

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TO LEARNING OF ECONOMICS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDUCATION DISTRICT IV, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper investigated students' attitude towards learning of Economics and their academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) in Education District IV, Lagos, Nigeria. Three research questions and two hypotheses were raised and answered in the paper. This paper adopted a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaire and Students' Achievement Test were used for data collection. The population of the study was 4305; while the sample size for the study was 366 SS2 Economics Students. The data obtained were analysed using frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T-test and Chi Square statistical tools at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that: the factors affecting students' attitudes to learning of Economics in SSS in Education District IV, Lagos, included teaching methods, cognitive styles of students, student's gender, and proposed careers of students; there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning of Economics; and students' attitude towards learning of Economics has significant influence on their academic performance. It was concluded based on the findings of the study that students' attitude towards learning of Economics has significant effect on their academic performance in Education District IV, Lagos. The study recommended among others that teachers should motivate and encourage all the Economics students to cultivate positive attitude towards the learning of economics in SSS; and principals should monitor the teaching and learning of Economics to promote effective teaching of the subject and to make students (both male and female) cultivate more positive attitude towards learning of Economics in SSS.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Attitude, Economics, Learning, Students

Introduction

Economics is a social science subject offered at the senior secondary schools level. It is a social science which studies human behaviours in its effort to allocate his scarce resources efficiently and effectively in order to minimize cost (Amaechi, 2014). The teaching and learning of Economics in senior secondary school is very significant because it helps the students to understand the basic knowledge, ideas, and concepts guiding human behaviour about their daily economic activities. The knowledge of economics enables students to make rational decision on daily activities. However, students' acquisition of required knowledge and skills to make rational decisions depends on their attitude towards learning of Economics at the senior secondary school level.

Attitude is the tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, persons or situations (Longbaam, Mawak, Nyako, & Garba, 2021). It is considered as a mental and natural state of readiness, organized through experiences exerting a directive influence upon the individual's responses to all objects and situation with which it is related (Sakariyau, Taiwo & Ajagbe, 2016). Attitude can be classified as positive and negative type (George, 2000). According to George (2000),

attitude does not only include the negative attitude such as prejudices, biases and dislikes, but also positive attitudes and are sometimes called sentiment, which include our attachment and loyalties to person, objects and ideas. In line with this, some attitudes are based on the people's own experience, knowledge and skills and some are gained from other sources (George, 2000). This however implies that a particular type of attitude may be displayed as a result of external or internal influences. Similarly, Orunaboka (2011) posited that attitude are formed by people as a result of some kinds of learning experiences, if the experience is favourable a positive attitude is found and vice versa. Attitude influences an individual's choice of actions and responses to challenges incentives and rewards (Yara, 2009). A student showing a certain attitude towards something is reacting to the feeling he has toward that thing rather than to its actual state. Thus, students' attitude refers to reactions towards objects, events or school subject like Economics.

Academic performance refers to the level of achievement attained by a student in school subjects such as Economics. Ganai and Muhammad (2013) viewed academic performance as the knowledge attaining ability or degree of competence in school tasks usually measured by standardized tests and expressed in a grade or unit based on pupils' performance. According to Narad and Abdullah (2016), academic performance is the knowledge gained which is assessed by marks by a teacher and/or educational goals set by students and teachers to be achieved over a specific period of time. Therefore, academic performance can be defined as a series of tests that helps to measure students' ability, knowledge, understanding and behaviour of students in a particular subject. It is also the outcomes of all learning experiences students are exposed to base on instructional goals. Equally, academic performance reveals students' behaviour towards a particular subject. This is noticeable when test is being conducted on the concepts taught in a particular subject.

Students' attitude to learning of economics may be related to their academic performance in the subject (Economics). Hence, students' academic performance in Economics can be affected by students' attitude towards learning of Economics. In relation to students' performance, attitude is seen not to be permanent. According to Olasheinde, and Olatoye (2014), students' attitudes change in their learning process either directly or indirectly through observation, experiences, and the learning environment. Thus, students' attitudes towards learning of Economics may have positive and negative effects on their academic performance.

