Gender, Age Indices as Determinants of Quality Admission and students' Academic Performance for Sustainable Growth in Public Universities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study investigated the difference in students' academic performance in public Universities in Akwa Ibom State based on admission patterns, gender and age.
The study employed ex-post facto design. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, using arithmetic mean to answer the questions while t- test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The population of the study consisted of all the 4,223 undergraduate students admitted into degree programmes through UTME and Direct entry in four Faculties in University of Uyo for the 2015/2016, 2016/2017 sessions. The sample of this study consists of 2441 undergraduate students which were drawn using stratified proportional random sampling technique. Two sets of data were collected viz: the UTME/Direct entry and Cumulative Grade Point Averages (CGPAs) from the University Exam and records cum Examination scores which are domiciled at Senate Business Committee (SBC). The study revealed that there is difference in students' academic performance in Public Universities in Akwa Ibom State based Gender and age on admission. It was concluded based on the findings of the study that Gender, age as a determinant of admission influence students' academic performance. The study therefore recommended among others that Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) should be effective and efficient in its examinations administration towards the performance of the candidates in the universities of their choice.
Keywords: *Gender, Age, Admission, Academic Performance, Students*

I.   Introduction

The concept of academic performance is fundamental in an educational set up in that it indicates an individual's learning achievement at any period of time at the end of any academic programme or course of study. It portrays an individual's potential relating to academic work. Academic performance is used generally to measure cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities of an individual. It is all about outcome of what was learned by having the ability of retaining or recalling back what was taught in the course of study. Academic performance can be inter-changeably used as academic achievement and attainment since it is geared towards the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved educational goals whether in short or long term range.

Academic performance according is defined frequently in terms of examination performance. It is referred to as what the student has learned or what skills the student has learned and is usually measured through assessments like standardized tests, performance assessments and portfolio assessment. It is a way in which an individual student reacts to the teaching-learning process with positive manner. That is how the student is able to assimilate, recall or retain and transmit what was learnt and putting it in action and response.

Andy, Kpolovie, Osonwa & Iderima (2014) opined that students' academic performance is usually measured in examinations or continuous assessment tests and it could also be expressed in various ways

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depending on what the scores are to be used for. Academic performance has different ways of predicting an individual's results such as anxiety test, environment and motivation (Friedman & Mandel, 2011).

Academic performance of students can be seen as bringing forth the prowess of knowledge and skills experienced and/or learnt in school as a result of standardized tests and examination marks/grades stipulated by the lecturers. It is observed that some of the students that get admission were not achieving academically due to lack of psychological, physiological and motivational incentives from their families members, peers, administrators and Institutions which made difficult for their achievement in academic. Others factors include students' attitudes, behaviour, socio-economic status, gender, peer influence, cognitive characteristics and lack of optimal attention during learning. These factors might have created a big gap from exhibiting expected performance and might have led to low performance in students' academics because they will find it difficult to assimilate effectively.

Whereas the maximum obtainable performance (CGPA) from any University is 5.0 which counts as the overall of a students' academic achievement from the day such student is admitted till his/her final year in the University, not minding how many years such a student is to spend in the course of study. The minimum point is geared at 1.5 depending on the university. But is unfortunate to observed that those students admitted through UMTE/PUTME and Direct entry by JAMB with high score, eventually end up with low CGPA of below 1.5 and some cannot cope which led to their withdrawal/dropout of the institutions.

Students that scale through JAMB scores with high scores and were admitted into university would have perform credibly in academic works so as to prove the worth of their intelligent quotient. But the reverse has been the case where students that gain admission into the university with better scores, end up being dropout, some over stay their sessions due to carry over courses and some graduating narrowly with third classes and passes. In the same vein, some lapses have been observed in the process of admission of students into universities in Nigeria through UTME necessitated the call for an alternative method of admitting students into the nation's universities. It could be that the candidates that score high in JAMB examination, but could not make it in University must have cheated to have gotten the high scores from JAMB examination.

Waters & Marzano (2006) noted that there is a range of factors that affect on the quality of performance of students and a series of variables are to be considered when to identify the affecting factors quality of academic success. Meanwhile Singh (2011) who assert that being motivated keeps people dynamic and gives them self-respect and they work towards achievement, feel free, enjoy life and be in control over the achievable targets.

Admission pattern is an order, model, style or design set by the examination bodies, Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) on the way an individual will strictly adhere to, in order to meet the requirement for admission in the higher institution of learning. These are admission through Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination and Post universal matriculation examination (UMTE/PUTME) and Direct entry. Admission in this regard is giving an individual access to enter into tertiary institution by merits.

The Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) is developed and administered by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) which the major criterion for its admission of candidates into Nigerian Universities has been through success in the examination. It geared towards effectively streamline the intake of students with a very high score in the examination into Nigerian Universities to avoid duplication of admissions on candidates to the detriment of other students. All the eligible candidates must have had the West African Examination Council (WASC) or National Examination Council (NECO) followed by JAMB and University cut-off points to be admitted into University of one's choice through this patterns.

Accordingly, JAMB decision on grading system based on marks was replaced with point based criteria. Admission points will be a combination of O' level and JAMB scores. The UTME/PUTME is used interchangeably with University Matriculation Examination (UME) in the current study. It is worth disturbing that despite the rigorous screening exercises by some universities, many of the students seems to yet graduate with low grades and some come out with excellent grades. The culmination of these menace have resulted in serious decay of academic performance, despite the good efforts made by the administrators of the Universities to ensure excellent academic performance by putting in place those variables that influence it. This also proposes that the variations in the academic performances of the students of the institutions are predominantly as a product of factors natural in the students which could have been sorted out at the time of admission selection process.

Oloyede (2018) urged that institutions should employ multi-level assessments in choosing their students and not depend on the UTME alone. This according to him is to analyze a case of students who ended up as valedictorians with the highest cumulative grade point average (CGPA) yet had to write the UTME many times. Observably, Ifedili & Ifedili (2010) concluded that candidate who did not do well in UTME, without prejudice did outstandingly in their University first year results.

Gender denotes either male or female division of human beings especially as differentiated by social, cultural roles and behaviour. It can be classified as masculine or feminine in differentiation of the sex. Both

male and female categories of individual need to have a common characteristics and qualities towards their education and equally have opportunity for them to choose and make decisions that have positive or negative impact on their lives. Gender is viewed as a social, psychological and cultural attributes of masculinity and femininity, many of which are based on biological distinctions which include; peoples self-image and expectations for behaviour among other things (Imran & Saeed,2009).

Gender nervous in terms male counterpart using electronic devices in calculation, solving mathematical or scientific problems in Faculties of Engineering, computer etc, can infer some inferiority in the female and send them to psychological trauma that will cause them to perform low in academics. Some female also feel that course of study they found themselves inn is a supposed course for male and see themselves as not being capacitated in the field, psychological they will tend to withdraw and or fail.

Masculinity vs. Femininity refers to as a society in which gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success while women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. In an educational view point, lecturers in masculine societies praise the best students more than any other student while on the other hand, school failure does not receive such great attention in more feminine society, hence the weaker student are praised more by lecturers to give them encouragement.(Hofstede, 2001).

Age is associated with the time of an individual student (youths) of which he actualizes the full potential to attend higher institution. It is as having the personal rights, capabilities and abilities to understand some phenomena that are to be vested upon a person. It is the process of becoming older or more matured in facing life and academic challenges. The age of students have a significant relation to their academic performance. According to Gani & Muhammed (2013), who ascertained that younger students within the school year will eventually face difficulties in a relative nature. This is to say that the younger the students, the more active their affective and cognitive domain emerges.

Statement of the Problem

The admission pattern in Nigerian Universities has been through UTME/PUTME and Direct Entry. Government policy on admission is based on merits, catchment areas and educational less developed state (ELDS) which has 45%, 35% and 20% respectively. Its policy on admission also states that when a candidate comes from one of the catchment areas of a University, such a candidate has a higher chance of gaining admission. That is to say a candidate from Rivers State has a higher chance of gaining admission into University of Uyo when compared with candidates from Imo State because Rivers is in University of Uyo catchment area and Imo is not.

Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) was established to provide equity and quality admission to learners into higher institutions of learning. However, there seems to be little or no attention given to students' academic performance in some of the universities in Nigeria. It might be that some of the students that did not get admission due to lack of psychological, physiological and motivational incentives from their families member, peers, administrators and institutions which made difficult for their excelling through JAMB scores.

