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PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT IN A NIGERIAN POLYTECHNIC: PERCEPTIONS OF ESTATE MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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Determinants of students' academic performance have continued to receive substantial consideration in the extant literature, and it remains a contested subject. Students' performance is influenced by different individual factors grouped under several themes, including school factors, teaching methods, assessment methods, lecturers, students' factors, and parental background. The influences of these factors are thought to vary from one academic environment to another. This study investigates estate management students' perceptions of predictors of academic attainment in Federal Polytechnic Ede, Nigeria, intending to identify critical areas that could inform reform. This study employs a quantitative research design to examine 35 individual factors under the six thematic categories earlier mentioned. All graduating students were examined, and a sample of 86 students was selected through purposive sampling. Descriptive statistics (mean score and standard deviation) were applied. The results revealed 23 out of the 35 individual factors as significant predictors of Estate Management students' academic attainment. A further analysis based on the thematic categories showed that assessment methods, lecturers and family background with mean values of 5.20, 4.74 and 4.67, respectively, are the top three thematic categories that predict Estate Management students' academic attainment. The paper concludes that there is a need to review the approach employed in imparting knowledge and assessment of Estate Management students. Improved lecturers' attitudes and assessment strategies are necessary to heighten the students' morale, which would, in turn, translate to better academic attainment.

Keywords: academic performance, Ede, graduating students, real estate

INTRODUCTION

Education provides the necessary knowledge and skills for future career success. Higher education plays a critical role in a country's economic development and serves as an interface between students and industries (Dahie et al., 2017). Real estate graduates' education has always been a primary concern for the profession's various stakeholders, including academic institutions, professional bodies such as the Nigerian Institution of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV) and industry employers. Academic institutions are expected to produce graduates capable of

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analysing and interpreting location and markets and finance, taxation, and law to acquire the skills necessary for local, regional, and international labour markets. Students' academic performance is the most appropriate criterion for determining the quality and efficacy of teaching and a crucial determinant in the quality of graduates created for industry employers (Peter et al., 2016). Low academic attainment and failure result in students dropping out of school or semi-qualified graduates, all of which undermine students' chances of getting hired and also, affect the standard of service provided to the employer.

Students' academic performance in tertiary educational institutions is declining (Hijazi and Noqvi, 2006). Many studies have looked into the influencing factors of students' academic accomplishment with various focuses. It is widely acknowledged that numerous individual factors influence students' academic performance. Individual factors have been broadly classified as academic or non-academic and grouped into several themes, including school environmental factors, teaching methods, lecturers, assessment methods, student personal characteristics and parental/family background. These factors are directly or indirectly associated with a student's academic achievement (Gajghat et al., 2017). There are many perspectives on the effect of these variables. Previous research shows that the opinions presented by numerous studies are contradictory. Some researchers argue that personal characteristics and socioeconomic background are more significant, while others argue that lecturers, school/environmental variables have a more significant impact on students' academic performance. Findings from earlier studies suggest that students 'academic success is likely to be affected by several factors. These factors are thought to vary from person to person and from one academic setting to the next. This study investigates perceptions of estate management students on the critical factors (both on individual and thematic categories) affecting academic attainment in Federal Polytechnic Ede, Nigeria intending to identify critical areas that could inform reform. This study adds to existing literature on academic performance in higher education from the perspective of Polytechnics in developing countries. The next section presents a review of literature on factors influencing students' academic achievements, followed by the methodology section. The subsequent section contains the findings and discussion, which is followed by a concluding remark.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted around the world to determine the factors that influence student academic performance. Various individual factors are broadly classified as intellectual and non-intellectual factors (Allen and Carter, 2007), academic factors and non-academic factors (Laurel et al., 2008), or internal and external classroom factors (Mushtaq and Khan, 2012). Lecturer competence, lecturing techniques and the quality of instruction materials are academic variables that have a significant positive effect on students' academic achievements (Yam and Rossini, 2012; Ganyaupfu, 2013; Enu and Akum, 2015). According to Ganyaupfu (2013) and Adediwura and Tayo (2007), a lecturer's ability to comprehend and transform knowledge, subject mastery, teaching skills, lecturer attitude and lecturer attendance are essential for effective teaching and students' academic performance. Kang'ahi et al. (2012) earlier attributed poor students' academic achievement to poor teaching styles. Also, Rasul and Bukhsh (2011) found that

