STUDENTS' PERSONAL VARIABLES AS PREDICTORS OF LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT IN MASS COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER INSTITUTION

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Abstract

Just as the height, size and stability of a building depend to a large extent on the quality of the materials used for the foundation, the quality of the learning achievement of any educational system is determined by the quality of the factors employed for it. More so, the difference between nations that make things happen and nations that watch things happen is the ability of the former to steer the learning achievement of her educational system toward national development. Many factors have been suggested by researchers as being responsible for high quality learning achievement in educational system in Nigeria. However, this study focuses on students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) as predictors of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions. The study used ex-post facto design of survey research type; one hundred (100) Mass Communication students were selected through multi-stage sampling techniques from the sampled institution. Two validated instruments were used to gather information for this study. These are: Study Habit Rating Scale (r = 0.75) and students' achievement in Mass Communication. Three research questions were raised and answered in this study. The data obtained were analysed using Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regressions at 0.05 level of significance. The result revealed a significant relationship between independent and dependent variables. The paper submitted that, since there is a significant relationship among the variables considered in this study, students of Mass Communication should develop productive study habits. Likewise, age and gender should be considered in the admission processing for Mass Communication.

Key Words: *Study habit, Age, Gender, Mass-communication, Achievement*

Introduction

Higher education is very important to the development and sustenance of any nation. According to Yoloye (2009), its benefits are evident in how it develops good qualitative

and quantitative analytical minds that are needed for national and international development. In the same vein, Mass Communication as a subset of higher education plays certain vital roles in nation building, and its role in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised. These roles include; unifying the nation's diversified cultural values, disseminating information among the heterogeneous group of people, bridging the gap between the government and the people, enlightening, educating, entertaining, and protecting the rights of citizens from the government by being a watch dog among others.

Considering all these benefits, the question that comes to mind is: to what extent are they in Nigeria? If these benefits are enjoyed by the nation, it means that there is quality learning achievement in Mass Communication. Obanya (2005) and Falaye (2014) are of the opinion that higher quality learning achievement is borne by many variables broadly classified as input and process variables. Without good infrastructure, adequate funding, favourable policy, sound management framework and qualified and competent academics, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to produce the quality achievement in education. This implies that as propounded by Yoloye (2014), the quality of total education is the interplay of the quality of input (admission, funding and facilities), process (curriculum implementations, teaching strategies, student personal variable) and outcome i.e the quality of graduates from the institutions. This can be represented with the following equation:

$QE = QI + QP + QLA$

Where

QE = Quality Education

QI = Quality Input

QP = Quality Process

QLA = Quality Learning Achievement

It can be further expressed that quality learning achievement itself is a function of the interaction between quality input and process. This can also be represented with a simple equation;

$QLA = QI + QP$

If QI is 5 and QP is 10, this means QLA is $5 + 10 = 15$……………equation 1

If QI is 20 and QP is 40, then QLA is $20 + 40 = 60$…………………………...equation 2

This implies that the higher the quality input and quality process, the higher the quality of the learning achievement.

In recent times, teachers, parents, stakeholders and researchers have expressed their concerns about the quality of education in Nigeria, including Mass Communication. Mass Communication The rise of online journalism and newsroom convergence has made contemporary news organizations to seek employees who are competent to

perform in a digital newsroom. It is no longer enough for graduates of journalism schools to possess oral and written communication skills. Odunlami (2014: pg 1) affirms that:

> *Journalism/Mass Communication trainees require theoretical and practical exposures that would make them write across the different media platforms, master new technologies including the ability to fuse previously separated roles such as writer and videographer in a multimedia story-telling format that ensures accuracy, fairness and balance. Today's journalists in a developing nation like Nigeria, must be able to use and manipulate technology*

To this effect, there is a call for the re-evaluation of journalism education for it to meet the digital demand in the news media. Hence, many factors have been considered by researchers as reasons for low quality learning achievement in Mass Communication. For instance, Kwame and Francis (2000) posit that a major shortcoming of communication training in Africa is the shortage of competent and experienced teachers and trainers. Poor working conditions have resulted in the loss of qualified teachers to other professions where they can easily earn their living. Kwame and Francis (2000) also argue that other problems attributed to training include shortage of teaching and training materials like computers, standard libraries, technology driven newsrooms and well equipped radio and television stations for practical training.

