

The Influence of Field Studies in Enhancing the Performance of Geography Students in Taraba State University, Nigeria

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Abstract: *The work examined the influence of field study in the performance of geography students in Taraba state university. The study was carried out with a view to ascertaining the influence of field work in the understanding of geography as a subject. The study adopted the descriptive research method which was applied in the gathering of the data. Data was collected from students of geography department with the aid of structured question using the census sampling techniques to elicit responses from student comprising of two hundred and fifty-seven (257). Sampling frame was obtained using the Tarro Yammne formula and sample size of 156 was obtained. Data was analyzed with tables, statistical diagrams, percentages and frequency distribution. The findings indicated that field work contributed to the development of practical skill and critical thinking abilities. Field work activities such as map reading, data collection, and analysis promote critical thinking and learning. It was recommended therefore that; integrated field studies should be incorporated into every aspect of the curriculum of the discipline. It is also suggested that students should be given a prefield orientation in every session to prepare them for the tax ahead of the discipline.*

Keywords: fieldwork, students' participation, Taraba state university, Ardo-kola, geography department.

INTRODUCTION

Field study is the collection of information outside a laboratory, library or workplace setting (Wikipedia, 2023). For instance, Alakpodia, (2000) noted that the aim of fieldwork in Geography is to expose student to actual field situation and brighten there awareness through visual experiences and practice measurement. Fieldwork is aimed at making the geographer in training to be well informed through intensive observation, accurate measurement and painstaking

gathering of information on spatial patterns, structures and process of geographical features in their natural forms in the field.

Fieldwork is also aimed at developing in the student the ability to observe and reason. During fieldwork, the students have the opportunity of seeing and appreciating in the field, theories and concepts learn in the classroom. Such experiences enable them to developed the power to read and have an accurate image of the real world. Hence, they are able to develop that mental faculty which would enable them perceive spatial patterns and relationships even in region unknown to them and in the map, air photographs and textbooks. Stressing feature, Fadere (1984) noted that observation and reasoning are two faculties that require to be specially developed, as some student can observe certain feature without being able to reason out the hows and whys of such feature in their spatial context. Field work helps the students to overcome such problems through simple thought-provoking question and answer session as well discussions of observed pattern.

Fieldwork provide the opportunity for students to acquire first-hand data, information and knowledge rather than depend solely on existing literature, it has been asserted that the field is the laboratory of geography and planners, a study visit to geographical feature such as a river, hill slope, pollution site etc is more likely to have a lasting impression on students than any other knowledge either from the classroom or existing literature. Fieldwork enables the students to develop relevant skill for acquitting geographical data. For instance measurement of metrological variation, hill slope, river valley, river discharge and speed, boundaries of properties elevation of terrain, tree height, vegetation density, species frequency and so on are normally carried out during fieldwork and student thus become proficient in the use of various instrument and equipment for measuring these geographical variables. During fieldwork student also learn how design sampling framework and administer questionnaires to acquire data in various aspect of studies in human geography

Fieldwork as well enables student to identify problems for geographical study. A well- planned fieldwork should be oriented toward problem solving. According to Ajaegbu, (1972), emphasis should be on the identification and appreciation of the spatial character of the feature; the relationship existing between phenomena; the core, peripheral, marginal, zonal and transitional character of distribution; as well as similarities and differences noticeable on the landscape from place to place. Indeed the orientation of modern fieldwork is field research which is directed toward finding solution(s) to identified problem(s)

Fieldwork afford the student the opportunity to known and learn about people and culture of areas visited or sites selected for the field exercise. For instance the 300 level fieldwork in Geography and Planning Department of Nigeria Universities is normally undertaken outside the students have the opportunity of knowing and learning about the physical environment of such places as well as the people's history, culture heritage and their living condition.

Fieldwork is a component part of the Nigerian Universities commission (NUC) approved curriculum for the award of the Bachelor of Science degree in the Department of Geography and Planning of Nigeria Universities. It is usually undertaken in the 100 and 300 level of study. The 100 level fieldwork is a one-day local field exercise, while the 300 level fieldwork is usually ten-days intensive field exercise undertaken outside the state where the institution is located. In some institution field work is undertaken at 100, 200, and 300 level of study with respective increasing duration of exercise and intensity. The approaches and methods used in field study vary across disciplines. For example, biologists who conduct field study may simply observe animals interacting with their environments, whereas social scientists conducting field study may interview or observe people in their natural environments to learn their languages, folklore, and social structures. Geographers however carry out their field study on lands, the features, the inhabitants, and the phenomena of earth

