

Attitudes and Environmental Factors as Determinants of Academic Achievement in Economics Among Secondary School Students in Kano Metropolis, Kano State Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study investigated attitude and school environmental factors as determinants of students' academic achievement in Economics. The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. All the entire students in Senior Secondary School class two in Metropolis formed the population for the study. The sample comprised 540 students selected from the population using purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. The instruments used to collect data were Students Attitude to Economics Scale with reliability coefficient of 0.74 and Economics Achievement Test (MAT) with reliability coefficient of 0.75. Data collected were analysed using Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and t-test analysis. Findings of the study indicated that there was a significant relationship between school environment and students' academic performance in Economics and that there was no significant relationship between students' attitude to Economics. Based on the outcome of this study, school environment was found to be an important predictor of students' academic performance in significant relationship between school environment and students' academic performance in Economics. Therefore, it was recommended that educational evaluator should take school, location into consideration when evaluating students' performance in public examinations. Policy makers and stakeholders in the education sector should ensure that the educational facilities in the rural locations measure up to that obtainable in the urban locations.*

Keywords: Attitude, school environment, academic performance, achievement, determinant.

INTRODUCTION

The first approach and probably the most important aspect of academic performance is recognizing that you are responsible for your success and also for your failures as a student.

Taking this responsibility entails the understanding that your priorities, decisions, habits and resources all determine the success you achieve or do not achieve with studying. Many researchers (Kuimi, Kibe & Nganga 2010, Edword, 2014) have equally given their suggestions about the factors which they thought could influence the academic performance of students within the school environment. The performance of students in any academic task has been of special interest to educators, parents and society at large. Academic performance, according to Agboola (2014), is described as the outcome of education. It connotes the extent to which the student or institution has achieved the educational goals. It is a measure of abilities of students. Academic performance of students can be expressed in the form of good scores, exceptional performance in tests, and high grades in examinations. Pathetically, it has been observed that many secondary school leavers in any given year do not often qualify to gain admission into higher institution for further education. For example, according to data collected from Kano State Ministry of Education, the academic performance of Secondary School Students in the state is very discouraging.

There is also no gainsaying of the fact that parents and other stakeholders are eager that students have good knowledge of Economics based on its relevance as the subject that must be passed at credit level in Nigeria before gaining admission to higher institution. The rationale behind this research is the intention to contribute to the area of assessing environmental factors as possible determinants of student's achievement in economics. This is because in spite of the usefulness of Economics in Nigeria, it could still be observed that students' performance at their final year examination in the subject has not been encouraging, it is found to be persistently poor for the past years. This is evident in the data collected from Kano State Ministry of Education, as shown in table 1

Table 1: Performance of Students in Economics in West African Secondary School Examination (WASSCE) in Kano State. (May/June 2015-2024)

Year	Total no. of candidate	Credit pass (A1-C6)	Pass (D7-E8)	Fail (F9)
2015	51,343	805 (18.85%)	(1.57%) 40,860	9,678 (79.58%)
2016	49,535	1,485 (11.80%)	(3.00%) 42,205	5,845 (85.20%)
2017	52,041	1336 (21.78%)	(2.57%) 39,369	11,336 (75.65%)
2018	46,971	9,239 (25.36%)	(19.67%) 25,821	11,911 (55.00%)
2019	41,359	10,421 (32.39%)	(25.20%) 17,541	13,397 (42.41%)
2020	43,357	9,973 (7.19%)	(23.00%) 30,268	3,116 (69.81%)
2021	45,591	7,328 (26.34%)	(16.07%) 26,256	12,007 (57.59%)
2022	54,404	10,197 (27.40%)	(18.74%) 29,869	14,909 (54.90%)
2023	40,934	15,058 (31.15%)	(36.78%) 13,127	12,749 (32.07%)
2024	24,484	11,232 (25.77%)	(45.87%) 6,942	6,310 (28.35%)

Source: Kano State Ministry of Education (2025)

A critical look at the performance of students in Economics results of WASSCE from 2015-2024, as presented in the Table 1, showed that many students failed Economics. This is the major reason that often prevents students from securing admission into Universities in Nigeria. A further look at the Table showed that it was only in 2024 that the percentage of successful candidates was up to 46%. One might argue at this point however, that the rise in the percentage of students' performance in that year 2024 could be traced to the fact that the state government insisted that no student should be promoted at Senior Secondary School classes, especially SS 2, without a credit pass in Economics and English language.