In addition, Alschull (1991), Kwame and Francis (2012) and Oso (2000) assert that the curriculum and textbooks used in schools in Africa are mostly imported from Europe and America. Therefore, they are tailored towards meeting the needs of these Western societies and not Africa. In Nigeria in particular, according to Odunlami (2014), the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and the National Universities Commission (NUC), stipulate the goals for Mass Communication in the country as follows:

i.   Producing graduates who are to meet the middle and higher level manpower communication requirement of Nigeria;

ii.   Producing qualified communication/journalism teachers for the Universities, Polytechnics and other similar institutions;

iii.   Producing technically qualified graduates who can be self-employed upon graduation and

iv.   Producing socially responsible journalists and communications.

It is pertinent to note at this juncture that students, being both the product and part of the process, have a vital role to play in the actualization and quality of these learning achievements. As noted by Yoloye (2014), there are many students' personal variables such as gender, age, attitude to learning, study habit that directly or indirectly affect the quality of learning achievement. Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011) assert that learners need to use a systematic disciplined and purposive approach to study if they must excel

in their academics. This implies that for study to be effective, the student needs to develop a systematic or patterned and focused approach to studying. Crede and Kuncel (2008) assert that study habit and skills predict performance more than standardized tests and previous grades, and should be regarded as the third pillar supporting collegiate academic performance.

In addition, Samuel and Aremu (2006) opine that through the internalization of good study habits, both struggling and sound students will raise their grades. On the other hand, ineffective study habits erode self-confidence among students and this invariably leads to poor academic performance as well as poor self-esteem (Adams, 2010). Moreover, Tuncay (2011) states that test anxiety and study habits are associated positively with academic success in his work entitled '*The relationship among test anxiety, study habits, achievement motivation and academic performance among Turkish high school students'*.

Age is a barrier to learning because of its link to cognitive development as well as its influence on classroom interactions (Hattie, 2008); likewise, Zhong (2012) found a positive link between delayed age of school entry and improved academic performance. A research study by Stipek and Byler (2001) concludes that older children in school classrooms perform better academically than their younger peers. However, Sharp, George, Sargent, O'Donnell and Heron (2009) disagree, finding no significant relationship between a student's age and academic achievement. Valenti (2009) agrees with earlier findings showing no link between student age and academic success.

Furthermore, gender is one of the variables of interest in this study. Gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed attitude and behaviour designated as female and male in a particular society. Dee (2005) holds that gender interactions between teachers and students have significant effects on students' achievement. However, the studies of Holmlund and Sund (2005) and Tymms (2005) found dispute this finding. In addition, Adeleke, Abimbade and Folawe (2013) affirm that more males are found to be achieving more in the fields of mathematics than females because of their ability to reason mathematically. Providing reasons for the disparity, Klein (2004) and Adeleke, Abimbade and Folawe (2013) assert that the differences in the scholastic achievements of boys and girls are generally attributed to biological causes and/or to cultural and stereotypes. ***Ewumi (2009) in a study found that*** male participants achieved higher than the female. In addition, Ghazvini and Milad (2011) report that, despite the fact that girls exhibit a more adaptive cognitive-motivational pattern than the boys, the former do not obtain significantly higher marks.

A review of literature in journalism and Mass Communication reveals that many variables affecting quality learning achievement have been researched, but not much research has been done on students' personal variables as predictors of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication. Therefore, this study investigated students'

personal variables (study habit, gender and age) as predictors of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institution.

Research Questions

Consequent to the problem identified in this study, the following research questions were raised and answered.

1. What is the strength and direction of relationship between students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions?

2. To what extent will students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) predict quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions?

3. What are the relative contributions of students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) in the prediction of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions?

Methodology

The Design: The study adopted an ex-post facto design of survey research type. This research type was chosen because the researcher does not have control over the variables as their manipulation has already occurred.

Population: The target population for this study comprised of all students of Mass Communication and related courses who are not in the terminal level in higher institutions -polytechnics- in the South-West zone of Nigeria. The reason for this choice was that, they were not under pressure of any examination, and so were able to give their full attention to the research work.

Sample: Simple random sampling technique was employed to select one hundred Mass Communication students from sampled polytechnics in South-west zone of Nigeria.

Instrumentation: Two validated instruments were used to collect information in the study. These are: Study Habit Rating Scale (r =0.75) and students' achievement in Mass Communication. This instrument was administered on the participants, Mass Communication with the assistance of two research assistants, over a period of two weeks.

