroborated in his keynote address to the first education summit of Oyo State held at Ibadan where he spoke concerning the quality of graduates from the Nation's Universities especially in the few years and thumbed down the quality of those that would graduate in the four years. This is very unfortunate because Nigerian Universities have been acclaimed for consistently producing high quality graduates in the past. As affirmed by Daisi (1997), many Nigerian University graduates have distinguished themselves in their fields of specializations in the best Universities in Europe, America, Africa and others in the past, so much that some of the graduates are now professors across the globe. While Oluwatayo (2007) opined that it looks as a mirage if such accolade is retrievable in present dispensation Osuji (2004) posited that in spite of the whopping sums of money being sunk in educational sector, the standard of education could not be restored to what it used to be and it is unlikely that it would get anywhere close to what obtained in those days.

All these motivate the researchers to go into this study. Studies on prediction for different purposes are vast in literature, in some studies emphasis was on the extent to which a criterion behavior pattern could be predicted (Bridgeman, McCamley-Jenkin & Ervin, 2000). In some studies, the emphasis was on test development in which the test developers seek to test the predictive validity of their newly developed test items (Thronidike & Hagen, 1977). In some other studies, the emphasis was on database for theory building about determinants of the criterion behaviour pattern (Michie, Dormandy, French & Marteau, 2004).

Needless to say, one type of prediction that has gained much prominence in educational circles is the use of scores derived from standardized tests to predict success or achievement in a particular course of study (Camara & Echternacht, 2000; Geiser & Studley, 2001). Evidence from the latter's studies reveals that the best tests that are good predictors are applied to practical problems such as selection of candidates for college admission or provision of scientific basis for the school counselors in helping the students to plan their academic future. Nwana (1981) had proved that university undergraduates' academic performance cannot be accurately predicted from School Certificate Examination or General Certificate Examination and Joint Matriculation Examination (UME). (Okwilagwe (2001) reported that SSCE (a secondary school performance) is a potent predictor of undergraduate academic achievement as it exerted a direct and significant positive influence on undergraduate grade point average (GPA) which seem to reveal its stability in establishing predictive validity over time than its counterpart the UME. Agbonifo & Dimowo (1985) showed in their studies that UME scores correlated significantly and positively with first year undergraduate performance. This implies that students with high scores in UME also obtained high scores in university examinations. WAEC (1992) reported that the Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) showed a positive significant relationship with the scores obtained by undergraduate students while Abe (2003), Oluwatayo (2003, 2007) and Adonis (2005) showed that Advanced level could predict students' academic performance at polytechnics and University levels.

Abe (2003) reported that SSCE showed negative prediction to the academic performance among the engineering students. Evans & Farley (1998) and Aminu, Asabe & Suleman (2002) showed that SSCE, Grade II Teachers' Certificate and Advance level certificate significantly predicted university undergraduate performance. Ogunmakin (2001) reported that study habit correlated positively with academic performance and good study habit enhances achievement in Mathematics. Adeyanju (2006) claimed that a student's success or failure in examination is dependent on his study habits. While Abe (1995) showed that study habit is one of the five psycho-social variables that exert direct effect on students academic performance in schools today; others being gender, attitude, home language and socio-economic status. Kumar (2002) found a low and positive relationship between self concept and academic performance and at the same time argued that it exhibited potent predictor to academic performance of distance learners.

The findings agreed with that of Marsh (1990) but not in agreement with that of Hammachek (1995) who found no relationship between self concept and academic achievement. While Adeniran (1986) found low and non-significant negative relationship between self concept and academic performance in boys schools, his findings in girls schools indicated that self concept had a negative but significant relationship with academic performance. Hence this study sought to investigate entry qualifications, study habit and self concept as correlates of academic performance among the university undergraduate in the southwest, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The concern of the researcher bordered on the horrible and daunting performance of the university undergraduates outside the schools to the point that many employers declared some of the Nigerian graduates not suitable to be employed. The problem of the study therefore is to investigate whether entry qualifications (SSCE, UME, ND and NCE), study habit and self concept could effectively predict the academic performance among the university undergraduates in South West, Nigeria. In addressing this problem, the following research questions were raised:

- i. To what extent would entry qualifications ((SSCE, UME, ND and NCE), study habit and self concept when taken together predict students CGPA at Degree level?
- ii. What is the relative contribution of the variables to the prediction?