changes in the pattern of question papers near examinations, unfair means in examinations, and a lack of proper guidance all have a significant impact on student performance. Muzenda (2013) reported that high teacher absenteeism hurts students' overall academic performance. Furthermore, Hayat et al. (2013) submitted that academic success was affected by the extent of students' participation in their studies, their studies' quality, their relationships with their peers, and their environmental indulgence. Bennett and Yalams (2013) found a positive and significant relationship between student's attendance, participation in the class and academic performance. Meanwhile, Zakaria et al. (2011) suggested that students who were given college accommodations had better academic performance than students who lived in private accommodations. In Dengra et al. (2013), extra-curricular actions, instruction strategies and class contact hours were all established as critical factors impacting students' academic attainments.

On the other hand, non-academic or external classroom factors include personal factors, financial factors, family background, parents' level of education and involvement (Laurel et al., 2008; Fan and Williams, 2010). In analysing the impact of factors such as peer pressure, school and family on students' academic success, Barry (2005) found that socioeconomic status is one of the main predictors of academic success. Okioga (2013) also indicated that socioeconomic background significantly impacted students 'academic success. In Bahar (2010), gender, family support and sociometric status were identified as crucial predictors of students' academic achievement. Kamau (2013) reported that the parent's education level, family size, family financial status, and type of family, whether cohesive or conflictive, had a significant relationship with students' academic performance while their marital status did not. The results of Kamau also showed that the parents' education level explained only 7 per cent of students' academic achievement. Moreover, Lee and Mallik (2015) claimed that entry qualification and age influenced students' academic performance. Ayodele et al. (2016) affirmed that the main factors impacting students' academic success are their passion an academic discipline, age and maturity. Olatunji et al. (2016) cited concentration, lack of reading habit and reading plan, fear, class size and peer group as the five most important factors impacting on students 'academic success in the discipline.

It is worthy to mention that research concerning students 'academic performance is extensive and ongoing. Within this body of research, limited studies have examined variables influencing academic attainment of real estate students in a number of institutions. In the international context, the studies of Allen and Carter (2007) and Huffman (2011) in the United States; Yam and Rossini (2012), Lee and Mallik (2015) provided valuable evidence from Australia. The efforts of Peter et al. (2016), Olatunji et al. (2016), Ayodele et al., (2016, 2017), Akinbogun (2018) and Ojetunde et al. (2020) are noteworthy in the Nigerian context. Findings from these representative studies suggest that academic success is affected by a variety of variables that differ from one academic environment to the next, from one group of students to the next, and also from one cultural setting to the next. Meanwhile, the preceding evidence indicates the presence of many studies and subject consistency over time, but with conflicting results about the factors affecting academic attainment. More so, the majority of research on factors influencing students' academic performance has primarily concentrated on universities and colleges (see also, Ganyaupfu (2013) in South Africa, Kanagi et al. (2015) in

Malaysia, Gajghat et al. (2017) in India, Ayodele et al., (2016, 2017), Ojetunde et al. (2020) in Nigeria. As a result, there is a scarcity of research on academic activities and student performance in the Polytechnics. This study adds to the existing literature on academic performance in higher education from the perspective of Polytechnics in developing countries. Ayodele et al. (2017) identified and categorised the various individual influencing factors into six themes: school factors, teaching methods, lecturers, assessment methods, student factors and family background as shown in Table 1. This current study employs the variables in Table 1 to assess the academic attainment of estate management students at a Nigerian polytechnic.

