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EFFECT OF GENDER ON ECONOMICS STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated the effect of gender on Economics students' academic performance in secondary schools. The study adopted a non-equivalent pretest-posttest control group research design. The population for the study consisted of Economics students in senior secondary schools in Oyo town. The sample for the study comprised 77students which was made up of male and female Economics students. Three mixed-sex schools out of 11 mixed-sex public secondary schools in Oyo West Local Government Area were selected using simple random sampling technique and one intact class was randomly selected from each of the sampled schools. One instrument was utilized for the study and this was Economics Performance Test (EPT). Data collected were analyzed using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The results showed that, there was no significant difference in the performance and retention of male and female students (t=0.27 ρ> 0.05 and t= 0.25, ρ > 0.05) respectively. The study concluded that gender has no significant influence on secondary school students' performance and retention in Economics. The study therefore recommended that both male and female students should be given equal educational opportunities in an Economics class and teachers should always adopt teaching strategies capable of enhancing male and female Economics students' performance.*

KEYWORDS: Gender, Economics, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Economics is a social science. It is a science because it employs scientific ways in its enquiry and a social science since it studies human behaviour as they make choices to tackle their problems. According to Ochejele (2007) Economics is the study of the method of allocating scarce resources (physical and human) among unlimited wants or competing needs. Also Hall (2013), defined Economics as the study of how individuals, firms and whole societies identify their most important needs, allocate and manage scarce resources in such a way that satisfies as many needs as possible Like every other science subject, the reasoning procedure in Economics is methodological, its analysis is systematic, and the validity of its various theories can be tested (Yusuf, 2012). Furthermore, Economics as a subject provides training for students on how to make rational use of scarce resources to satisfy their unlimited wants, to build up theories and tools for economic analysis, provide rationale guide to firms and governments in allocating scarce resources, to understand and appreciate economic problems facing the society and suggest ways of rectifying them, help the planners to plan for economic development, helps to solve the fundamental problem of what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce and to appreciate Government's economic policies among others (Augustine 2010). It is a subject of direct utility which prepares a student for a wide

range of career options, ranging from business to government (Hall, 2013) such as in industries and other professional areas like Banking, Accountancy and Planning.

Mankiw (2004), wrote that studying Economics enables one to be a more knowledgeable participant in the modern economy, helping him/her to be a smarter consumer, producer and investor. In this line, Obemeata (2012) stated that Economics contributes to intellectual training as it has a great logic in it which helps connect learners to the essentials of everyday life and it is also concerned with almost tropical events such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and so on. Knowledge of Economics also deepens ones understanding of world events and of government policies, helping one to understand the limits of government actions (Hall 2013). Thus, Economics as a subject can help students in economic development. Despite these huge values of Economics, there seems to be poor achievement and disparity between male and female performance of secondary school students in the subject. This is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Comparison of Candidates Economics Performance on Gender Basis for the May/June 2009 - 2012 WASSCE in Nigeria

Years	Entries (Total Sat)					No. & % Passed at Credit Level and Above (1-6)					No. and % Failed (F9)				
	Male		Female		Total	Male		Female		Total	Male		Female		Total
	No	%	No	%	No. =T	No.	%	No.	%	No. & % =T	No	%	No	%	No. = T & %
2009	686701	54.05	583856	45.95	1270557	295329	23.24	282016	22.20	577345 (45.44)	152683	12.02	105242	8.28	257925 (20.30)
2010	658113	53.57	570288	46.63	1228401	352243	53.52	338706	59.39	690949 (56.25)	98430	8.01	65947	5.37	164377 (13.38)
2011	760268	53.77	653618	46.23	1413886	434082	57.10	407176	62.30	841258 (59.50)	101527	7.18	68337	4.83	169864 (12.01)
2012	835283	54.21	705619	45.79	1540902	442071	28.69	422202	27.40	864273 (56.09)	144670	9.39	87651	5.69	232321 (15.08)

Source: WAEC Statistic Division, Yaba, Lagos, 2016

From the table above, the range of credit passes of male and female students was 57.10% to 23.24% and 62.30% to 22.20% respectively from 2009 to 2012. Also, the number of male enrolments for the subject continues to increase over the period as shown in the table.