Field study involves a range of well-defined, although variable, methods: informal interviews, direct observation, participation in the life of the group, collective discussions, analyses of personal documents produced within the group, self-analysis, results from activities undertaken off- or on-line, and life-histories (Glaser, 1995). Although the method generally is characterized as qualitative research, it may (and often does) include quantitative dimensions. The quality of results obtained from field study depends on the data gathered in the field. The data in turn, depend upon the field worker, his or her level of involvement, and ability to see and visualize things that other individuals visiting the area of study may fail to notice. The more open researchers are to new ideas, concepts, and things which they may not have seen in their own culture, the better will be the absorption of those ideas. Better grasping of such material means better understanding of the forces operating in the area and the ways they modify the lives of the people under study (Fatima, 2016).

The study examined the impact of field study on the academic performance of geography students in Taraba State University, Jalingo with the following objectives:

- I. to examine the influence of field study on the academic performance of geography students;
- II. to examine the influence of field study in the understanding of geography as a subject; and,
- III. to identify the limitations associated with field study in the field of geography..

Study Area

Taraba State University which is the study area is located in Ardo Kola Local Government Area of Taraba state and lies between longitudes 11°05' to 11°45'E and latitude 8°40' to 9°05'N. Its headquarters is in the town of Sunkani. It has an area of 2,262 km². It is bounded to the North by Karim Lamido, to the East by Jalingo, to the West by Gassol Local Government Area and to the South by Bali (fig 1.1).

