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Students' Interest in Learning, Self-Motivation and Adult Students' Academic Commitment in Universities in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated how students' interest in learning and self-motivation influence adult students' academic commitment in universities in Cross River state. A descriptive survey design was adopted and the population of the study consisted of adult students aged 22 to 45 years in the multi-stage sampling techniques were employed to select 362 undergraduate students from two universities in the state. Data was obtained through a well validated questionnaire titled: Students' Interest, Self-Motivation and Academic Commitment Questionnaire (SISMACQ). The reliability index of the instrument obtained through KR-20 reliability method was .77. Two research questions guided the study and One-way Analysis of Variance was applied to analyze data collected from the respondents at .05 significance level. The results obtained from the data analyses revealed that students' interest in learning and self-motivation significantly influence adult student' academic commitment in the universities. It is therefore concluded that students' interest in learning and self-motivation are important variables influencing adult students' academic commitment. Thus, it was recommended among others that adult students should be encourage to develop high interest in learning and self-motivation in order to foster high and quality academic commitment in the universities.

Key words: Students' Interest in Learning, Self-Motivation, Adult Students, Academic commitment

Introduction

Academic commitment is one of the basic components of educational pursuit, especially in the university education and it plays crucial role in the overall educational processes. Research has it that academic commitment is important predictors of student retention, achievements and success (Van den 2012; Griep 2021). Academic commitment has been described as a force that binds an individual to a course of action of relevance to one or more targets/tasks (Meryer and Herscovitch, 2001). For Strydon et al. (2010); Human-Vogel and Rabe (2015) academic commitment is a state of psychological attachment to educational process in which students give their time, loyalty to its values and goals. Additionally, academic commitment is a notion of physiological commitment, task commitment, goal commitment, and identity-related commitment which contributes to students' academic success (Joel and Prakash, 2019). Academic commitment takes a pivotal role as consistent predictors of later achievements and student success (Van den, 2012).

Nigussie and Gita (2024) revealed that students' academic commitment mediated their growing academic resilience and academic performance. By implication, academic commitment informed how students regulate their abilities to successfully carry out their studies. It is plain that when students are committed to learning and other academic activities that they could benefit from what the education have to offer and acquire the needed knowledge and skills to succeed in the labour market. However, failure of students to commits to education activities would result in low retention in school. In addition, they will not develop themselves in obtaining learning goals, understanding and intellectual development which might later degenerate to unemployment. Research indicates that students' commitment towards academic work is a cornerstone to their academic success (Van den 2012). In universities in Cross River state, high students' commitment towards academic activities is crucial for achieving educational goals. However, several factors may in one way or the other influence students' ability to commit effectively to academic activities. Human-Vogel and Rabe (2015); Abyaa et al. (2019); Joel et al. (2019); AL-Qadri

et al. (2024) and other researchers assert that self- motivation, attitudes, interest, and other variables could influenced educational process and success. Hence, the present study explored how students' interest towards learning and self-motivation influence adult students' academic commitment in universities in Calabar metropolis. Understanding how these variables could influence adult students' academic commitment is imperative since academic commitment is one of the important indices of quality and effective educational system. The study is guided by the following research questions: how does students' interest in learning influence adult students' academic commitment? How does self-motivation influence adult students' academic commitment?

Theoretical Framework

To understand the link between the independent and dependent variables the study adopted social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1977). Social cognitive theory is a contemporary theory that stresses learning from the social environment (Schunk and DiBenedetto, 2023). Bandura's social cognitive theory explains human behaviour as a reciprocal interaction between personal factors, behavioural, social and environmental variables. By implication, the theory assumed that engagement in a given target behaviour is a function of individual, social and environmental factors. It therefore, means that, students' commitment to academic tasks is a function of personal, behavioural, social and environmental factors. The social cognitive theory is very useful in this study because it help in the understanding of the connection between learners' interest in learning, self-motivation and academic commitment.