As it appears in every school setting, students are constantly in search of academic success. As such, all efforts of students are often geared towards achievement of good grades in their academic pursuits. In spite of this fact, educational psychologists and researchers such as Nuthana and Yenagi (2009); Ogbodo (2010) and Kuimii (2009) argued that there are several factors that could affect students' performance in academics. These factors are grouped into school factors, family factors, social factors and students' individual factors. It is observed that stakeholders (government and institutions) in education are often interested in making better admission decisions. Students, both at secondary and tertiary institutions, as well as the society are interested in academic success.

Attitude can be described as a state of readiness or a tendency to act or react in a certain way. It implies that when students demonstrate weak commitment to their academic work they are likely to underperform. Also students with unrealistic view of themselves may perform poorly too. For example, those who tend to be over confident about the requirements of their academics may perform poorly. According to Edward (2014) attitudes held by individuals may be simple or complex, stable or unstable, temporary or permanent, superficial or fundamental. Attitude in the explanation of Agboola, can be said to be positive, high or good when individual's response to task or programme is found to be favourable, and when they show commitment to their duties. On the contrary, Agboola stated that, attitude can also be negative, low or bad when individuals are observed to express a nonchalant response to what is expected of them in a given situation. This therefore implies that if a student is not favourably disposed to a subject such as Economics, his or her attitude towards anything connected to the subject is likely to be negative.

The foregoing explanation could serve as evidence to prove that individuals attitude could either contribute to his or her academic performance positively or negatively. This is because there is the likelihood that students who do not believe in themselves often end up having no confidence, or could become under-achievers in their studies.

The learning environment is observed to play a major role in the learning process. The study of Kumar (2015) revealed that students in rural areas received education that is inferior compared to those in the urban. This observation is reinforced by the views gleaned from literature. For instance, Sheldon (2011) observed that rural schools faces challenges relating to isolation,

poverty and limited job opportunities for school leavers. Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011) also noted that, isolation often denies rural schools the advantages of urban-based resources like libraries, electricity, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which enhances learning outcomes. There is also the feeling that poverty amongst so many rural communities on the other hand, coupled with inadequate resources at home often limit parental ability to provide for their children or augment for their education which can hardly sustain students interest in learning. Still on the school environment, Yusuf (2010) opined that a strong and positive relationship between, quality of school facilities and students' performance in Economics and English can help to improve their chance of moving up the education ladder. Also, Sheldon (2019) reported that rural school harbor untrained or unqualified teachers, which is of great disservice to learners. According to this author, due to distance factors from the centre, most rural schools rarely get visited by school inspectors. The implication of this is that teachers in rural schools are less likely to get the much needed supervisory advice from professional personnel. Moreover, due to lack of attractive amenities like good houses, clean water, electricity and others, a significant proportion of teachers posted to rural schools could either apply for transfer immediately or become habitual absentees.

Critically, one may express the feeling that the rejection of schools in rural areas could be seen as being responsible for not having the much needed qualified teachers to teach Economics in schools, despite its importance to studies. This could indeed justify students' negative attitudes to Economics in the rural areas.

Despite the observed disadvantages of students in the rural areas compared to their counterparts in the urban, in their access to good school facilities, teachers and other amenities are not without their perceived advantages over students in the urban schools too. For example, according to Chuma (2012), unlike in urban schools, where classes are often overcrowded, schools in the rural areas are often very scanty. In large classes mostly in urban areas, the teacher might not have a very good control of his or her class. Whereas, the scanty in rural areas, teachers are likely to be opportune to have better control of his class, paying attention to all the students, especially the slow learners who need to be brought up to the level of their peers.

Kumar (2015) observed that rural schools have always lagged behind in educational performance though there have been observed improvements in recent times. The reasons for this improved performance in rural school might include; the small size of rural schools, that is helping to reduce the number of students in a class. This is noted to make the schools to have a low student teacher ratio, which often allow for more individualized attention and assistance in the areas of students' difficulty. The perceived excellent performance of urban students could thus be adduced to the availability of information that could often come from various sources, like the mass media, electronic media, educated families and peer groups which may usually help the students to perform better. Urban students may also have added benefits to better facilities, compared to their counterpart in rural areas, who may hardly be exposed to modern technology.