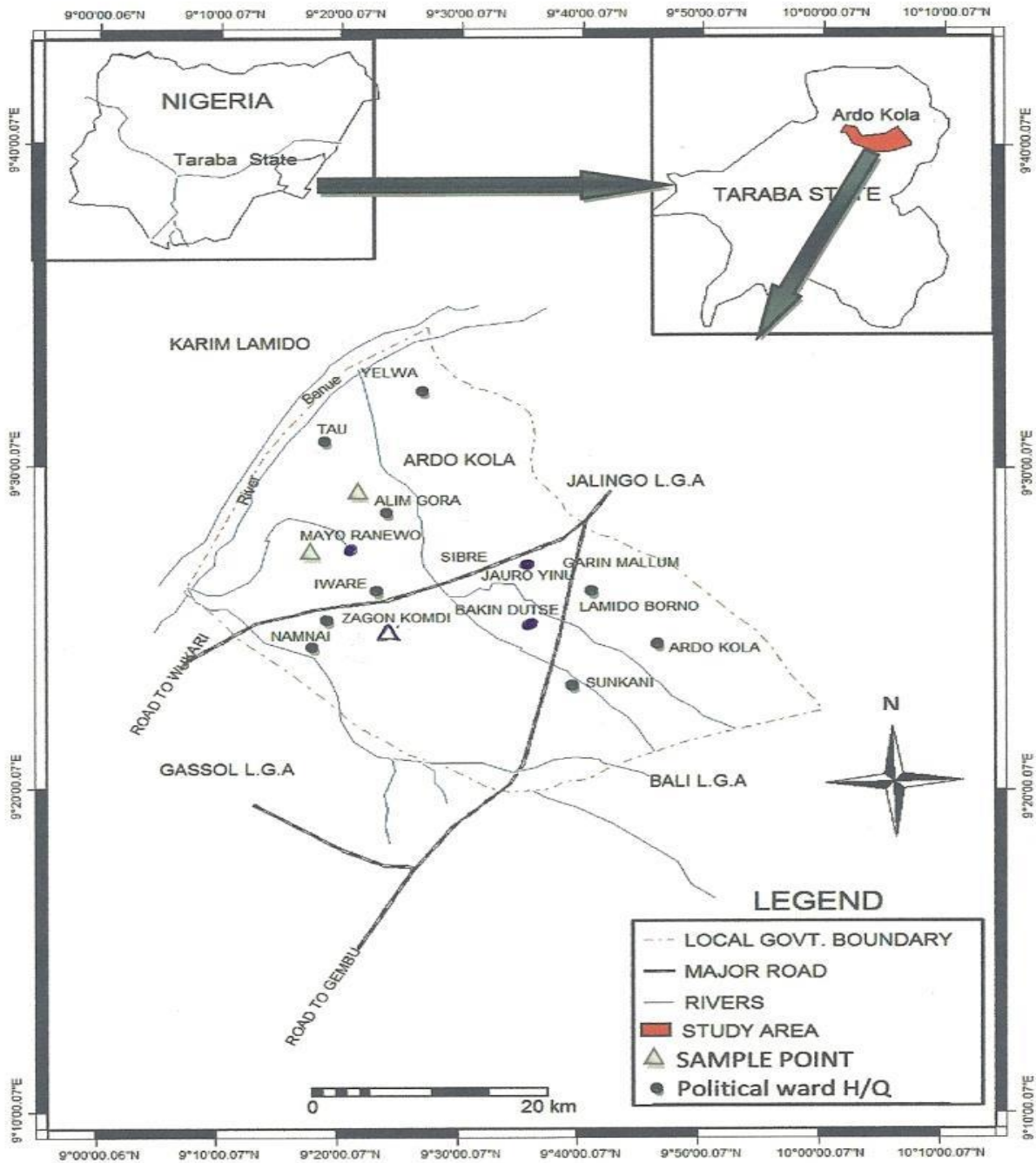


Fig 1.1: Map of Taraba State showing Ardo-Kola LGA
Source: Ministry of land and survey Jalingo.

Ardo-Kola Local Government lies within the Tropical Continental Climate marked by wet and dry seasons. The rainy season commence from early May to October, while the dry season start from November to March. The rainy season reaches its peak in August and start retreating from late September. The mean annual rainfall is 1016mm — 12700mm (40-50 inches). But the mean annual temperature is 29°C- 32°C with annual range of 3°C. Though the temperature varies monthly, the highest temperature is in March and the least in August when the precipitation is at its peak and with high relative humidity (Taraba Agricultural Development Programme, Jalingo 2011). The study area is situated along the Benue Trough. It has sedimentary rock formations that are largely land stones and shales. The area is made up of crystalline metamorphic and igneous rocks of the basement complex situated south of the Benue trough (Taraba Agricultural Development Programme, Jalingo 2011). The area is mainly drained by River Lamurde and River Taraba. The predominate soil is the foressols. The soil is mostly loams, sandy loams and in some places sandy clay loams. The soils are of ferric composition except in alluvial area toward swampy area close toward to the River Lamurde and Benue. The texture of the surface soil horizon but in alluvial areas, the soils are fine at all levels (Mahmood, 2011). The main vegetation is the Guinea Savannah. The vegetation cover consists of mainly trees such as shear butter and locust beans with shrubs and grasses of varying height.

There are also restricted areas of woodland which form the forest reserves area. Though some of the trees are presented for their edible nature, mango, cashew and orange trees, with the ability to stand the very long dry season and bush fires. The grasses too, have durable roots which remain underground after stalks are burnt away or wilted in the dry season only to germinate with the first rainfall. The study area according to 2006 population census has an estimated population of 86,921 people. Most parts of the local government areas are sparsely populated with a population density of about 23 persons per square kilometer.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Geography has moved up and down the scale of educational importance since the time of the cultured Athenians, disappearing entirely from the curriculum when its import was low, returning when the public interest expanded from local to international concern, or when the physical and intellectual life of the people was focused into the same era of time. Geography has never occupied the first place in the school curriculum as a cultural subject, but in rare instances its utility has given it the highest standing, as in the school of navigation established by Prince Henry at Segres in the fifteenth century, and in modern times in the colonial schools maintained by certain European governments. The educational status of the subject has not been due to its content, but to its pedagogy. Teachers have looked upon it as a collection of facts which could be memorized; and if action rather than speech can be taken as a reflex of thought, the majority of the army of teachers still maintains this conception. This does not refer to the superior teachers in every department from the kindergarten to the college, but to the great teaching body which shapes our educational policies.

Fatima (2016) viewed geography as a subject with limited employment opportunities. Surveyed 106 students of different academic levels in Pakistan to examine their perceptions about the concepts, themes, nature and scope of geography, choice of geography as an academic discipline, major problems they are facing while studying geography and possible career opportunities. Her research revealed that students had clear perceptions about the concept, themes, and nature of geography. As regards its significance, geography was viewed by intermediate students as a third or the least ranked subject while graduate, master and Ph.D Students considered it as a first or second ranked subject. Geography was perceived to be very informative and equally important for both girls and boys. Research, teaching and cartography were considered as major job opportunities by students. As a whole, geography was perceived as an interesting, multidisciplinary, and useful subject. Beyond the international context of students' perception of geography, a study relating to students' perceptions of geography in the Ghanaian context is important for teaching, learning and curriculum practices in Ghana and also to contribute to geographical knowledge for both local and international comparison.

The nature of geography is not static but highly dynamic. The nature of geography is both physical environment and human environment. However, the meaning and scope of Geography has dramatically changed with the passage of time, thus, is concerned with the study of Nature and Human interactions as an integrated whole. 'Human' is an integral part of 'nature' and 'nature' has the imprints of 'human'. Nature has influenced different aspects of human life. Its imprints can be noticed on food, clothing, shelter and occupation. Human beings have come to terms with nature through adaptation and modification.

