

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND INTEREST IN ECONOMICS AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA: A REVIEW.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the students' perception and interest in economics at high school level using questionnaire. One of the main aims of education in a dynamic society should be to educate students for economic efficiency. Such economic education is very important and necessary for a developing like Nigeria, which aspires toward economic advancement. Therefore, this research project was carried out to assess student's perception and interest in economics at high school level. The study was necessary so as to emphasize the importance of economic education. The study was also based on the nature of students' interest in economics, the relationship between the nature of students' interest in economics and their perception, some environmental and educational factors which may affect their interest with respect to other school subjects, the nature of preference that students have for economics relative to other schools subjects. The results of the analysis proved that perception and interest in economics as a subject has a highly significant effect on the students' and right across all models.

Keywords: Perception, interest, economics, students

1.0.INTRODUCTION

In most cases, studying perception and interest of students in Economics seems to be difficult task. This stems from the fact that these two factors (perception and interest) have different meanings. According to (Wikipedia 2022; Bernstein, 2011) perception is not only the passive receipt of these signals but it is also shaped by the recipients learning, memory, expectation, and attention. Perception can also be defined as the categorization, interpretation analysis, and integration of stimuli, from our sensory organs. This means that a student perception of student implies his or her being able to visualize and at the same what he/she has seen. Oxford advanced learners dictionary (2006) defines perception as the capability to comprehend the true nature of something. The study of perception dates back in the history of education, a model of perception in which people put together the information contained in a target and a situation to form perception of ourselves and others based on social categories Alan and Gary (2011). There are many approaches towards the perceptual phenomenon. These include physiological (employing neurophysiological mechanism)

gestalt (using hypothetical central forces), behavioral (stressing the learned nature of perceptual behavior. In education systems around the world, the use of tests is increasing, supposedly to measure students' level of knowledge and skills. The Gestalt theory of perception emphasized form, both in psychological phenomenon and in nature generally form is a fundamental law; it is the way things appears to the perceiver.

The feeling that someone have when he/she wants to know or learn more about something or somebody is referred to as interest Oxford advanced learners dictionary (2006). The students who have high interest in studying the subject stand the chance of achieving trade and specialization and maximum industrialization and proper diversification of the economy. Hence there is need for economic education for every citizen; this will help developing countries and other countries of the world to be good producers, good consumers and good spenders. Some of the factors discovered which has been militating against the successful learning and teaching of economics includes the following; lack of improved instructional materials by the teacher as well as lack of

use of the library. Shortage of economics teacher and some educational and environmental factors such as parental influence militates against its success. Pritchard (1936) studied the relative popularity of high school subjects among over 8000 pupils. Each of the students was given a list of subject and asked to cross out the ones he/she did not like. It was noted that they students felt the need for variety and wanted everything linked up with everyday life. Parental influence on students interests have been obtained in several studies Medinnus (1962) studied the development of parents' attitude toward education scale. Hence the influence of parents of middle and upper status were much more on the decision taken by their students in schools regarding the subjects they were doing and the career that should come out of these, while parents of lower status often regarded the school with suspicion and considered education as essentially unprofitable. The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of high school students' interest in economics and their perception of the subject.

2.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The South Eastern Nigeria is an area covering about 76,358 km² east of the lower Niger and South of the Benue valley. The region is located between latitudes 4° 47' 35" N and 7° 7' 44" N, and longitudes 7° 54' 26" E and 8° 27' 10" E of Nigeria and is made up of five (5) States namely; Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia, Anambra, and Imo (Okoli et al.,2001)

2.1. Data requirement and sample collection

Eight high schools were used for the study comprising three boys' schools, four girls' schools, and one mixed school. Students in high school one to three were used as the subjects; a population of one hundred and fifty students was involved in this research work. Twenty students were selected randomly from each of the schools chosen.

2.2. Research Instrument

This research work utilized questionnaire as its measuring instrument, containing seven questions was distributed to the principals, teachers, and students. The questions were carefully structured in such a way that the respondents were only expected to tick/against their choices. The questionnaire was divided into five sections A, B, C, D, and E according to the variables for the research. Section 'A' was designed to get the subjects personal data; such as school, class, and sex. Section 'B' was designed to determine the type of interest held by the respondents. Section 'C' was designed to determine the perception of the respondents toward economics. Section D' was designed to establish the validity of the perception and interest expressed by the respondents. Section 'E' deals with the factors that may affect and influence the type of interest in economics, formed by the students.