Related Literature Review

Interest can be seen as an individual mental schema related to the interesting activity or object based on positive emotional experience and individual value system (Köller et al. 2001). The characteristic, interest, is a powerful motivational process that energizes learning and guides academic and career paths

(Renninger and Hidi, 2017). Interest is both a psychological state characterized by increased attention, effort, and affect, experienced in a particular moment, as well as an enduring predisposition to reengage with a particular object or topic over time. Students' interest in learning could most probably be a very powerful affective psychological trait and a very strong knowledge emotion as well as an overwhelming magnetic positive feeling, a sense of being captivated, enthralled, invigorated and energized to cognitively process information much faster and more accurately in addition to most effective application of psychomotor traits like self-regulatory skills, self-discipline, working harder and smarter with optimum persistence (Hidi and Renninger 2006; Kpolovie et al. 2014).

A study conducted to find out the relationship between students' interest and academic performance in secondary schools in South West of Nigeria revealed a significant relationship between students' interest in studying Biology and academic performance (Adekinle, 2016). Meanwhile, Perez-lopez and Ibarrondo-Davila (2020) concluded that learners with higher level of academic interest tend to posses higher academic performance. Mappadang (2022) confirmed that students' academic interest contribute to academic performance of Accounting students in the University.

Motivation is an inner feeling of an individual to complete a task or to perform a positive act. It is to satisfy human desire or to fulfill a need or to derive some other advantage out of such a task or an act. Motivation is an influential factor in the teaching-learning situations (Filgona et al. 2020). It is a meta concept with inherent elements such as academic engagement, persistence with assigned task to finish, interest in assigned activities, and self-determination (Nuraini et. al. 2020). Self-motivation is a general view about oneself across various sets of specific domains driven by self-knowledge and evaluation related actualizing carefully set goals and objectives. Self-motivation is an innate quality required for achieving set goals is important considering its potentials for success in human endeavors (Oladele, 2023). Self-motivation is believed to play a vital role in attaining academic success, as evidenced by its significant impact on goal-setting and action, perseverance, proactively, and time management (Justin,

2023). Self-motivation has been established to bring about high achievement which in turns leads to satisfaction (Moneva et al. 2020). When students are self-motivated, they are better able to prioritize their assigned and personal tasks, avoid or limit procrastination, and maintain a productive study routine. As a result, they are able to make efficient use of their time, allocating sufficient attention to academic responsibilities without neglecting social and personal growth. Developing effective time management skills by virtue of self-motivation, students are thus able to optimize their academic performance and better achieve success.

Sukor (2016) conducted an empirical study on motivation towards Food Science course among non Food Science students in a public local University. Considering six factors of student's motivation like self-efficacy, active learning strategies, Science learning value, performance goal, achievement goal and learning environment stimulation as predictors of students' academic achievement in Food Science course. A positive significant relationship score was obtained between overall motivations with academic performance. A study carried out to investigate students' factors such as interest, motivation, attitude and gender influencing academic performance in Biology in secondary schools within a state in south-south Nigeria, established that, students' motivation significantly influence their academic performance in Biology (Otobo, 2021).

A quantitative study using a rational survey model to explore the relationship between motivation, attitude, self-efficacy beliefs and academic achievement of secondary school students reports a strong positive relationship between motivation and students' academic achievement in Science subjects (Ince, 2023). This result indicates that motivation is an influential factor in teaching and learning process. The success of learning depends on high or low motivation of the students. It can drive learners in reaching learning goals. Therefore, learners' self-motivation can influence such learners' level of participation in educational or school activities. When students are motivated, they are more likely to engage in their

learning, take responsibility for their own progress and seek out resources and opportunities to improve their performance (Brubaker, 2023).