According to Kant, the famous German scholar defined "geography as a study of the earth. "The latest and comprehensive definition of Geography was given by Richard Hearthstone in his book in title "Perspective on the Nature of Geography" published in 1959. According to him "Geography is the concerned to provide accurate, orderly and rational description and interpretation of the variable characters of earth surface".

While field trips have been a staple in primary and secondary education, they are currently on a decline, as museums in the United States have reported a significant decrease in student traffic in the past decade. Furthermore, many schools, according to the American Association of School Administrators, have decided to forego the enrichment activity altogether (Vogt, 2009).

Field trips are gradually being pushed out of school curricula for a variety of reasons, not least of which the costs are involved as well as the bigger focus on academics implemented by schools. In addition, school excursions consume a lot of time and can take their toll on educators, considering that some of them did not receive ample training in planning and conducting trips of that nature (Michie, 1998).

However, evidence of the efficacy of field trips as learning tools as well as a means of stimulating student engagement has surfaced, with participants performing better in a variety of aspects (Greene et al., 2013). Field trips are not limited to primary and secondary schools though. Even higher learning institutions offering online programs such as these cheapest online MSW programs or pursuing a career in gerontology can benefit from a grassroots immersion to further their learning experience.

Academic Impact of Field Studies on Geography Students

A well-organized field trip is a foremost example of knowledge transfer. The new layers of thought acquired by students through observation, interaction, and the narrative provided by guides and lecturers, can be applied to day-to-day scenarios, and this includes reaction papers and quizzes. Therefore, it helps them improve the retention of knowledge. In fact, in 2009, a student survey showed that 53.78% of students strongly agree that field trips have helped to increase their knowledge base (Rahman & Spafford, 2009). A 2015 study echoes this as it was proven that science-oriented field trips can improve the scores of middle school students in science tests and increase their overall proficiency in the subject matter (Whitesell, 2015). Interestingly, the ones who exhibited the biggest growth are poor students and those belonging to ethnic minorities.

Field trips are a popular and well-established method of education. Even the oldest college in the world offers them in one form or another. One of the advantages of field trips is that its offer students the opportunity to learn about a subject in a more hands-on and immersive way than they can in the classroom.

However, field trips also have some potential drawbacks. For example, they can be expensive and logistically challenging to organize. Moreover, the ever-present risk that something will go wrong is also one of the disadvantages of field trip activities. But on balance, field trips can provide an invaluable educational experience for students of all ages. When used judiciously, they can help to bring the class material to life and foster a love of learning in even the most reluctant students.

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However, evidence of the efficacy of field trips as learning tools as well as a means of stimulating student engagement has surfaced, with participants performing better in a variety of aspects (Greene et al., 2013). Among the many reasons why these excursions are organized include the belief that it boosts cultural awareness (79%), reinforces personal development (74%), as well as provides a positive impact on education (Student & Youth Travel Association, 2016). Field trips are not limited to primary and secondary schools though. Even higher learning institutions offering online programs such as these cheapest online MSW programs or pursuing a career in gerontology can benefit from a grassroots immersion to further their learning experience.

Although connectivity in today's digital age has largely bridged the information gaps between students and subject matter not found in the classroom, experiencing new concepts or activities firsthand brings forth knowledge that is not fully encapsulated by non-tactile media. For instance, a trip to a state capitol to learn how Electoral College works. It stimulates recall (explorable places) as learners get to engage with subjects in various ways, potentially assigning sensory interactions to each, which can serve as mental markers.

Museums are one of the primary destinations of field trips and for good reason. Each painting and installation is a portal to a specific time, location, and set of socioeconomic conditions, any of which potentially influencing how a piece was rendered in an artist's mind. This line of thought serves as a lens through which artworks are viewed and analyzed. Students may not know of this or might not know how to apply this had they not gone to a museum or a gallery for their field trip. In relation to the aforesaid concept, the study of Greene and co-researchers (2013) shows that students who had their field trip at the Crystal Bridges Museum experienced a 6% standard deviation increase in historical empathy. This means that the attendees gained at least a basic grasp of how life was like in previous times and in specific places by viewing a series of old American paintings. As such, 70% of those who attended admitted to understanding the thoughts and feelings of early Americans based on the artworks. The same goes for tolerance. Nearly 70% of those who attended thought that artworks that are critical of the U.S. should not be censored (Greene et al., 2013). While this may not be too significant from the outset, the level of tolerance expressed by the students can be applied when entertaining people with dissenting ideas, which is particularly useful when forming plans and strategies, as well as when immersing in other cultures. Moreover, there was a spike in interest in art museums after the field trips, especially among minority students and those from high-poverty schools (Greene et al., 2013).