Students may exhibit either negative or positive attitude towards learning any subject, including Economics. In line with this view, Morabe (2004) reported that an unfavorable attitude to a particular subject causes difficulty learning as there is a lack of interest and confidence in the subject. Mushinzimana and Sinaruguliye (2016) in their studies reported that there was a positive correlation between students' achievement and their attitude towards science subjects. Also, Filade, Omozokpia, Uwannah, Amanze, Ajibola, and Omotosho (2020) found that there is significance influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on academic performance. This implies that positive attitude of students towards Economics may improve their academic performance; while the negative attitude towards learning of Economics may affect students' performance negatively.

Statement of Problem

Poor students' academic performance in Economics has been a great concern to stakeholders for over a decade now. Supporting this claim, *Orunna (2023) reported* that between 2016 and 2019, over 43% of the students who sat for WASSCE could not secure at least a credit pass in Economics; while more than 50% of the candidates (students) who sat for WAEC (SSCE) in 2019 had less than a credit pass in Economics. The poor academic performance has been attributed to various factors such as use of ineffective instructional strategy, inadequate instructional resources, difficult concept, and poor students' attitude to learning. This implies that there may be a strong association between individuals' attitudes towards any school subject and their academic performance in the subject (including Economics). However, available literature shows that little or no empirical study exists on students'

attitude toward learning Economics and academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools, especially on Education District IV, Lagos State, Nigeria. This is the gap filled by this paper. This paper therefore investigated students' attitude toward learning of Economics and their academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools in Education District IV, Lagos State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This paper examined students' attitude to learning of Economics and their academic performance in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. examine the factors affecting students' attitudes toward learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos;
- ii. ascertain the difference between the male and female students' attitude to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos; and
- iii. ascertain the effect of students' attitude to learning of Economics on their academic performance in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in this study:

- i. What are the factors affecting students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State?
- ii. What is the difference between the male's and female's students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State?
- iii. What is the effect of students' attitude to learning of Economics on their academic performance in Economics in **senior** secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided this paper:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning Economics.

Ho2: Students' attitude towards learning of Economics has no significant influence on their **academic performance**.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design was adopted to enable the researcher obtain opinions of the respondents on the problem of investigation. The sample size for this study comprised 366 senior secondary schools Economics students out of the 4305 SS2 Economics students in the 17 sampled senior secondary schools. Taro Yamane sample size calculator was used for the determination of sample size in this paper. The simple random and proportionate sampling techniques were adopted for this study. This is because these techniques enabled the selection of senior secondary schools (SSS) and students without being bias. 17 senior secondary schools were purposively selected in Education District IV, Lagos State out of the 48 SSS using simple random technique. The names of all the SSS in Education District IV were written in pieces of paper and put in a box. The box was shaken 17 times until 17 SSS were selected. In each of the SSS selected, equal number of boys and girls were selected using proportionate sampling technique (That is, based on the number of students in each of the selected SSS). Hence, the sample size of this study was 366 students, comprising 183 boys and 183 girls.

Researcher-designed questionnaire and Students' Achievement Test in Economics were used as instruments for data collection in this study. The questionnaire consisted fifteen items drawn from the research questions raised in this paper. The questionnaire was formed on a 4-point likert-scale of

'Strongly Agreed- SA', 'Agreed- A', 'Disagreed –D' and 'Strongly Disagreed- SD'. The Students' Achievement Test contained ten (10) items on Economics topics for the second term, 2021/2022 session. The reliability of the instruments was carried out using Cronbach Alpha method at 0.05 levels of significance. The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.79 and 0.87 for **questionnaire** and the students' achievement test respectively. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions; while the research hypotheses formulated to guide this study were tested using t-test and Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the factors affecting students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State?

