Evaluation of Determinants of Low Performance among Academically At-Risk Students in University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the determinants of low performance among academically at-risk freshmen in University of Ibadan. To achieve the purpose of this study three research questions were raised to direct the study. Literature review was done according to the variables under study. Ex-post Facto research design was adopted for the study. A sample of four hundred and twenty-five (425) undergraduate at-risk students was selected for the study. The selection was done through the simple sampling technique. The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The instrument was subjected to validation by using test-re-test method and by experts in measurement and evaluation, University of Ibadan. The reliability estimate of the instruments was established through test-retest reliability method. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and Regression Analysis were the statistical analysis technique adopted to answer the research questions under the study. The results of the analysis revealed that, all the independent variables were significantly the determinants of low academic performance. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that the issue of admitting students on catchment area and educationally less disadvantage area should be cancelled because majority of the students at-risk are in the category of these two conditions. Students should be admitted on merit alone. Therefore, the study conclude that all the independent variables are germane to low academic performance among at-risk freshmen of university of Ibadan.

Keywords: Academic, At-Risk Students, Determinants, Evaluation, Low, Performance

Introduction

Academic at-risk students in University of Ibadan are the students who escape narrowly of being withdrawn at the end of the session due to low academic performance in their academic performance. These are the students who made Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) below 1.5 or between 1.00 and 1.5. The hallmark of education for any student that is exposed to teaching-learning process is to perform excellently well. It is believed that any student who has enough requirements for the chosen career/profession in the chosen university is supposed to pass very well after exposure to the prescribed courses. At University of Ibadan, there are certain minimum

requirements that individual must possessed before he/she is given admission. They are five-credits/distinction in senior school certificate examination certificate or the mixture of credits and distinction in 5 subjects in one sitting or 6 credits/distinction at two sitting respectively, secondly, ability to score 200 marks in unified tertiary matriculation examination (UTME) being conducted by Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB). In addition, the person must be able to attain the minimum age of 16years. It is the belief of the researcher that if the candidate is admitted into the University of Ibadan and the person is able to meet the minimum requirement as it is stipulated by the university without any waver, the individual student should be able to pass very well without any problem. However, the reverse is the case at the end of every session, the university did record attrition and some students at-risk due to poor performance at the end of the session. At the end of every session not less than 3 to 5 percent of the freshmen are being withdrawn due to low academic performance and not less than another 5 to 6 percent students are at-risk students in University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria (University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Admission office Annual Bulletin).

At the end of every session, the freshmen in the University of Ibadan are always seen running from pole to pillar thinking that they might be withdraw from the programme, wearing long face and seeking for assistance in order not to be withdrew from the university. At this time around the researcher observed that the joy of getting admission into the university get vanished and individual now face reality of life and their studentship now hang in the balance.

The researchers due to work experience and being a level and programme coordinator for many years as an undergraduate mentor were able to understand this scenario. The researcher observed some factors that are presumed to be responsible for student at-risk as follows:

 a. Poor entry qualification,
 b. problem of curriculum, wrong career choice,
 c. wrong admission procedure,
 d. lack of preparatory class,
 e. underutilization of college counsellor and
 f. lack of motivation on the part of the parents to the students.

There are some other factors that could lead to students at-risk but this study is set to address the above factors in this study. In this study the entry qualification has to do level of performance of individual in the senior school certificate examination, performance in unified tertiary matriculation examination and minimum of 16 years of age (Abdullah & Mirza, 2018). It is the believe of the researcher that if the individual student that is able to pass SSCE, UTME and he/she has attained minimum of 16 years of age and get admitted into the university there would not be any reason for any student to be at-risk of being withdraw from university due to poor or low academic performance. The students who are at risk cast aspersion on the part of WAEC/NECO and JAMB if they failed to perform up to expectation in the university examination at the end of their first session. Cast aspersion in the sense that these three public examining bodies are not

measuring what they supposed to measure (Ajogbaje, 2011). Any test items prepared in measuring SSCE and UTME are reliable and valid and individual students genuinely passed it without being assisted by anybody either in passing SSCE and UTME there would not be any cause for them to fail university examination and that individual student is 16years of age and above (Adewale & Adhuze, 2014). The assumption of the researcher is that for any candidate to be able to meet condition of entry qualification such candidate should be able to pass excellently well at the end of the first year and all other sessions respectively.