Method

This study is design along the lines of both correlational and descriptive research of survey type. Cohen, Manion and Morrison(2011) describes correlation research as that involving the collection of data in order to determine what degree of relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables. The descriptive research of the survey type was employed to survey the self concept and study habits of the sampled subjects. The target population comprises of both male and female UME and Direct Entry University undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria. Five conventional universities namely Lagos State University, Lagos, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife were purposively selected out of the ten Federal and State owned conventional Universities in southwest Nigeria.

These sampled Universities are noted for their specialization virtually in Education, Arts, Engineering, Sciences and Social Sciences. While seven hundred and fifty (750) students made up of three hundred and seventy five (375) male and three hundred and seventy five (375) female were selected from the five universities that were purposively selected using stratified random sampling technique. One hundred and fifty students made up of 75 male and 75 female were selected from each of the five selected university.

Instrument: An inventory tagged "Entry Qualifications Proforma (EQP)" and Questionnaire tagged "Self concept inventory and Study habits inventory" were used to collect the data. The self concept and study habits inventories were adapted from Akinboye (1976) and Bakare (1977).

Data Analysis: Data analysis involved Multiple Regression Analysis (Backward Solution) using SPSS package

Results

The results of the data analysis are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: Regression Summary of the Independent Variables on students Academic Achievement

Multiple R	0.781
R ²	0.610
Adjusted R ²	0.565
Standard Error	0.41981

The table 1 depicted the composite use of the six variables and academic achievement among the university undergraduates which yielded a coefficient of multiple correlation of 0.781 and a standard error of 0.41981 which indicated that on the average the predicted achievement in academic performance will deviate from true value by 0.41981 limits of that measure.

While R² of 0.610 indicated coefficient of determination which is implying that only 61% of the academic achievement of university undergraduates could be accountable for by the independent variables while the remaining could be explained by other variables not considered in this study.

Tables 2: Analysis of Variance between the Dependent and Independent Variables

Variation	DF	SS	MS	F CAL	F _{tab}
Regression	5	3484.45	696.89	43.86	2.21
Residual	744	11822.16	15.89		
Total	749	15306.61			

Where Df = degree of freedom

SS = sum of squares

Ms = Mean Squares

F CAL= Anova (denoted by F) calculated value

F tab = Anova (denoted by F) table value

Table 2 showed that analysis of variance for multiple regression data yielded an F ratio of 43.86 which is significant at $p < 0.05$, hence, the coefficient of determination is significant, implying that the six independent variables (SSCE, UME, ND, NCE, Self Concept and Study habit) have significant influence on the dependent variable (CGPA) and the multiple correlation of 0.781 which upheld the assumption of linearity of regression equation indicated a reasonable positive relationship between the dependent (CGPA) and six independent variables (SSCE, UME, ND, NCE, Self Concept and Study habit).

Table 3: Test of Significance of Regression coefficients

Predictor variables	B weight	SE	t-values
SSCE	0.01284	0.010	1.297
UME	0.00242	0.003	-0.806
ND	0.03041	0.012	2.547
NCE	0.04425	0.10	4.547
Study habit	-0.07176	0.047	1.521
Self Concept	-0.02770	0.026	-1.086
Constant	3.035	0.936	3.241

At $p < 0.05$, $t = 1.96$. The regression equation derivable from the table 3 above is academic achievement = 0.01284 (SSCE)+ 0.00242 (UME) + 0.03041 (ND) + 0.04425 (NCE) – 0.0716 (Study habit – 0.02770 (Self Concept) + 3.035.