Result

Research Question One: *What is the strength and direction of relationship between students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions?*

Table 4.1: Correlation matrix table of students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication

Variables	Study Habit	Gender	Age	Quality Learning Achievement in Mass Communication
Study Habit	1.000			
Gender	.145	1.000		
Age	.053	.127	1.000	
Quality Learning Achievement in Mass Communication	370**	.222**	.297**	1.000

 ** *Significant @ p < .05; n = 100*

In relation to quality learning achievement in Mass Communication by the three predictor variables (study habit, gender and age), it was observed from table 4.1 that at $p < .05$, there is no multi-collinearity among the variables of the study. Moreover, the intercorrelation matrix showing the correlation coefficients of the predictors (study habit, gender and age) and the criterion variable (quality learning achievement in Mass Communication) reveals a significant positive relationship between study habit and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication ($r = .370$, $p < 0.05_{(.000)}$). Furthermore, the result shows that gender has a significant effect on quality learning achievement in Mass Communication as demonstrated by this equation: $r = .222$, $p < 0.05_{(.027)}$. In addition, the finding shows that age is a significant factor affecting students' academic achievement in Mass Communication ($r = .297$, $p < 0.05_{(.003)}$). Mass Communication

Research Question Two: *To what extent will students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) predict quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions?*

Table 4.2: Regression Summary and ANOVA of Students' Personal Variables (Study Habit, Gender and Age) and Quality Learning Achievement in Mass Communication

Multiple R = .483					
R Square = .233					
Adjusted R Square = .209					
Standard Error = 1.022					
Analysis of Variance					
Source of Variance	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	30.408	3	10.136		
Residual	100.182	96	1.044	9.713	.000
Total	120.590	99			

** *Significant @ p < .05; n = 100*

Table 4.2 shows that the multiple correlation coefficients (r) of all the combined independent variables with quality learning achievement in Mass Communication is 0.483. The adjusted R^2, which estimates the variance on dependent variable measured, accounted for by the combination of independent variables, is 0.209. This implies that,

all the independent variables: study habit, gender and age made 20.9% contribution to the variance in quality learning achievement in Mass Communication. Regression ANOVA produced ($F_{(3,96)=}$9.713, $p < 0.05_{(.000)}$). This implies that a joint contribution of all the independent variables (study habit, gender and age) considered in this study to quality learning achievement in Mass Communication is statistically significant.

Research Question Three: *What are the relative contributions of students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) in the prediction of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions?*

Table 4.3: Relative Contribution of Students' Personal Variables (Study Habit, Gender and Age) in the Prediction of Quality Learning Achievement in Mass Communication

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.229	.321		.733	.465
Study Habit	.138	.089	.140	1.537	.128
Gender	.241	.083	.261	2.894	.005
Age	.343	.092	.336	3.717	.000

** Significant @ p < .05; n = 100

Table 4.3 shows the relative contribution of predictor variables on criterion variables. Two out of the independent variables considered made significant contributions to quality learning achievement in Mass Communication. These are,gender ($\beta = .261$, t = 2.894, $p < 0.05_{(.005)}$) and age ($\beta = -0.336$, t = 3.717, $p < 0.05_{(=.000)}$). However, study habit ($\beta = .140$, t = 1.537, $p < 0.05_{(.128)}$) did not contribute significantly to the prediction. Therefore, the value of the standardized regression weight associated with the two variables shows that gender and age are the potent predictors of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication.

Discussion of Findings

The significant result of the relationship between study habit and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication is in consonance with the assertion and findings of many authors. For instance, Crede and Kuncel (2008) asserted that study habit and skills predict performance more than standardized tests and previous grades and should be regarded as the third pillar supporting collegiate academic performance. Moreover, the finding supports Tuncay (2011) who found that test anxiety and study habits were associated positively with academic success in his work entitled 'The Relationship among Test Anxiety, Study Habits, Achievement Motivation and Academic Performance among Turkish High School Students'.

In addition, the significant result of the relationship between age and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication buttresses the assertion and findings of many researchers such as Stipek and Byler (2001) concluded that older children in school classrooms performed better academically than their younger peers. Likewise, Zhong (2012) supported Stipek and Byler (2001) where the author found a positive link between delayed age of school entry and improved academic performance. However, the finding negates Sharp, George, Sargent, O'Donnell and Heron (2009) who discovered insignificant relationship between a student's age and academic achievement.

Similarly, the significant result of the relationship between gender and quality learning achievement in Mass Communication is in line with the assertion and findings of many authors and researchers. For instance, Dee (2005) found that gender interactions between teachers and students have significant effects on students' achievement. Furthermore, Adeleke, Abimbade and Folawe (2013) stated that more males perform better in the fields of mathematics than females because of their ability to reason quantitatively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper investigated students' personal variables (study habit, gender and age) as predictors of quality learning achievement in Mass Communication in higher institutions. The discovery of a significant relationship among the variables considered in this study suggests that students of Mass Communication ought to develop productive study habits. Furthermore, age and gender should be considered in the admission processing for Mass Communication.

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