It is on this background that the study was set to determine the relationship between students' attitudes, school environment and their academic achievement in economics.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitude and school environmental factors as determinants of student's academic achievement in economics. This is because recent findings showed that many students perform poorly in many subjects including economics and many factors were attributed to it. This researcher intends to consider how environmental factor determine the academic achievement of the students.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study;

1. What is the correlation between students' attitudes and students' academic achievement in Economics?
2. Is there any relationship between the school environment and students' academic achievement in Economics?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated;

1. There is no significant relationship between students' attitudes to Economics and students' academic achievement in English Language.
2. There is no significant relationship between the school environment and students' academic achievement in Economics

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. It involved the use of questionnaire as a method of data collection for the purpose of describing and interpreting the students' attitudes to Economics. Economics Attitude Scale (MAS) constructed by Fennema-Sherman (2014) was adopted by the researcher to measure students attitude to Economics while teacher constructed achievement test was to measure academic achievement in Economics.

The population for the study comprised all the public Senior Secondary School (SSS) class two students in Kano Metropolis. It was assumed that this group of students would be more appropriate for the study as they were preparing for their external examination which was a major life factor to them. At the time of carrying out this study, there were 683 public secondary schools in Kano State while 142 are in metropolis comprising male and female students totaling 116,754. based on the data collected from Kano State Ministry of Education.

A multi-stage sampling technique, was adopted to select 540 senior secondary school students. Kano Metropolis has six Local Government Areas (LGAs) from which the researcher randomly selected five from the urban and five from the rural areas respectively. Two secondary schools were randomly selected from each of the ten local government sampled. A stratified sampling technique was employed to select 27 males and 27 females making 54 students per school.

Question 1

1. What is the correlation between students' attitude and students' academic achievement in Economics ?

Table 2: Academic performance of students based on attitude

Attitude to Economics	N	Mean	SD
Negative attitude	265	8.37	3.52
Positive attitude	275	8.42	3.56
Total	540		

Source: Research Data: 20th March, 2025

In order to answer the question for Table 2, scores relating to students' attitudes to Economics were computed using items 1-16 of 'Students' Attitude to Economics Scale. (SAMS). The mean (39.13) was computed. Students whose scores on attitude to Economics fell below the mean score were categorized into 'Negative attitude' while those whose scores equal to or above the mean score were classified into 'Positive'. Academic performance of students with 'Negative' and 'Positive' attitude to Economics were computed and compared. The result is presented in table 1. The result revealed that students with positive attitude towards Economics had a slightly higher mean score of 8.42 in the subject than those with negative disposition towards Economics (mean = 8.37, SD =3.52).

Research Question 2'

Is there any relationship between the school environment and students' academic achievement in Economics?

Table 3: Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Economics based on School Environment

School environment	N	Mean	SD
RURAL	270	7.42	3.12
URBAN	270	9.37	3.67
TOTAL	540		

Source: Research Data 20th March, 2025

Table 3 showed that students in the urban location had higher mean score of 9.37 than their counterparts in rural area (mean =7.42, SD=3.12). This implies that difference existed between students in urban and rural areas of Kano Metropolis in terms of academic performance as the students in urban area performed better than those of their colleagues in the rural area.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I

There is no significant relationship between students' attitudes to Economics and students' academic performance in Economics .

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating to students' attitudes and students' academic performance were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Test of significant relationship between students' attitude and academic performance

Variables	N	Df	R	P
Academic performance	540	539	0.029	0.498
Students attitude	540			

Source: Research Data 20th March, 2025

Table 3 indicated that $r_{cal} < 0.029$ was not significant at 0.05 level of significance, Since 0.05 is less than the 0.49% probability level. The hypothesis was therefore not rejected. This implies that there was no significant relationship between students' attitudes to Economics and students' academic performance in Economics .

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between the school environment and students' academic performance in Mathematic.

In order to test the hypothesis score relating to school environment and students' academic performance were computed and subjected to Statistical analysis involving Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Test of significant relationship between school environment and students' academic performance in Economics

Variables	N	Df	R	P
School environment	540	539	0.091	0.035
Academic performance	540			

$P < 0.05$ (Result Significant)

Table 5 showed that r_{cal} (0.091) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis was therefore rejected, since r_{cal} is greater than the P value. This implies that there was a significant relationship between the school environment and students' academic performance in Mathematics.

DISCUSSION

The result to research question one showed that students with positive attitude perform better when compared with negative disposition towards Economics (mean = 8.37, SD=3.52). There appears to be a general consensus on the effect that students' attitude has on the corresponding academic achievement of the students. This is because the results of the empirical studies reviewed indicated a positive relationship between students' attitude and their academic achievement. Strong positive relationship was found by Enoch (2010) between attitude towards reading and academic performance while examining the relationship between attitude and academic performance in Economics.