Other factors include students' gender, age, peer influence, cognitive characteristics and lack of optimal attention during learning. These factors might have created a big gap from exhibiting expected performance. Students that scale through JAMB scores with the listed factors above could have pass narrowly. These factors also might have led to low performance in students' academics because they will find it difficult to assimilate effectively. Some menace observed as the students that were admitted with merits still depreciate in grades after the first and second year in the University while others still made good grades. Having observed all manner of doubts about the efficacy of UTME scores as the major footing for admission into universities in Nigeria. The issue of how their scores predict or correlate to the students' performance in universities becomes all more crucial and imperative. It is in realization of this controversy that it becomes necessary for the researcher to investigate the Gender, Age as determinant of Quality Admission and Students' Academic Performance for Sustainable Growth in Public Universities in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference in the academic performance of students admitted through the UTME/PUTME, and Direct Entry with their CGPA in the University of Uyo. Specifically the study intended:
1.   To determine if there is any difference in academic performance of students who were admitted through UTME/PUTME and Direct entry based on Gender in the University of Uyo.
2.   To investigate if there is difference in academic performance of Students who were admitted through UTME/PUTME and Direct entry based on their Age in the University of Uyo.

Research Questions
The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:
1.   What is the difference in academic performance of students who were admitted through UTME/PUTME and Direct entry based on their Gender in the University of Uyo.
2.   What is the difference in academic performance of Students who were admitted through UTME/PUTME and Direct entry based on their Age in the University of Uyo.

Research Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.
1.   There is no significant difference between the CGPAs of undergraduate students who were admitted through UTME/PUTME and Direct entry based on their Gender in the University of Uyo.
2.   There is no significant difference between the CGPAs of undergraduate students who were admitted through UTME/PUTME and Direct entry based on their Age in the University of Uyo.

II.   Literature Review

Psychological theory propounded by John Bean in 1980 was adopted as theory of student retention which asserts that the background characteristics of students must be taken into consideration in order to understand their integration into a new university environment. The theory also contends that the intentions of the students to persist are influenced by their attitudes and behaviours which might affect the degree to which the student is satisfied with the institution. This theory is relevant to the study because it gives an insight that students' psychological needs such as support from parents, peers, administrators, and the institution itself will affect their all round development and bring effectiveness in their academic performance. Acclimatizing with the above psychological needs, the students will in turn put more effort academically and will maximize production of knowledge, skill, creativity, and give rise to future dedicated scholars and professions in their different cadre.

Etim & Ema (2017) noted that students are influenced not only by motivating forces of their homes, but also by the social pressures surrounded the individual in school. Therefore, the younger a student is in school, the better for him or her to disengage on social entanglement.

Nwanze (2008) noted that JAMB result is unreliable for testing students' real ability. Busayo (2010) in comparing the scores of UME and Post-UME students at the University of Education (TUNEDIK) Ikere, Ekiti State asserts that 56.5 percent who failed the post-UME screening would have been admitted automatically were it not for the post-UME screening that exposed their lapses.

Olajide, Okewale & Agboola (2015) opined that all students admitted into University irrespective of the mode of entry will be able to cope with the academic rigours, while some students drop out on the way without graduating from the University. . It does not really matter whether which modes were the students admitted into the university, rather what effort has such student put in achieving the best result regarding his/her academic performance, so that he/she will not end up with third class or pass degree thereby compounding the chances of not gaining employment. According to Mgbake (2006), the students' academic success is largely a function of the amount of efforts put into study and not necessarily as a result of modes of entry into the University

Females' self-concept about their nature and fitness can also contribute to the low academic performance. Ukoette, (2013) concluded that the physical attractiveness of female child self-concept, her method of social interaction and relationship with others plays a significant role in their academic performance. Ukoette, (2018), generally, male are less nervous in the use of electronic or electric apparatus, hence, the condition which probably gives them the confidence in the use of electronic gadgets more than female. Male counterparts significantly differ from their female counterpart in knowledge sharing and preferred strategies (Volkom, Stapley, & Malter. (2013).

Ladychampionz (2019), noted that students' age had a significant effect on their academic performance and does not have any significant effect on their academic motivation. The age of which a student enrolled in school matters in the cognitive ability of such a child. Billari & Pellizzari (2008) concluded that the youngest students perform better compared to their oldest peers, especially in technical subjects.

III.   Research Method

The study employed causal comparative ex-post facto design. The area of the study is Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population for this study were 4,223 persons who were admitted into Degree programmes in four Faculties in University of Uyo for the 2015/2016, 2016/2017 sessions. Through randomization, four (4) Faculties were used out of twelve (12), which implies that seven (7) Faculties were excluded. Thus Faculties of Agriculture 499; Science 900; Education 1356; and Arts 1468. While total of UTME/PUTME was 2,058 and 383 Direct entry. **Source:** University of Uyo Exam and Records Office/Senate business committee (SBC). The

sample of this study consists of 2441 undergraduate students which were drawn using Stratified Proportional Random Sampling Technique. two sets of data were collected viz: the UTME/PUTME/Direct entry and Cumulative Grade Point Averages (CGPAs) from the University Exam and records cum Examination scores which is domiciled at Senate business committee (SBC), using the Results Profile Form. The two (2) research questions were answered using arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The null hypotheses were also tested at 0.05 level of significance with independent t-test. The entire data analysis were done using SPSS version 20.