Table 1: Grouping of factors influencing students' academic achievements

Themes	Individual factor	Authors
School factors	The school's academic calendar Accommodation type and quality Conducive lecture halls, Sufficient lecture halls, The school's overall environment	Yeshmerbat et al. (2013), Adedapo et al. (2015)
Teaching methods	Integration of ICT into the classroom Student's participation in class Tutorials and seminars Excursions Contact hours Use of more practical than theories	Dengra et al. (2013), Oladokun and Ayodele (2015)
Lecturers	Scope and depth of the lecturers' knowledge Lecturers' accessibility Lecturers' commitment Lecturers' ability to clarify complex concepts Sufficiency/adequacy of lecturers Method/style of teaching	Newell and Archeampong (2003), Ganyaupfu (2013), Dengra et al. (2013)
Assessment methods	Fairness in-class assessments Grades reflecting the effort expended in studying Adequate instruction materials Sufficient time to learn and assimilate before being tested The lecturers appear to be more concerned in testing what is memorised than what is genuinely understood	Crews (2004), Oloyede and Adegoke (2007)
Students' factors	Inability to enrol in a desired course of study Age/ Maturity It is difficult to understand the courses that are being taught Study hours A thorough understanding of the field of study Passion for the course of study Participation in extra-curricular activities	Victor (2011), Gambo et al. (2012), Hayat et al. (2013), Dengra et al. (2013), Kanagi et al. (2015)
Family background	Parent's involvement in my studies Parents' occupations and educational backgrounds My position and the size of my family Availability of financial resources Family pressure to succeed in one's chosen course of study Family set-up/ background	Noble et al. (2006), Kyoshaba (2009), Okoiga (2013), Kanagi et al. (2015)

Source: Adapted from Ayodele et al. (2017).

METHODOLOGY

This study's target population consists of graduating real estate students of Federal Polytechnic Ede, South-western Nigeria. Graduating students were chosen as it is anticipated that they would have greater knowledge than students in lower grades. Their perception level would represent current realities, allowing them to provide more accurate answers to the research questions. The sample frame for the study consisted of all HND II real estate students in the institution referred to above. The study used a self-administered close-ended questionnaire to elicit the respondents' perceptions of the factors that affect their academic success. Extant literature was used to identify the variables influencing estate management students' academic achievement (see Table I). The variables are divided into six thematic categories: school factors, teaching methods, lecturers, assessment methods, students 'factors, and parental/family background. The respondents were requested to rate a set of established variables on each theme regarding how they affect their academic performance using a 7-point Likert scale (1-strongly disagree to 7-strongly agree). A 7-point Likert scale was employed to provide deeper insights on the question raised in line with earlier studies such as Ayodele et al. (2017). A total of 98 copies of questionnaires were administered to the respondents through purposive sampling, out of which 86 copies of questionnaires representing 87.76% response rate were retrieved and analysed using the mean score. The mean score for each item was determined and ranked. Furthermore, the significant levels of the items were determined using a 4.0 yardstick in line with earlier studies (Ikediashi and Okwuashi (2015); Ayodele (2017). Items with mean scores higher than four were considered significant (SS), while those that have lower were deemed non-significant (NS). The variables were further analysed by thematic areas and ranked according to the themes 'group mean. For the purpose of this study, weighted mean score is determined as follow:

$$\frac{1n1 + 2n2 + 3n3 + 4n4 + 5n5 + 6n6 + 7n7}{N} \quad \text{(i)}$$

Where:
n1 = number of respondents who answered strongly disagreed.
n2 = number of respondents who answered disagreed
n3 = number of respondents who answered somewhat disagreed
n4 = number of respondents who answered undecided
n5 = number of respondents who answered somewhat agreed
n6 = number of respondents who answered agreed
n7 = number of respondents who answered strongly agreed
N = total number of questionnaires retrieved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results and discussions of the study are presented in this section and are twofold. The first part focuses on individual factors influencing estate management students' academic attainment (Table 2). As shown in Table 3, the factors influencing the academic attainment of estate management students based on thematic areas were examined in the second part.