Gender gap in Economics as noted by Jensen and Owen (2013), is that the mainstream Economics curriculum excludes topics and methodology of interest to women. Other reasons for the gender gap in Economics classes are poorer Mathematics preparation of female students, poorer relative performance in Economics classes, and less overall interest in the topic due to different career aspirations, (Jensen & Owen, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

One of the problems that are of concern to the general public in Nigeria today is the gender gap in academic performance of students in schools. Observation from the West African Examination Council (WAEC) results analysis had shown that there's disparity between male and female performance. Conflicting evidences exist on gender differences and students' performance in Economics and most subjects of studies in schools. In some of the studies,

male students have been found to be more intellectually superior to the female while the reverse is the case with other studies. Among the few researches conducted on gender differences in academic performance, none of the researchers gave a conclusive answer to the problem and it appears that not much research focusing on gender difference in academic performance in Economics have been conducted especially in Oyo town, hence this study.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the performance of male and female Economics students.
2. There is no significant difference in the retention of Economics concepts by male and female students

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted pretest-posttest non-equivalent control group design. The population for the study consisted of secondary school male and female Economics students in Oyo town**,** Oyo State. The sample for the study consisted of 77 secondary school two (SS2) students from three schools in Oyo West Local Government Area (LGA). Oyo West LGA was randomly selected from the four LGA in Oyo town. Three schools were selected from Oyo West Local Government Area using simple random sampling technique. One class was selected in each of the sampled schools using simple random sampling technique. Economics Performance Test (EPT) on Tools for Economic Analysis was used for data collection. The EPT consisted of multiple-choice questions. The items/questions were adapted by the researcher from past WAEC question papers which cover the aspect of Economics tools. The test contained 25 multiple choice items with four options lettered A-D each. The 25 multiple choice items test were scored four percent each making a maximum total of 100%. The data collected were analysed using t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in male and female students' academic performance in Economics.

In testing this hypothesis, the post-test scores of male students were compared to the post-test scores of female students using t-test and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: T-Test Analysis of Economics Students' Test Scores

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	T	p-value
Male	32	28.22	7.38	75	0.270	0.013
Female	45	30.36	8.93			

ρ <0.05

The analysis above shows that t=0.270, ρ > 0.05. This implies that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of male and female Economics students.

Research Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the retention of Economics concepts by male and female students. In testing this hypothesis, the retention test scores of male students were compared to the retention test scores of female students using t-test and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: T-test Analysis of Retention test Scores

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	T	p-value
Male	32	31.81	8.29	75	0.25	1.54
Female	45	33.87	7.13			

$\rho < 0.05$

The analysis above shows that the t=0.25, $\rho > 0.05$. this implies that there is no significant difference in the retention of Economics concepts by male and female Economics students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the results of this study, it was found out that there was no significant difference in the performance and retention of male and female students in Economics. The study is in agreement with the findings of Akinbobola and Afolabi (2010) who carried out a research on constructivist practices through guided discovery approach. The study revealed that gender does not significantly influence students' achievement in Physics when the students are taught with guided-discovery. The finding is also in line with the findings of Okoro (2011) who discovered in his study that there was no significant gender difference in the post test achievement of the experimental group taught with the expository and guided discovery strategies in Biology. The findings are also in agreement with that of Nzewi (2010) who found out that females achieved as high as their male counterparts when given equal opportunities. This indicates that with the use of any good teaching strategy, male and female students will achieve equally. However, the findings of the study contradict the findings of Ekweoba (2014) which revealed a no significant interaction effect of modes of concept-mapping and gender on students' achievement in Economics. The results of this study also failed to validate the result of Olorode and Jimoh (2016) which revealed that female students gained more than the male students in Accounting when exposed to guided-discovery.

Limitation to the Study

The limitation to this study is that the researchers were not able to use single sex secondary schools due to the non-availability of single sex secondary schools in the study area.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that gender has no significant influence on secondary school students' academic performance. It was also concluded that gender has no significant effect on students' retention of Economics contents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Both male and female students should be given equal educational opportunities in an Economics class.

2. Teachers should always adopt teaching strategies capable of enhancing male and female Economics students' performance.

3. Educational planners, administrators and evaluators should supervise, monitor and co-ordinate the activities of schools to discourage gender stereotype activities like textbooks.

4. The Nigeria ministry of Education, Economics authors as well as Economics teachers should design Economics textbooks devoid of any gender – typical behavior or gender bias.

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