According to the researcher one of the major factors that could lead to student at-risk problem is the problem of curriculum. In most cases the curriculum in use in Nigeria educational system is linear in native. Linear in the sense that the curriculum in use at secondary school level does not prepared students for tertiary education level. For instance, the mathematics curriculum at SSCE level has no link with tertiary education mathematics curricular be it in Nigeria's Certificate Examination (NCE) or at National Diploma level (ND) or university level/degree certificate mathematics curricular (Okobiah & Okorodudu, 2004). The mathematics curriculum at SSCE level can never be found at NCE or B.Ed mathematics programme, meaning there is no place where teachers that are teaching mathematics in secondary school are being exposed to what they supposed to teach except the one they are exposed to when they are doing their secondary education (Nwachukwu, 2007). The researcher is very versed in mathematics that is why the researcher is able to point out this anomaly using mathematics curricular, that there is no link between SSCE Mathematics curriculum and tertiary institution mathematics curriculum. What the researcher's opinion is that secondary School subjects curricular are not spiral in nature to tertiary institution curricular (Biggs, Kember& Leung, 2001). Therefore, since the curricular at secondary school level is at variance with tertiary institution an average student who did not wake up in time may not be able to pass very well as expected in the tertiary institution programme.

Another factor that comes to mind is the issue of wrong career choice. Majority of the students either through imitation of their peer group in choosing career that their academic capability cannot cope with and this led them to student at-risk grade (Pasila, Elo & Kaariainen,2017 and Lee & Kim, 2015). While some due to prestige and honour attached to some profession choose such profession without knowing the rigour of academic required to survive the course or due to their level of unseriousness by handling the chosen career with levity hands (Liaw, Wu, Chow, Lim & Tan 2017). Before such students that found themselves in this kind of mess get to know what befall them they are already student at-risk.

College counsellors are not available in some Universities and where the college counsellors are available the students do not know their usefulness. Majority of University freshman do not know the importance of the university counsellor (Essuman, 2007). The college counsellor is academic social and moral mentor to the students. But majority of university students see them as busybody who wish to know the secret of all students - that is ready to know their

secret and what they are passing through in their academic pursuit in the university (Mehmood, Rashid & Azeem,2011). Not until when they are at-risk before they get to know that college counsellor are meant to help them resolve their academic problem and help them out before the problem blown out of proportion. Some of the functions of college counsellor is to guide and guard the students right, expose students to university life, educate them how to do private study, prepare for test and university examination, how to handle assignment and not to procrastinate on what needs to be done at one time or the other (Adebowale, 2011).

Furthermore, admission problem is also one of the major problems or determinants of students at-risk due to low performance at University examination. Majority of the students that are at-risk due to low academic performance have been looking for admission for at least 3 sessions without success (Adeniyi & Taiwo, 2011). These set of students have in mind the course they want to read and they have been trying it year-in-year-out without success after possessing the rightful requirement to get admission (Afemikhe, 2008). According to Agboola& Ofoegbu (2010), they discovered that during their gap year they have studied what programme the university is not having enough candidates for every year of conducting admission exercise knowing fully that they have the admission requirement and having waited for admission in their area of interest without success, they will just enter for one of the programmes that are available. After the admission, the individual will just discovered that what the course entails is not in their own interest and as a result he/she cannot meet the demand the programme in which the admission is given and the resultant effect is inability to pass very well. Also, during the gap year (the period stayed at home seeking for admission) majority of the students are already relax and the seal for academic exercise is no longer there (Adeniyi & Taiwo, 2011).