Table 2. Factors influencing the academic attainment of estate management students

s/n	Factors	Mean	SD	Rank	Remark
	School factors/environment				
1	School's academic calendar	4.47	4.38	16	SS
2	Accommodation type/quality	4.34	5.30	19	SS
3	Conducive lecture halls	2.86	4.07	34	NS
4	Sufficient lecture halls	2.58	3.97	35	NS
5	School's overall environment	3.91	4.32	24	NS
6	Family set-up/ background	5.31	4.38	7	SS
	Teaching methods				
7	Integration of ICT into the classroom	2.93	3.10	33	NS
8	Student's participation in class	4.96	4.86	11	SS
9	Tutorials and seminars	3.66	3.76	27	NS
10	Excursions	3.37	3.47	32	NS
11	Contact hours	5.03	4.89	10	SS
12	Use of more practical than theories	3.74	3.85	26	NS
	Lecturers				
13	Scope and depth of the lecturers' knowledge	4.52	4.36	14	SS
14	Lecturers' accessibility	4.21	4.18	21	SS
15	Lecturers' commitment	5.26	5.07	8	SS
16	Lecturers' ability to clarify complex concepts	4.32	4.26	20	SS
17	Sufficiency/adequacy of lecturers	4.86	4.70	13	SS
18	Method/style of teaching	5.40	5.06	6	SS
19	Fairness in-class assessments	5.68	5.33	4	SS
20	Grades reflecting the effort expended in studying	5.73	5.33	3	SS
21	Adequate instruction materials	4.50	4.41	15	SS
22	Sufficient time to learn and assimilate before being tested	4.46	4.32	17	SS
23	The lecturers appear to be more concerned in testing what is memorised than what is genuinely understood	5.65	5.30	5	SS
	Students' Factors				
24	Inability to enrol in a desired course of study	3.82	3.92	25	NS
24	Age/ Maturity	4.94	4.76	12	SS
25	It is difficult to understand the courses that are being taught	4.17	4.12	22	SS
26	Study hours	3.62	3.70	28	NS
27	A thorough understanding of the field of study	4.12	4.12	23	SS
28	Passion for the course of study	5.80	5.41	2	SS
29	Participation in extra-curricular activities	3.56	3.61	30	NS
30	Parent's involvement in my studies	3.60	3.71	29	NS
31	Parents' occupations and educational backgrounds	4.44	4.31	18	SS
32	My position and the size of my family	6.02	5.59	1	SS
33	Availability of financial resources	5.09	4.91	9	SS
34	Family pressure to succeed in one's chosen course of study	3.55	3.65	31	NS
35	Family set-up/background	5.31	5.01	7	SS

Source: Analysis of survey data, 2020.

Table 2 reveals that 23 of the 35 individual factors were significant predictors of Estate Management students' academic attainment at a 4.0 benchmark. The five most critical factors influencing students' academic attainment are the respondents' position/size of the family and passion for the course of study. Others are grades being a reflection of the effort expended in studying, fairness in class assessments, and the lecturers appear to be more concerned in testing what is memorised than genuinely understood (mean values of 6.02, 5.80, 5.73, 5.68 and 5.65, respectively). The first two critical factors are related to parental/family background and students' factor. This finding is congruent to the position of Barry (2005), Bahar (2010) and Okioga (2013) that personal characteristics and socioeconomic background have a more significant effect on students' academic attainment. This result is not surprising given that it is widely assumed that most families' cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds put pressure on their children to succeed in their chosen field because it is perceived as a source of honour among family members and friends. As a result, students are under much pressure to satisfy this societal and cultural need. Furthermore, given the current state of affairs in Nigeria's higher educational institutions, the reason for the responses regarding students' interest in the course of study as a critical influencing factor may not be far-fetched. Many undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions find themselves studying courses they never intended to study or have a passion for. However, they find themselves in those courses/fields for a variety of reasons. Moreover, the other three factors indicated by the respondents are related to the assessment methods. Thus, students consider the method of assessment as a critical factor that impacts academic performance. This finding is consistent with the assertion of Rasul and Bukhsh (2011). While this may not be surprising, most students believe that their academic grades should reflect their efforts in preparation for the examination. However, according to Ayodele et al. (2017), students often overestimate their capabilities because they misjudge their examination performance. As a result, the actual results often differ from the students' expectations. This could be attributed to the implicit nature of the grading criteria adopted by lecturers for assessment. Students' opinions about assessment have a significant effect on how and what they understand. Hence, more comprehensive assessment methods that enable students to have prior knowledge of the grading process and the lecturer's expectations for each question will enhance students' academic success.