Table 1: Factors affecting students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	The teaching methods used by the teachers affect students' attitude to learning of Economics.	50 13.7 %	316 86.3 %	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	366 100%
2	Students' attitude to learning of Economics is influenced by teachers' attitude to the subject.	40 10.9 %	298 81.4 %	20 5.5%	8 2.2%	366 100%
3	The cognitive styles of students determine their attitude to learning of Economics.	136 37.2 %	110 30.1 %	92 25.1 %	28 7.7%	366 100%
4	Students' attitude towards learning of Economics is dependent on their gender.	24 6.6%	86 23.5 %	200 54.6 %	56 5.3%	366 100%
5	The proposed careers of students influence their attitudes towards learning of Economics.	96 26.2 %	270 73.8 %	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	366 100%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From Table 1, analysis of item 1 shows that all the respondents 366(100.0%) agreed that the teaching methods used by their teachers affect students' attitude to learning of Economics; while none of them had contrary opinion. Analysis of item 2 shows that 338(92.3%) of the respondents agreed that students' attitude to learning of Economics is influenced by teachers' attitude to the subject; and 28(7.7%) disagreed. Analysis of item 3 shows that 246(67.2%) of the respondents agreed that the cognitive styles of students determine their attitude to learning of Economics; while 120(32.8%) of them disagreed. Analysis of item 4 shows that 110(30.1%) of the respondents agreed that students' attitude towards learning of Economics is dependent on their gender; while 256(69.9%) disagreed. Analysis of item 5 shows that all the 366(100.0%) respondents agreed that the proposed careers of students influence their attitudes towards learning of Economics; while none of them disagreed. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the factors affecting students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State include:

teaching methods, students' attitude toward the subject, the cognitive styles of students, student's gender, and the proposed careers of students influence their attitudes towards learning of Economics.

Research Question Two: What are the attitudes of male and female students to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State?

Table 2: Male and Female Students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total
11	Students' attitude to learning of Economics will affect their performance in the test.	46 12.6 %	320 87.4 %	0 0.0% 	0 0.0% 	366 100 %
12	Students' performance in examinations depends on their attitude to learning of Economics.	152 41.5 %	214 58.5 %	0 0.0% 	0 0.0% 	366 100 %
13	Students' attitude to learning of Economics will affect their contributions during teachers' delivery of instructions.	112 30.6 %	182 49.7 %	48 13.1 %	24 6.6% 	366 100 %
14	Students' attitude to learning of Economics will affect their performance in assignment.	192 52.5 %	156 42.6 %	18 4.9% 	0 0.0% 	366 100 %
15	Students' performance generally depends on their attitude to learning of Economics.	126 34.4 %	212 57.9 %	20 5.5% 	8 2.2% 	366 100 %

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From table 3, analysis of item 11 revealed that all the respondents 366(100.0%) agreed that students' attitude to learning of Economics will affect their performance in the test; while none of them disagreed. Analysis of item 12 revealed that all the respondents 360(100.0%) agreed that students' performance in examinations depends on their attitude to learning of Economics; while none of them disagreed. Analysis of item 13 revealed that 294(80.3%) of the respondents agreed that students' attitude to learning of Economics will affect their contributions during teachers' delivery of instructions; while 72(19.7%) disagreed. Analysis of item 14 revealed that 348(95.1%) of the respondents agreed that students' attitude to learning of Economics will affect their performance in assignment; while 18(4.9%) disagreed. Analysis of item 15 revealed that 338(92.3%) of the respondents agreed that students' performance generally depends on their attitude to learning of Economics; while 28(7.7%) disagreed. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that students' attitude to learning of Economics has influence on their academic performance in Economics in secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students towards learning of Economics.

Table 4: Significant difference between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning Economics

Variables	Mean	SD	N	df	t-Cal	t-Critical	Remarks
Male attitudetowards learning of Economics	2.27	0.99	183	364	0.096	1.960	Ho1rejected
Female attitudetowards learning of Economics	2.26	0.99	183				

Analysis in Table 4 showed that the calculated value of “t”(0.096) is less than the critical value of “t”(1.960) at 0.05 level of significance with degrees of freedom 364. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that “There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning of Economics” is accepted. Thus, no significant difference existed between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning of Economics in Education District IV, Lagos State.

Hypothesis Two: Students' attitude towards learning of Economics has no significant influence on their academic performance.