One other major problem is the problem of lack of preparatory class. In some advanced countries when a student fails to cope with a chosen profession, such student may take a permission or excuse him/herself from such programme without forfeiting his/her admission and such student will go and attend preparatory class where such student will be exposed to what he/she is likely to come across in his/her chosen profession (Jiao, 2013). The type of lecturers and what the departmental staff will be expecting from such students (Kwenda, 2011). A situation where this facility is not available the students are likely be at risk of not performing well (Martha, 2010). Finally, some students are not motivated from any quarters either by their parents, society, religious organization and even community where the candidate comes from (Amrai, Motlag, Zalani &Parhon, 2011). Instead criticism of telling such student that when your colleagues are reading medicine, law, or engineering it is education course you are able to get in the university to read (Arbabisarjou, Zare, Shahrakipour & Ghoreishinia, 2016 and Alderman,2004). This kind of discouragement words could lead students to at-risk by performing below expectation.

Many people might have work on students at-risk, but to the best of the researcher's knowledge no one has ever combined the factors considered in this study. The researcher taught it

wise that if this problem is not attended to on time it could lead to half-baked graduates ending up by getting third class degree certificate which cannot earn the individual job nor be able to use such certificate to pursue postgraduate programme.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to showcase the determinants of low performance among academically At-Risk students in University of Ibadan, Ibadan. The study is designed to examine the pattern of relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. It also meant to determine the composite effect of entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation on the part of the parents to the students on students at-risk in University freshmen. Finally, it is meant to determine the relative contribution of each of the independent variables on students at-risk among the university of Ibadan freshmen.

Research Questions

The following research questions guide the course of this study. The instrument that was used for this work shall therefore be designed to answer the following questions.

1. Are there any relationships among the independent variables (entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation and dependent variable (students at-risk) among the university of Ibadan freshmen?
2. What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?
3. What is the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

Methodology

Descriptive research design of ex-post facto type was employed to investigate the relationship that exists among the entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation on the part of the parents to the students (predictor variables) and students at-risk among the university of Ibadan freshmen (criterion variable). The population for this study consists of the students who enrolled at the Universities of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria from 2014/2015 session to 2018/2019 session who are students at-risk for five sessions. From this population, records on performance in public examinations from random sample of 517 candidates were obtained from University of Ibadan admission office and Academic Record Office using predetermined criteria such as age, UTME score and SSCE result by WAEC / NECO. The sample consisted of 149 males and 276females. The average age of the participants is 18.63 years and with standard deviation of 2.96 years.

The first-year students were considered in this study because differences in performance are usually more noticeable early in the course than in the final year. Data were collected from the admission offices and academic record office of the selected Universities. The data were collected on the basis of the subgroups involved in the study. The subgroups were male and female and the age of candidates that gained admission on the basis of possession of minimum of five or six credit passes at one or two sittings in the WASSCE and SSCE and that had enrolled as a fresh students in any of five sessions and had CGPA between 1.0 and 1.5 in Universities of Ibadan. The data for this study were collected using a questionnaire that was divided in to 7 sub sections. The instrument was designed by the researcher in line with variables of the study. The first section is the demographic section followed by section B which is known as curriculum problem, followed by section C which is known as wrong career choice, followed by section D which is known as admission problem, followed by section E which is known as lack of preparatory class, followed by section F which is known as underutilization of college counsellor and finally followed by section G which is known as lack of motivation.

Each of the subsection contains 12 items each. The reliability coefficient of the instrument is 0.87 using Cronbach alpha. The data on entry qualification and CGPA of the students at-risk were obtained from university of Ibadan Admission and Academic Record Office as earlier stated. The other data were collected from the selected random students who were at-risk of being withdraw from the University of Ibadan due to low academic performance and later merged with entry qualification and CGPA. The data were then analyzed using simple correlation and multiple linear regression analysis. The results are as presented below.

Results

Research Question 1: Are there any relationships among the independent variables (entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission problem, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation) and dependent variable (students' at-risk academic performance) among the university of Ibadan freshmen?

The result from Table1 depicts the test of correlations among independent variables (entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation and dependent variable (Grade Point Average (GPA)) among at-risk students in university of Ibadan.