Any new concept might not register in the minds of students if they do not find it engaging, relatable, or applicable to their lifestyles. With this, field trips break the barrier of apathy by allowing students to freely interact with subjects like significant objects, places, personalities, and processes. The excursions also sharpen students' observation and perception skills as they engage in sensory-based learning (Nabors et al., 2009) and gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Field trips carry bulks of information that teachers can leverage as reference points during lectures (Kelly, 2019). Rather than fleshing out new bodies of knowledge, which takes a lot of time and effort, they can simply refer to relevant segments of the excursion and add more context to what the students experienced. Learners can likewise use the reference points when reviewing lessons as opposed to reading entire chapters

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive research method was used in the study and it was also used as prelude and exploratory in order for the researcher to gather data, summarize, present and interpret it for the reason of elucidation. It also permits the researcher to trace record, analyses and report conditions that exist or existed. This intent allowed the researcher to produce descriptive and numerical data, which was used in measuring relationship between variables.

Primary data was used for this study. The data was collected from the students of geography department on student's performance with the aid of a well-structured questionnaire. The sources of data were chosen and tailored specifically to meet the demands or requirements of particular research. Also, before choosing a data collection source, things like the aim of the research and target population need to be identified.

Census sampling technique/complete enumeration was use for this study and census sampling technique refers to a non-probability sampling technique where the units, sample, or target respondents are based on the criteria set by the researchers. Usually, the researchers look for the similarities of the target respondents to be considered in their study. Upon establishing the commonalities, they look into the distribution of the respondents by specific units. Most of the research instructors or paper advisers prefer to consider all the target respondents of the study because of too little number.

The sample for this study comprised of all the students of geography department. The total population of the student is two hundred and fifty-seven (257).

Census sampling techniques will be adopted for this study. This is a statistical investigation in which the data are collected for each and every element/unit of the population is termed as census method. It is also known as 'complete enumeration' or '100% enumeration' or 'complete survey'. It is useful when case intensive study is required or the area is limited.

The sample used was obtained from the population using Taro yamane formula for sample. The sample obtained was 156.

Data obtain was analyzed with tables, statistical diagrams, percentages, and frequency distribution.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS.**Demographic Characteristics of the study Area****Table1.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Factors		Frequency (Percentage)
Gender	Male	117(75%)
	Female	39(25%)
	Total	156(100%)
Age	18-20	34 (21.8%)
	21-23	19 (12.2%)
	24-26	42(26.9%)
	27 and above	61(39.1%)
	Total	156(100%)
Year of study	First year	15(9.6%)
	Second year	42(26.9)
	Third year	49(31.4)
	Fourth year	50(32.1%)
	Total	156(100%)

Source: Field survey, 2024

From the demographic characteristics of the respondents from table 1.1 above, the table shows that out of 156 respondents, 117 (75%) were male, and 39 (25%) were female. This indicates a higher representation of males in the respondent group. The age distribution among the respondents is varied. The majority, 61 (39.1%), were aged 27 and above, followed by 42 (26.9%) aged 24-26, 34 (21.8%) aged 18-20, and 19 (12.2%) aged 21-23. This suggests a diverse age range within the respondent pool. Regarding the year of study, the respondents were distributed across different academic years. The highest number, 50 (32.1%), were in their fourth year, followed by 49 (31.4%) in their third year, 42 (26.9%) in their second year, and the least, 15 (9.6%), in their first year. This indicates a relatively balanced representation across the academic years, with a slightly higher proportion in the upper years.