This is implying that the predictive strength of (SSCE, UME, ND, NCE, Self Concept and Study habit) on the CGPA ranged from -0.02770 to 0.04425, the standard error ranged from 0.010 to 0.936. Hence NCE showed to be the best predictor follow by ND, SSCE and UME in that order while Study habit and Self Concept exhibited negative predictors to academic achievement. But at $p < 0.05$ only t-values for NCE and ND showed significant predictive strength while UME indicated to be a poor predictor of academic achievement among the undergraduate students in the south west Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that, 61% of the variability in academic achievement among the university undergraduates in the south west Nigeria is accounted for by a linear combination of the independent variables (SSCE, UME, ND, NCE, Self Concept and Study habit), NCE and ND: the qualification for direct entry showed potent prediction to the academic performance of the university undergraduates in the south west Nigeria which corroborated. the reports of Abe (2003), Oluwatayo (2003) and Adonis (2005). NCE and ND advanced level results showed to be a good academic foundation for entry into Nigeria university. The group of students with these results appears to have capitalized on their sense of maturity, previous motivational, goal oriented approaches of learning and diligent experiences as students of intermediate tertiary institutions, that is, students that received some learning experiences between elementary secondary school and university level. This group of students were probably made to work diligently. By implication, advanced level curriculum experiences provided opportunity for acquisition of increased knowledge which yields increased success as a result of improved teaching standard. Increased success does not devalue results but for improved teaching standard, better results should be welcome. Whatever an individual engages himself, he should be ready to jettison something for him to exercise diligence on the goal.

While SSCE and UME show very low negative prediction to the academic performance of the university undergraduates which was at variance with the studies of Agbonifo and Dimowo (1985), and Okwilagwe (2001) who reported that SSCE (a secondary school performance) is potent predictor of undergraduate academic achievement.

This result may be due to laziness, lack of commitment and diligence on the part of the affected group of students. A good student works hard to do well in all examinations. The negative prediction of UME to the university undergraduate academic performance corroborated the report of Abe (2003) but is at variance with the study of Aminu, Asabe and Suleman (2002). Also the poor predictive strength of SSCE equally corroborated the report of Nwana (1981) but at variance with the report of WAEC (1992). The reasons for the poor prediction of UME and SSCE for university undergraduate academic performance may likely not be unconnected with the effects of mass cheating usually witnessed during the conduct of UME and SSCE which yielded bogus scores which did not give a true forecast of the candidates' true academic abilities. By implication, JAMB and WAEC who are saddled with the responsibilities of conducting UME and SSCE respectively should as a matter of urgency begin to overhaul their techniques of conducting selection test for admission into university and for provision of senior school certificate for the proper and appropriate placement of students into university undergraduate programmes. Also, study habit and self concept exhibited negative contributions as against the findings of Adebule (2007), Akubuiro and Joshua (2004), Kumar (2002), Abe (1995), Hammachek (1995), Marsh (1990) but in line with the study of Adeniran, (1986). These results could be so because whatever qualities an individual possessed does not matter but what the individual felt about it and made out of it matters a lot.

Conclusion

The study justifies the state of poor reading habit and self-concept among the university undergraduate students in Nigeria and the introduction of post UME screening test by the university authorities. Also both SSCE and UME exhibited poor predictive strength to academic performance among the University Undergraduates in the South West Nigeria.

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that NCE and ND or their equivalents should be made the basic qualifications for admission of candidates into the university programme to complement the admission of candidates with good and genuine senior school certificate Examination (SSCE) and University Matriculation Examination (UME) results in order to improve the quality of academic performance of university undergraduate.

Also, concerted efforts should be made by the Nigerian university authorities toward resuscitating good and genuine reading habit (culture) and self concept among the university undergraduate student which will invariably minimize the low quality output of Nigeria undergraduates university products.

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