Table1: Summary of Test of significant Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables (Cumulative Grade Point Average) of the Respondents

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Entry Qual.	1.000							
Curriculum Prob.	.346**	1.000						
Career Choice	.333**	.354**	1.000					
Admission Prob.	-0.065	.170*	0.077	1.000				
Preparatory Class	.560**	.664**	.562**	.266**	1.000			
College Counsellor	.354**	.911**	.565**	.184*	.655**	1.000		
Motivation	.603**	.856**	.383**	.158*	.635**	.795**	1.000	
Academic Perf.	.359**	.807**	.695**	.163*	.620**	.909**	.670**	1.000
Mean	31.32	28.92	31.26	26.02	37.27	36.04	35.99	34.75
Standard deviation	3.08	4.59	3.26	3.55	3.45	5.16	4.36	4.59

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table1 shows Mean, Standard Deviation and zero order correlation among the variables. It was observed that there was significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (CGPA of At-risk Students) in the following order of magnitude: college counsellor (r = 0.909, P<.05), curriculum problem (r = 0.807, p < 0.05), career choice (r = 0.695, p < .05), motivation (r = 0.670, p < 0.05), preparatory class (r = 0.620, p < 0.05), entry qualification (r = 0.359, p < 0.05) and admission problem (r = 0.163, p < 0.05).

Research Question 2: What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

Table 2: Joint Effect of the Independent variables on Dependent Variable

R	.948
R Square	.899
Adjusted R Square	.894
Std. Error of the Estimate	1.45796

ANOVA REGRESSION

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3002.87	7	428.982	53.19	.000(a)
Residual	3370.98	418	8.065		
Total	6373.85	425			

Table 2 shows that there was joint effect of the independent variables (mass-media, family factor, peer factor, self-concept and emotional deprivation) on At-risk students among university of Ibadan freshmen; R = 0.948, p <.05. The table further reveals 89.4% (Adj. R^2 = 0.894) of the variance in the At-Risk student's academic performance of the university of Ibadan freshmen were accountable for by the linear combination of the independent variables. The ANOVA results from the regression analysis shows that there was significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables; $F_{(7, 418)}$ = 53.19, P<0.05.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

Table 3: Relative Effect of the Independent Variables on the Dependent Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-2.714	1.663		-1.632	.105
Entry Qualification	.328	.060	.219	5.465	.000
Curriculum Problem	.615	.093	.600	6.619	.000
Career Choice	.517	.056	.374	9.205	.000
Admission Problem	.091	.035	.072	2.558	.011
Preparatory Class	-.279	.060	-.215	-4.639	.000
College Counsellor	.465	.069	.527	6.744	.000
Motivation	-.430	.066	-.413	-6.537	.000

Table3 above shows that seven independent variables showed relative contribution to students' At-risk academic performance of the university of Ibadan freshmen. The variables include the following: entry qualification (β =0.219, t = 5.465, p<0.05); curriculum problem (β = 0.600, t = 6.619, P<0.05),career choice (β = 0.374, t = 9.205, P <0.05), admission problem (β =0.072, t = 2.558, p<0.05), preparatory class (β = -0.215, t = 4..639, p<0.05), college counsellor(β =0.527, t = 6.744, p<0.05) and lack of motivation(β = -0.413, t = 6.537, p<0.05). It was observed that curriculum problem was the most potent contributor to student's At-risk academic

performance, that is ($\beta = 0.600$, t = 6.619, P<0.05) while lack of motivation was the least ($\beta = - - 0.413$, t = 6.537, p<0.05) potent among the predictor variables.

Discussion of Findings

In response to the research question one on the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable, it showed that there was significant positive correlation between the independent variables with academic performance of students At-risk among university freshmen in University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. It was found that there was reasonable positive relationship between entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation and academic performance of students At-risk among university freshmen in university of Ibadan.