IV. Results of the Findings

Research Question 1
What is the difference in students' academic performance based on their gender?
Hypothesis 1
There is no significance difference between students' academic performance based on their gender
Table 1: Result of t-test analysis for the difference in Students' academic performance and their gender

(n=2441)

Variables	n	$\bar{x}$	st.d	r – cal	t-crit	Remark/Decision
Students' academic performance						
Male	981	2.685	0.874			Mean different exist & Ho: sig
				4.56	1.96	
Female	1460	2.738	0.797			

df = N-2 = 2439.   P> 0.05

Result in Table 1 showed the data obtained from students' academic performance based on their gender in the University of Uyo. Based on the calculated mean, female academic performance was higher than their male counterpart. Furthermore, the null hypothesis tested showed a significant difference in the levels of academic performance of students according to their gender. As indicated, the calculated t-value of 4.56 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significance is thus rejected.

Research Question 2
What difference exists between students' academic performance based on their age?
Hypothesis 2
There is no significance difference between students' academic performance based on their age.

Table 2: Result of t-test analysis for the difference in Students' academic performance and their age.

(n=2441)

Variables	n	$\bar{x}$	st.d	r – cal	t-crit	Remark/Decision
Students' academic performance						
Age below 16	425	2.606	0.855			Mean different exist & Ho: sig
				3.043	1.96	
Age 16 and above	2016	2.7402	0.822			

df = N-2 = 2439.   P> 0.05

Result inTable 2 revealed that mean value of students that age 16 and above was higher than those below 16 years old. In addition, t-test value showed the calculated t-value of 3.043 which was greater than critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus null hypothesis was rejected which indicated that there exist significance difference in students' academic performance based on their age.

V. Discussion Of Findings

Hypothesis 1, data analysis indicated that there is a significant difference between gender and students academic performance. This is found to be the case because when both sexes found that there is disparity in gender, either male above female or vice-versa, there is a tendency for the disperse one to degenerate in grades and points as a result of fear of unknown. This could be attributed to the fact that some parents are still adhering

to male education more than female or the reverse being the case. It could also be attributed that the sex distribution of enrolment admission was not put into consideration by the university and examination bodies. This finding is in agreement of Ekpoh & Etukuyo, (2017) who were in conclusion that lack of sustained government policy on women education can be argued to have significantly contributed to the sustained gender gap in favour of male in Nigeria universities.

The findings support with that of Volkom, Stapley, & Malter. (2013) who ascertained that male counterpart significantly differ from their female counterpart in knowledge sharing and preferred strategies. This is in support of the findings in Ukoette, (2013) who observed that the physical attractiveness of female child self-concept, her method of social interaction and relationship with others plays a significant role in their academic performance; and that female self-concept about their nature and fitness can also contribute to the low academic performance.

Data analysis in hypothesis 2, revealed a significant difference between age and students' academic performance. This is seen to be true because the age that the students were admitted into university matters a lot in their academic achievement. It could be concluded that when a student as admitted while there is still agility, ability, capability and interest within such student, there is a positive reaction of academic excellence and successes. The reverse is the case when their cognitive and affective domain/abilities decline.

The findings of this hypothesis is in line with Juan-Jose, Javier & Pedro, (2015) who concluded that the cognitive development models in developmental psychology, the existence of horizontal gaps within the same stage of development and the difference rhythms of maturation could explain the relative age effect (RAE). This finding negates that of Gani & Muhammed, (2013) who ascertained that younger students within the school year will eventually face with difficulties than the older students in relative nature.

VI. Conclusion

It was concluded based on the findings of the study that: there is a significant difference that existed between students' academic performance and their gender; and there is a significant difference that existed between students' academic performance and their age.

VII. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings and conclusion of the study.
1.   JAMB should be effective and efficiency in its examinations scores towards the performance of the candidates in the universities of their choice.
2.   Administrators should endeavour to admit candidates in their courses they have interest without substitution. This will give rise to their good academic performance and prepare them towards workforce as the graduate.
3.   Government should streamline some certain percentage of the total candidates to be admitted in a session and give credence to female applicants as they constitute the marginalized group.
4.   Parents, guardians and the society should guide the ages and initial stages their wards are to be enroll or admitted into university so that they can be achieved and perform well in academic work.

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