Another study demonstrates that there is a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between student motivation and student academic performance in government-aided secondary schools in Wakiso district (Namuzinger and Nabukeera, 2024). In another study, it was revealed that there is a significant correlation between attitude towards school and academic performance (Maseka et al. 2024). Moreover, a study demonstrated significant effect of self-motivation on academic performance of university students. It further pointed out that intrinsically motivated students view learning as an opportunity to satisfy their curiosity (Khan et al. 2024). From the empirical studies reviewed, it can be deducted that student interest in learning and self-motivation has significant influence on students' academic achievement.

Methods

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive survey design. The population of this study comprised both undergraduates and post graduate students between 22 and 45 years in the universities in Calabar metropolis of Cross River State. This population was considered appropriate for the study because their profiles can be easily retrieved in the universities archive. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study. The purposive sampling was used to pick Calabar metropolis and to select two universities in the metropolis namely: Cross River state university and university of Calabar. Thereafter, stratified sampling technique was used to divide the universities into strata based on faculties. Then simple random sampling technique was utilized to select eight departments across four faculties in both University of Calabar and University of Cross River State. The sample size for the study was three hundred and sixty-two (362) adult students in the selected universities. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled 'students' interest, self-motivation and academic commitment questionnaire (SISMACQ) with a estimated reliability index of .77. The researcher administered the questionnaire with

the aid of two research assistants. To analyze data gathered from the respondents, the researchers employed one-way analysis of variance statistical tool at .05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One:

How does students' interest in learning influence adult students' academic commitment? To answer this research question, students' interest in learning was broken down into three groups: low, moderate and high using the formula X ±1SD. Those below X -1SD were considered low, those between X – 1SD and X +1SD were classified as moderate and those above X +1SD were classified as high. The one-way analysis of variance was employed and result as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary Data and One-Way Analysis of Variance of the Influence of students' interest in learning on Adult Students' Academic Commitment

Categories	N	Mean	SD
Low	76	40.42	10.66
Moderate	44	46.41	10.61
High	242	46.45	14.10
Total	362	45.18	13.26

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F-cal	p-value
Between Groups	2180.804	2	1090.402	6.398*	.002
Within Groups	61273.163	395	170.677		
Total	7259.52	361			

*significant at 0.05 level of significance; Critical f = 3.00

The information as provided in Table 1 shows that students within the low category had the least mean of ($\bar{X}$ = 40.42; SD = 10.66). Followed by those within moderate category with mean of ($\bar{X}$ = 46.41; SD = 10.61), while the students within high category had the highest mean of ($\bar{X}$ = 46.45; SD = 14.10). This indicates that students with high interest towards learning are more academically committed than learners with low academic interest. The results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in Table 1 showed a calculated f-value of (F =6.389; p<.05). Since this value is greater than the critical f-value of 3.00, it is adjudged that there is a significant influence of learners' interest on academic commitment among young adult learners. To ascertain the extent of significant differences in the mean ($\bar{X}$) academic commitment

of the learners based on three interest groups, a Post Hoc test using Fisher's Least Significance Difference (LSD) test was performed as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Fisher's LSD Test of the influence of students' interest in learning on their Academic Commitment

Interest (I)	(J)	Mean difference (I-J)	Standard Error	p-value
Low	Moderate	-6.03*	1.72	.001
	High	-5.99*	2.47	.016
Moderate	Low	6.03*	1.72	.001
	High	.05	2.14	.983
High	Low	5.99*	2.47	.016
	Moderate	-.05	2.14	.983

*significance at .05 levels

Table 2 shows that there exist higher and significant mean differences in the academic commitment of adult learners within the low group of interest in learning. This implies that learners with moderate interest have a higher mean academic commitment that was statistically significant over those with low academic interest. In the same table, students with high academic interest have a higher and significant mean academic commitment over those with low academic interest (Mean difference = 5.99; $p<.05$) but there was no mean difference in the mean academic commitment of those in the high interest group and those in the moderate interest group.