Table 3. Influencing factors of estate management students' academic attainment (by thematic grouping)

s/n	Thematic Groups	Group mean	Group rank
1	Parental/family background	4.67	3
2	Students' factors	4.29	4
3	School factor/environment	3.63	6
4	Teaching methods	3.95	5
5	Lecturers	4.74	2
6	Assessment methods	5.20	1

Source: Analysis of survey data, 2020.

According to Table 3, the results of influencing factors based on thematic categories showed that assessment methods, lecturers, and parental/family

background are the three most critical thematic categories that predict estate management students' academic attainment, with mean values of 5.20, 4.74, and 4.67, respectively. According to the respondents, this result also reveals that the most significant academic-based variables affecting students' academic success are the assessment methods and lecturers. Ayodele et al. (2017) discovered that assessment methods and lecturers were two of the top three themes that significantly affected Nigerian university students' academic success. This finding emphasises the importance of paying close attention to the lecturer's behaviour and expectations. Lecturers' attitudes are vital for successful teaching, and assessment is invariably a crucial factor in motivating students to learn. Consequently, the need for improved lecturers' attitudes and assessment strategies in higher education institutions cannot be over-emphasised. Lecturers are responsible for creating an environment that promotes learning activities relevant to achieving the desired outcomes. One crucial strategy is to use assessment to engage students. Making classroom experiences more engaging can also serve to pique students' interest in academic excellence, assisting them in improving their overall performance.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore the significant factors that predict estate management students 'academic attainment in a Nigerian polytechnic. The study examined 35 individual factors under the six thematic categories, including school factors, teaching methods, lecturers, assessment methods, students' factors, and parental/family background. The results revealed 23 out of the 35 individual factors as significant predictors of estate management students' academic attainment. Further analysis of these factors based on the thematic categories revealed that assessment methods, lecturers and parental background are the three most critical thematic categories that predict estate management students' academic attainment. The findings have some important implications for real estate education. There is a need for higher institutions to adopt a variety of lecturing and assessment policies to improve students 'learning outputs. Grading standards should be made transparent and publicly accessible to promote the learning process and enhance academic outcomes. Students' anxiety will be reduced if they perceive the assessment as explicit and non-threatening. It is also critical to provide timely and accurate feedback that is related to the assessment indicators to promote students' engagement. Nonetheless, if students are not required to engage with the feedback, it will have little impact. As a result, activities that encourage students to reflect on their mistakes and better understand the lecturer's expectations must be developed. Lecturers' positive attitude combined with suitable teaching styles and regular and informative assessment feedback should significantly improve students 'academic achievements.

LIMITATIONS AND PATHWAY FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study only considered real estate students at one Polytechnic. Compared to existing related research, this study's sample size was relatively small (n= 86), making it difficult to generalise the findings to a larger student population and different programmes. Consequently, expanding the research to include a larger

sample size and participants from several academic institutions will strengthen the findings. Furthermore, future research could integrate more factors from academic institutions, individual students and socioeconomic dimensions to provide more detailed policy implementation outcomes.

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