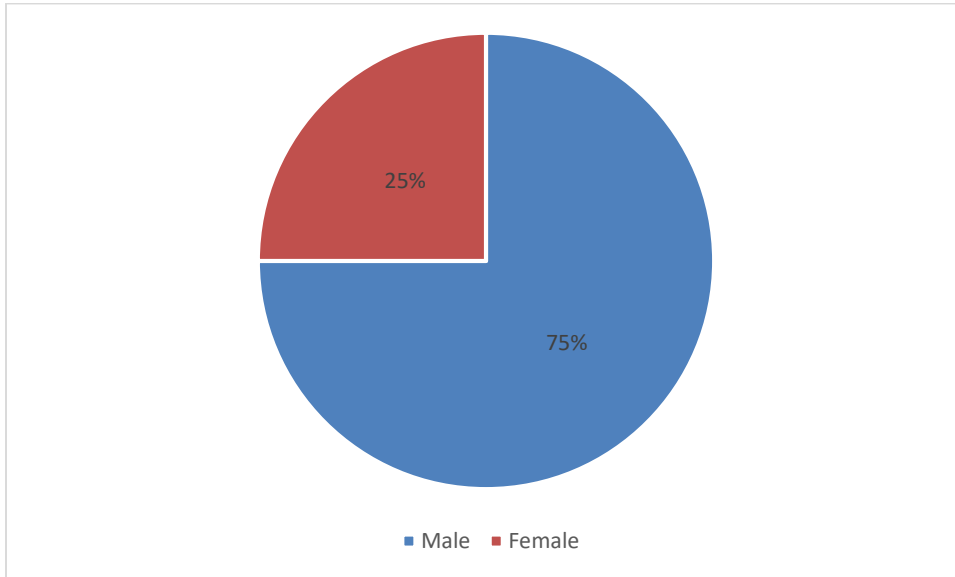


Fig. 1.2 Pie chart Showing Respondents Sex

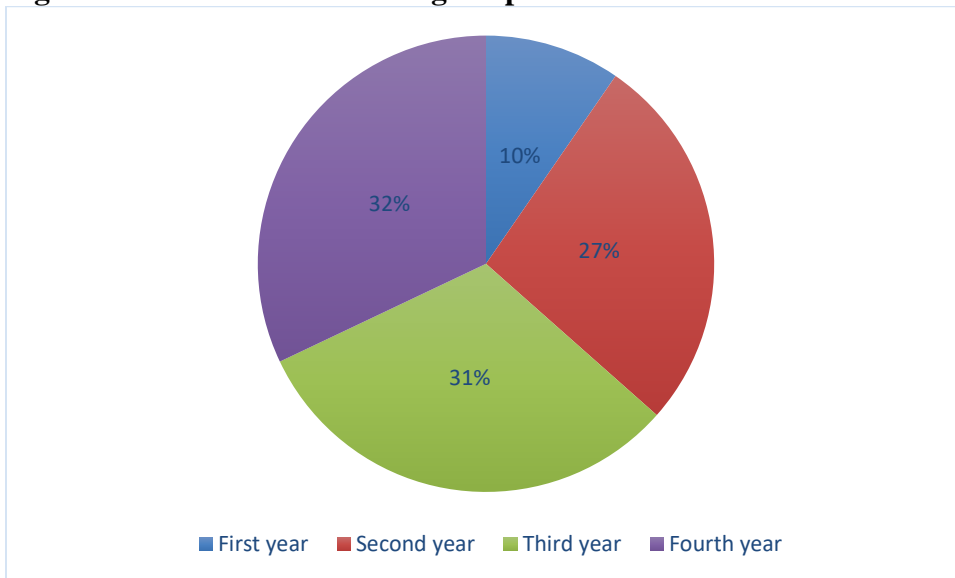


Fig. 1.3 Pie chart Showing Respondents' Year of Study

Table 1.2 Influence of Field Study on the Academic Performance

S/N	Statement	Response	
1	Have you participated in any field studies related geography during your academic program at Taraba state university?	Yes	132(85%)
		No	24(15%)
		Total	156(100%)
2	Do you feel that participating in field studies has enhance your understanding of geography concepts taught in class?	Yes	148(95%)
		No	8(5%)
		Total	156(100%)
3	Have you notice an improvement in your grades in geography courses after participating in field studies?	Yes	154(98.7%)
		No	2(1.7%)
		Total	156(100%)
4	Do you find yourself more engaged and interested in geography courses after attending field studies?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)
5	Do you believe that the knowledge gained from field studies has help you in applying geographical concepts in practical situation?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)

Source: Field survey, 2024

From table 1.2 above, the majority of respondents, 132 (85%), have participated in field studies related to geography during their academic program at Taraba State University, while 24 (15%) have not. A significant portion, 148 (95%), of the respondents feel that participating in field studies has enhanced their understanding of geography concepts taught in class, while only 8 (5%) do not share this sentiment. Nearly all respondents, 154 (98.7%), have noticed an improvement in their grades in geography courses after participating in field studies, indicating a strong positive correlation between field studies and academic performance. All respondents, 156 (100%), find themselves more engaged and interested in geography courses after attending field studies, demonstrating a unanimous agreement on the positive impact of field studies on engagement with the subject matter. Similarly, all respondents, 156 (100%), believe that the knowledge gained from field studies has helped them in applying geographical concepts in practical situations, indicating a unanimous perception of the practical relevance of field studies.