Several studies (Adewale & Adhuze, 2014; Afemikhe, 2011; Abdullah, & Mirza, 2018) have shown that poor or low academic performance is caused by the improper entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation, Alderman (2004); and Okobiah and Okorodudu (2004) maintain that high levels of students' academic performance may not be guaranteed where entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivationare defective or not available and not adequate. The assertions of Jiao (2013); Arbabisarjou, Zare, Shahrakipour, and Ghoreishinia (2016) and Kwenda (2011) further support the view that a entry qualification and faulty curriculum and school facilities were significantly related to students' poor academic achievement. They also asserted that unavailability of college counsellor and wrong career decision making among other factors contributed to students' low academic performance.

In response to the research question which asks whether there is any joint effect of the independent variables on poor academic performance of students at-risk among university of Ibadan freshmen. The result shows that there was joint effect of the factors (entry qualification, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, admission procedure, lack of preparatory class, underutilization of college counsellor and lack of motivation) on poor academic performance or low CGPA. This leads to the fact that the independent variables accounted for 89.4% of the variance in the poor performance of students at-risk (unadjusted $R^2 = 0.894$). This joint relationship is also shown by the Table2 to be significant ($F_{7/418} = 53.19$, p <0.05). Based on this, it can be inferred that the joint effects of all the independent variables on poor academic performance of students At-risk among the university of Ibadan freshmen is significant.

The result of the third research question on the relative effect of each of the independent variable has also been significant. The general literature and the global studies experiences emphasize that low academic performance stories rest on both systemic and specifically local

elements. The low or poor academic performance initially addresses a well-understood local need and responds to significant local demand. The poor academic performance itself is largely locally derived and is led, nurtured, and often protected by leaders who are less charismatic, less inventive, and unable to build political coalitions to support and shelter the scaling up good academic performance. Mehmood; Rashid and Azeem (2011) identified some factors critical to the success of innovative educational institution-community partnerships. Some of the factors are: availability of college counsellor, good entry qualification, motivation and good career decision making, organizational compatibility, and simplicity. Mercanlioglu (2010) discovered that innovative curriculum, strict admission policy and preparatory are essential for the long-term success of good academic performance in any given programme. This finding is further corroborated by the study of Kwenda (2011); Alderman (2004); Nwachukwu (2007) and Adebowale (2011) who found that the above variables have significant effect on poor academic performance among students at-risk in university of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Conclusions

The seven independent variables explored in this study could be used to predict and facilitate student's at-risk academic performance among the university of Ibadan freshmen. Students at-risk academic performance stems from a post pourri of factors some of which have been studied in this work. The study reveals that a student may have more than one reason for poor or low academic performance and that a quick intervention will lead to the identification of the factors responsible appropriately inform the solution required. The model from this study is tenable in explaining the significant predictors between independent variables and dependent variable with College counsellor being the most potent factor followed by, curriculum problem, wrong career choice, lack of motivation, lack of preparatory class, entry qualification and finally the admission problem. This indicates that, parents, education stake holders and curriculum planners should not toy with the future of the children, adequate concern must be shown and students must be encouraged to be committed to their studies so that after basic education, many of the transiting students will be able to perform well and the problem of students At-risk of low/poor academic performance will completely be eradicated and good moral standard will be uplifted. Only this can guarantee the nation the expected development and growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings study, the following recommendations are made:

1) The parents apart from providing logistics to their children they must learn how to praise their children on their academic performance and also ensure to encourage them to do better.
2) The curriculum planners should avoid linear curriculum and change completely to spiral curriculum for continuity of learning and enhancement of knowledge.

3) The issue of admitting students on catchment area and educationally less disadvantage area should be cancelled because majority of the students at-risk are in the category of these two conditions. Students should be admitted on merit alone.

4) The university must as matter of urgency to introduce college counselor's office in each faculty to assist students to know what is required to pass each course creditably well. The counsellor is to be properly trained.

5) Age of the students is a significant predictor of academic performance; the researcher observes that the younger students are less serious and majority of them fall below the expected academic attainment expected of them.

6) Parents and peers should not be allowed to intervene in the choice of career of the individual student.

7) Finally, based on the findings, discussion and conclusion above, the researcher, hereby recommended that parents should monitor the behaviours of their children, check excesses of their children, give them good moral support and upbringing. Parents are advised to visit the schools of their children to know how they are behaving.

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