Table 5: Significant Influence of Students' Attitude towards Learning of Economics on their Academic Performance

Variables	Mean	S.D	N	df	X ² _{cal}	X ² _{tab}	Sig. level	Decision
Students' attitude	3.11	4.20						
Academic performance of undergraduate	6.00	4.01	366	3	12.186	7.815	.002	H ₀ 2 Rejected

**Significant, N= 366; *P*= 0.05; *df*= 3

From analysis in Table 5, the calculated value of “X²”(12.186) is greater than the critical value of “X²”(7.815) at 0.05 level of significance with degree of freedom 3. In view of this, the null hypothesis which states that “students' attitude towards learning of Economics has no significant influence on their academic performance” was rejected. Thus, students' attitude towards learning of Economics has significant influence on their academic performance.

Discussions

The analysis of the responses to research question one in this paper revealed that the factors affecting students' attitudes to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State include: teaching methods, students' attitude toward the subject, the cognitive styles of students, student's gender, and the proposed careers of students influence their attitudes towards learning of Economics. This implies that students' attitude are influenced by teaching methods, students' attitude toward the subject, the cognitive styles of students, student's gender, and the proposed careers of students. Corroborating the finding of this paper, Adesoji (2008) in his study reported that a number of factors relating to students attitude to science and social sciences

(Economics) were; teaching methods, teachers' attitude, influence of parents, gender, age, cognitive styles of pupils, career interest, social view of science, social implications of science (Economics) and achievement. Similarly, Yara (2009) in a study on "Attitude to the teaching of economics in secondary school" found that teachers' method of teaching and personality greatly accounted for the students' positive attitude towards the subject.

The results of the analysis of research question two revealed that the attitudes of male and female students to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State are not significantly differed. This result is in line with the hypothesis one which revealed that there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State. This means that attitude of both male and female does not vary towards learning of Economics. In other words, both male and female students have almost the same attitude towards economics as a subject at the senior secondary schools level. Corroborating this finding, Filade, Omozokpia, Uwannah, Amanze, Ajibola, and Omotosho (2020) reported that there was significance influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on academic performance. Also, the study revealed that both male and female students have almost the same attitude towards economics as a course and the attitude of students towards economics as a course is the same at different academic levels. Hence, there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female students' towards learning of Economics in senior secondary schools in Education District IV, Lagos State.

The analysis of the responses to research question three in this paper revealed that the attitude of students towards economics has significant effect on their academic performance in secondary schools. Also, the corresponding hypothesis (hypothesis two) to the research question three showed that the students' attitude towards learning of Economics has significant influence on their academic performance. This means that the attitude of students towards economics has significant effect on their academic performance in secondary schools. Corroborating the finding of this study, Heng and Karpudewan (2015) found that students with a positive attitude are trying to excel in the subject being taught compared to those with a negative attitude. Also, Mushinzimana and Sinaruguliye (2016) in their studies reported that there was a positive correlation between students' achievement and their attitude towards science subjects. Still in line with the finding of this paper, Filade, Omozokpia, Uwannah, Amanze, Ajibola, and Omotosho (2020) found that there is significance influence of students' attitude towards economics as a course on academic performance. This implies that students' attitude towards learning of Economics has effect on their performance.

Conclusion

The influence of students' attitude to learning of Economics on their academic performance cannot be underestimated. This is based on the fact that students' attitude to learning of Economics is sequin none to their performance. Consequently, this paper concluded based on its findings that students' attitude towards learning Economics has significant influence on their academic performance in Education District IV, Lagos State. It is imperative there fore for students to show positive attitude to learning of Economics in senior secondary schools for better learning outcomes.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested based on the findings of this study:

1. Teachers should motivate and encourage all the Economics students towards cultivating positive attitude towards the learning of economics in senior secondary schools.
2. Principals should monitor the teaching and learning of Economics to promote effective teaching of the subject and to make students (both male and female) cultivate positive attitude towards learning of Economics in senior secondary schools
3. Economics teachers should apply motivational strategies in the teaching and learning Economics in order to enhance students 'attitude towards learning of Economics for better academic performance in Senior Secondary Schools.

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