Based on the overall average of approximately 95.74% of respondents expressing positive views towards the influence of field studies on academic performance and understanding of geography concepts, it can be inferred that field studies have a highly beneficial impact on students' learning experiences and academic achievements in geography courses at Taraba State University.

Table 1.3 Influence of Field Study in the Understanding of Geography

S/N	Statement	Response	
1	Do you think field studies contribute to a deeper understanding of geography as a course?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)
2	Do field studies help in making real-world connections to theoretical concepts learned in geography classes?	Yes	149(95.5%)
		No	7(4.5%)
		Total	156(100%)
3	Have field studies helped you develop critical thinking skills related to geographical issues?	Yes	150(96.2%)
		No	6(3.8%)
		Total	156(100%)
4	Do you believe field studies enhance practical skills such as map reading, data collection and analysis?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)
5	Do field studies provide a broader perspective on geographical issues compared to classroom learning alone?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From table 1.3 above, it can be seen that all respondents, 156 (100%), believe that field studies contribute to a deeper understanding of geography as a course, indicating a unanimous agreement on the educational value of field studies. The majority of respondents, 149 (95.5%), feel that field studies help in making real-world connections to theoretical concepts learned in geography classes, suggesting that field studies enhance the application of theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios. A significant portion, 150 (96.2%), of the respondents believe that field studies have helped them develop critical thinking skills related to geographical issues, highlighting the role of field studies in fostering analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Enhancement of Practical Skills: All respondents, 156 (100%), believe that field studies enhance practical skills such as map reading, data collection, and analysis, indicating a consensus on the instrumental role of field studies in skill development. Similarly, all respondents, 156 (100%), agree that field studies provide a broader perspective on geographical issues compared to classroom learning alone, emphasizing the enriched understanding and perspective gained through experiential learning outside the classroom.

Based on the overall average of 100% positive responses from the respondents across all statements, it can be confidently concluded that field studies have an overwhelmingly positive influence on the understanding of geography among students at Taraba State University. These findings underscore the significant role of field studies in deepening comprehension, fostering critical thinking, enhancing practical skills, and broadening perspectives in the study of geography.

Table 1.4 Limitations Associated with Field Study in the Field of Geography

S/N	Statement	Response	
1	Have you encounter logistical challenges (e.g., transportation, scheduling) when participating in field studies?	Yes	145(93%)
		No	11(7%)
		Total	156(100%)
2	Have weather conditions ever hinder the effectiveness of field studies?	Yes	8(5%)
		No	148(95%)
		Total	156(100%)
3	Do safety concerns arise during field studies, such as in remote or unfamiliar locations?	Yes	78(50%)
		No	78(50%)
		Total	156(100%)
4	Have you experienced limitations in accessing certain geographical sites for field studies?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)
5	Have you faced challenges due to a lack of resources (e.g., equipment, funding) during the field study?	Yes	156(100%)
		No	0(0%)
		Total	156(100%)

Source: Field survey, 2024

It can be seen from table 1.4 above, the majority of respondents, 145 (93%), have encountered logistical challenges such as transportation and scheduling when participating in field studies, indicating that logistical issues are a common hurdle in conducting fieldwork. A small portion of respondents, 8 (5%), have experienced hindrances to the effectiveness of field studies due to weather conditions, suggesting that adverse weather can sometimes impact the conduct of fieldwork. Half of the respondents, 78 (50%), have encountered safety concerns during field studies, particularly in remote or unfamiliar locations, highlighting the importance of addressing safety measures in fieldwork planning. All respondents, 156 (100%), have experienced limitations in accessing certain geographical sites for field studies, indicating that site accessibility can be a significant constraint in fieldwork activities. Similarly, all respondents, 156 (100%), have faced challenges due to a lack of resources such as equipment and funding during field studies, suggesting that resource constraints are a prevalent issue that may affect the quality and scope of fieldwork endeavors.

Based on the average of respondents' responses across all statements, it is evident that field studies in the field of geography are subject to various limitations and challenges. These include logistical hurdles, weather-related constraints, safety concerns in remote locations, limitations in accessing geographical sites, and resource constraints such as equipment and funding shortages. These findings underscore the importance of proactive planning, risk management, and resource

allocation strategies to mitigate the impact of these limitations and ensure the effectiveness and safety of field studies in geography education.

Out of the 156 respondents, 75% were male, while 25% were female. This gender distribution highlights a higher representation of males in the respondent pool. This finding aligns with broader trends in STEM fields, where males often outnumber females, though efforts to promote gender diversity and equity in academia are ongoing (Smith & White, 2019).