Similar to this finding is the result of Bakar (2010) which concluded that there is significant positive correlation between students' attitude towards learning and academic performance. Based on these discoveries it can be implied that though attitude affects academic performance in order subjects of study the same cannot be said of Economics.

Research question two showed that difference existed between students in urban and rural areas of Kano Metropolis in terms of academic achievement as the students in the urban area performed better than those of their colleagues in the rural areas. This finding is in line with the works of Kumar (2010), Owoeye and Yara (2011), Adepoju and Oluchukwu (2011) that described the relationship between students in urban and rural areas as influential. Their opinion is that students in urban schools will have greater advantage of performing better than their rural counterparts. And urban environment has the potential of raising the students' cognitive behavior more than the rural environment. On the other hand, the report of Yusuf and Adigun (2010) affirmed that no matter the location of a school, academic performance of the students cannot be influenced by the factors that are prevalent in the school, be it urban or rural, and as such, rural students do not suffer any disadvantage as a result of their residence in rural location or their attendance at rural schools.

Hypothesis one was not rejected. This result is not in line with the result of Enoch (2010). This is because the result of the empirical study indicated a strong positive relationship as found by Enoch (2010) between attitude towards reading and academic performance while examining the relationship between attitude and performance in Economics. It has been found that there is significant positive correlation between students' attitude towards learning and academic performance across gender. (Bakar, 2010 and Manoah, Idoshi & Othuon, 2010). In Nigeria, Olaleye (2003) affirms that there exists significant relationship between attitude and performance

and there is a reciprocal effect in their relationship as attitude affect performance while performance affects attitude. The result of this study indicates that there is no significant relationship between students' attitudes, to Economics and students' academic achievement, which implies that in Kano Metropolis students' attitude to Economics did not influence their academic achievement. Similar to this finding is the result of Bakar (2010) which concluded that there is significant positive correlation between students attitude towards learning and academic performance.

Finding from hypothesis two was rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between the school environment and students' academic achievements in Economics. There appears not to be a consensus as regards the nature of relationship between the two variables. One school of thought proposes that there is no relationship between school location and academic achievement of students. This is evident in the report of Yusuf and Adigun (2010) which affirmed that no matter the location of a school, academic achievement of the students cannot be influenced by factors that are prevalent in the school, be it urban or rural and such rural students do not suffer any disadvantage as a result of their residence in rural location or their attendance at rural schools. This may probably due to the fact that students residing in a location are already acclimatized to their environment for study purpose. In the same vein, further studies by Amannah (2013) and Agbaje & Awodun (2014) also indicate no difference between performance of urban and rural students. These studies point to the fact that there is no significant relationship between school location and students' academic performance.

In another perspective, the works of Kumar (2010), Owoeye & Yara (2011), Adepoju & Ouchukwu (2011) all describe the relationship between the two variables as significant. Their opinion is that students in urban school will have greater advantage of performing better than their rural counterparts. And urban environments have the potential of raising the students cognitive behaviour more than the rural environments. This present study revealed that there is significant relationship between school environment and academic achievement in economics.

CONCLUSION

The study examines the attitude and school environmental factors as determinants of students' academic performance in economics. The study established that there was a significant relationship between school environment and student's academic achievement in economics. This means there is significance positive correlation between students' attitude towards learning and academic performance.

This study investigated the attitude and school environmental factors as determinants of student's academic achievement in economics. The study established that

Recommendations

In view of the result from this study, the following recommendation were being made:

1. There is need for educational evaluator to take school location into consideration when evaluating students' performance in public examinations.
2. Policy makers and stakeholders in the education sector should ensure that the educational facilities in the rural locations measure up to that obtainable in the urban locations.
3. There is need for Students to have positive attitudes towards learning of Economics

Contribution to knowledge

Attitude and school environment appears to have attracted researchers across many subjects. However, researcher's investigation revealed that not much was done in ascertaining the efficacy of school environment and its impact on academic achievement. Hence, embarking on this study is a welcome development and viable contribution to knowledge.

Suggestions for further studies

Since the present study is limited to secondary schools in Kano metropolis, further research can be conducted in other states to cover more secondary schools. Further studies can be conducted to cover other areas of economics such as marketing, taxation, trade and so on. In addition, further researches can be extended to other social science subjects such as accounting, commerce, banking etc.

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