Research Question Two:

How does self-motivation influence adult students' academic commitment? The independent variable in this research question is self motivation which was classified into three groups: high, average and low while the dependent variable is adult students' academic commitment. To answer this research question, One-way analysis of variance was used and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary data and One-way Analysis of Variance of the Influence of Self Motivation on Adult Students' Academic Commitment

Variables	N	Mean	SD

High	172	47.24	13.62
Moderate	54	45.70	12.82
Low	136	42.37	12.52
Total	362	45.18	13.26

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F-cal	p-value
Between Groups	1823.346	2	911.673	5.311*	.005
Within Groups	61630.621	359	171.673		.
Total	19999.3	361			

*Significant at .05; Critical F = 3.00

The results of the data analysis in Table 3 above showed that learners with high self-motivation has mean value of ($\bar{X}$ =47.24; SD = 13.62), followed by those with moderate self-motivation ($\bar{X}$ =45.24; SD = 12.82); while learners with low self motivation has a mean value of ($\bar{X}$ = 42.18; SD = 12.52). By implication, students with high self-motivation are highly committed academically than those with moderate self-motivation and low self-motivation. Also, result of the One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows that there is significant influence of self-motivation on adult students' academic commitment (F =5.311, p<.05). Since the calculated F-value is greater than the critical value of 3.00. To find out the direction of influence, a Post Hoc test using Fisher Least significant difference (LDS) test was performed and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Fisher's LSD Post Hoc Test of Self-Motivation Influence on Adult Students' Academic Commitment

(i) Group	(j) Group	Mean Difference (i-j)	Standard Error	p-value
Low	Moderate	-1.54	2.04	.452
	High	3.34	2.12	.114
Moderate	Low	1.54	2.04	.452
	High	4.88*	1.50	.001
High	Low	-3.34	2.12	.114
	Moderate	-4.88*	1.50	.001

*significant at .05 levels

Table 4 above reveals that students with high self-motivation showed a higher and significant academic commitment over those with low self-motivation, and significantly better committed than learners with moderate self-motivation.

Discussion

The result of research question revealed that students' interest significantly influence adult students' academic commitment. The implication of this finding is that students' interest is a function of students' academic commitment. It means that, students' own interest in a particular discipline or subjects directly influences their level of commitment to education activities. However, in a situation where the students show no interest in academic activities, commitment becomes low. Students' interest in learning plays a crucial role in students' academic attainment at all levels of the educational system. This finding aligns with the studies of Adekinle (2016); Perez-Lopez et al. (2020) and Mappadang (2022) which revealed a significant relationship between students' interest and academic performance and academic commitment of students in the university.

The result of research question two revealed that self-motivation significantly influence adult students' academic commitment. The implication of this finding is that self-motivation a powerful determinant of students' academic commitment. In general, when students are intrinsically motivated, they tend to be more committed to their studies, developed true interest in learning, which are significant to academic achievement. The finding of this study supports studies done by Otobo (2021) and Namuzinger and Nabukeera (2024) which affirmed a significant influence of self-motivation on academic performance.

Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to investigate the influence of students' interest in learning and self-motivation on adult students' academic commitment in universities in Calabar metropolis. Based on the results of the data analyses, it is concluded that students' interest in learning and self-motivation

important variables that contribute significantly to adult students' academic commitment in the universities.

Implications

The finding of this study shows that students' interest in learning and self-motivation significantly contribute to adult students' academic commitment. This implies that commitment to academic activities is achievable if variables like students' interest in learning and self-motivation are duly recognized by the teachers and other schools administrators. It is believed that the recognition of these variables would help the teachers to build, adopt and choose appropriate instructional material and methods of instruction that meet the needs of the students.

Recommendations

Since it has been confirmed that students' interest and self-motivation influence adult students' academic commitment in universities, the study made the following recommendation:

1. These students variables should be encourage and sustain by lecturers, universities management and other educational stakeholders.
2. Efforts should also be made by the lectures and other stakeholders in education to provide opportunities for individual students to participate in academic activities of their interest.

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