The respondents' age distribution varied across different age brackets. The majority of respondents (39.1%) were aged 27 and above, followed by 26.9% aged 24-26, 21.8% aged 18-20, and 12.2% aged 21-23. This diverse age range indicates a mix of both younger and older students within the respondent group. Such variation in age distribution is common in university settings, reflecting students from different stages of their academic journey and life experiences (Thomas & Herbert, 2017).

Respondents were distributed across different academic years, with 32.1% in their fourth year, 31.4% in their third year, 26.9% in their second year, and 9.6% in their first year. This distribution suggests a relatively balanced representation across the academic years, with a slightly higher proportion in the upper years.

The distribution across academic years is crucial for understanding the level of experience and exposure of respondents to geography courses and field studies, which may influence their perceptions and responses (Roberts et al., 2020).

Majority of respondents expressed positive views towards the influence of field studies on academic performance and understanding of geography concepts. This aligns with previous research highlighting the significant positive impact of field studies on student learning outcomes (Harris & Bell, 2018). Field studies provide students with practical experiences that reinforce theoretical knowledge, leading to deeper understanding and improved academic performance.

The findings indicating that field studies contribute to the development of practical skills and critical thinking abilities are consistent with the literature. Fieldwork activities, such as map reading, data collection, and analysis, promote hands-on learning and foster critical thinking skills (Kinchin et al., 2018; Healey & Jenkins, 2009). These skills are essential for geographical inquiry and problem-solving, both in academic settings and real-world contexts.

The identified challenges and limitations associated with field studies, including logistical issues, weather constraints, safety concerns, and resource shortages, corroborate previous research (Roberts & Healey, 2017; Bedford et al., 2020). Researchers have emphasized the need for careful planning, risk assessment, and resource management to address these challenges effectively and ensure the successful implementation of fieldwork activities.

Building on the findings, it is crucial for educators and institutions to implement strategies to mitigate the impact of challenges associated with field studies. This may include developing comprehensive risk management plans, securing adequate resources, and providing appropriate training for students and staff involved in fieldwork activities (Walford & Tucker, 2019). Collaboration with local communities and stakeholders can also help overcome logistical and access challenges while enriching the educational experience.

In conclusion, the findings from the field survey in line with existing literature, depicting the importance of field studies in geography education for enhancing academic performance, deepening understanding, and developing practical skills and critical thinking abilities. While challenges and limitations exist, proactive planning and effective management strategies can maximize the benefits of fieldwork experiences for students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to explore the effect of field trips on the academic performance of geography students at Taraba State University, Jalingo. The survey covered demographic characteristics, perceptions of field studies, understanding of geography concepts, and encountered limitations associated with field studies. The findings revealed several significant insights. The respondent pool consisted predominantly of male students, with a diverse age range and a relatively balanced representation across different academic years. A vast majority of respondents reported participating in field studies and expressed overwhelmingly positive views regarding the impact of field studies on their understanding of geography concepts, academic performance, engagement, and practical application of knowledge. Respondents unanimously agreed that field studies contribute to a deeper understanding of geography, help make real-world connections to theoretical concepts, develop critical thinking skills, enhance practical skills, and provide a broader perspective on geographical issues compared to classroom learning alone. Despite the positive perceptions, respondents also highlighted various limitations associated with field studies, including logistical challenges, weather-related hindrances, safety concerns, limitations in accessing geographical sites, and resource constraints.

The findings suggest that field studies play a crucial role in enhancing the academic performance and learning experiences of geography students at Taraba State University. The positive impact of field trips on understanding, engagement, and skill development underscores the importance of integrating experiential learning opportunities into geography curricula. However, the encountered limitations indicate the need for proactive measures to address logistical, safety, and resource-related challenges to ensure the effectiveness and safety of field studies.

Base on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made

1. Taraba State University should provide institutional support and resources to facilitate the planning and execution of field studies, including funding, transportation, and access to necessary equipment.
2. Implement comprehensive safety protocols and risk management strategies to address safety concerns during field studies, especially in remote or unfamiliar locations.
3. Integrate field studies more effectively into the geography curriculum, ensuring alignment with learning objectives and course content to maximize the educational benefits for students.
4. Provide faculty members with training and professional development opportunities to enhance their capacity in designing, implementing, and evaluating field studies effectively.
5. Offer pre-field trip orientation sessions to prepare students for the challenges and expectations associated with field studies, including safety protocols, academic objectives, and behavioral guidelines.

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