2.3. Administration of the Instrument

Table 2.1 shows the number of questionnaire administered to the students and their responds

Number Of Questionnaire Administered	Number Of Questionnaire Returned	Number Of Questionnaire Found Valid
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180	150	150
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(Sex boys 70, girls 80) Total =150

The students were required to read and fill the questionnaires on the day each school was visited. The analysis recorded frequencies of responses to each item of the questions. Such frequencies and their percentages were used and determined the popularity, significance of the issue raised in the questionnaires.

2.4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following points were taking into consideration; any percentage below 50 is an indication of rejection, any percentage of 50 and above denotes approval also the analysis was based on the 150 valid responses from both male and female students.

Table 2: Number of interest responses of students and the percentages

TYPES OF ATTITUDE RESPONSES	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGES
Like	126	84
Dislike	24	16
Total	150	100

Table 2 shows a high positive interest response of students, 84 % of the 150 students indicated that they liked economics while 16 % indicated that they dislike economics. In numerical strength, the number of high-interest responses far exceeds those with low-interest responses by 102. It will be concluded that the hypothesis is accepted and one can safely note that the number of students with high interest in economics far exceeds those with low interest.

Table 3: Interest responses of male and female students compared and their percentages

TYPES OF INTEREST RESPONSE	Like	Dislike	Total	Percentages	
Number of male responses	60	10	70	40	6.7
Number of female responses	70	10	80	46.7	6.7
Total	130	20	150	100	

The result of table 3; shows that 70 male and 80 female responded to the questionnaire. Hence 53.3% of the females recorded high interest in economics while 47.7% of the boys indicated interest. 6.7% of both the girls and boys indicated that they dislike economics. From the outcome, the second hypothesis is rejected, and hence the girls exhibited slightly higher interest than their male counterparts.

The result of the perceptive and interest responses of students on whether they understand economics and economic textbooks and percentages outcome reveals that out of 130 students studied, 73.3% of them indicated they understood economics and economic

textbook. However, 26.7% of them indicated that they do not understand economics and the textbook they use in the study of economics.

The responses of students about the attitude of their parents and guardians to them because of economics

The result obtained because of the attitude of parents and guardians towards economics shows that 68.7 % of the students like economics because of the influence of their parents or guardians. 31.3 % of the students do not have any parental influence. Students with high-interest responses indicated that their parents are happy because they study economics. However; the interest responses of students on their teacher’s influence via the use of instructional materials and personality, shows that 83.3 % of the 150 student indicated that they were not taught with instructional materials only 16.7 % of them indicated that they were taught with one or two types of instructional material. 60 % of them indicated that they like their teachers while 40 % indicated that their teachers had no influence on them. The results pointed out to the fact that the role of some economic teachers, their methods, academic competence, and personality are highly questionable.

Table 4: Interest Responses of Students about Their Academic Performance in Economics and Their Occupational Aspirations for Studying Economics

TYPES OF INTEREST RESPONSE	Like	Dislike	Total	percentages	
Academic Performance	135	15	150	90	10
Occupational Aspiration	140	10	150	93.3	6.7

The results of table 4, shows that 90% of the 150% students passed their economics examinations. 93.3% of the students indicated that they liked economics because of its utility in terms of job opportunity, while 6.7% do not connect their study of economics with the type of work they will do after school.

Table 5: Interest Responses of Students about the Use of the School Library in Their Study of Economics

TYPES OF INTEREST RESPONSE	Number of responses	Percentages
Like	15	10
Dislike	135	90
Total	150	100

The outcome reveals that 90% of the 150 students were not influenced by the use of the library in their study of economics, 10% of them indicated that they had a form of assistance in using the library. It is quite obvious that each of these factors play a vital role in shaping the student's interest in economics. Therefore, the hypothesis that some educational and environmental factors affect the students’ interest is accepted.

3.0.CONCLUSION

This research project which is concerned with the assessment of high school students’ interest and perception in economics reveals that most of the students have high interest in economics. Consequently, the students showed positive perception in relation to studying the subject. The study showed high-interest responses to such factors as mentioned earlier as parental influence on the students, wealth aspiration of students that study the subject, and academic performance of the students. Despite these factors which determined their high interest in economics, a lot still remains to be done to further raise and sustain the high interest of students in economics. This research also showed low-interest responses on these factors such as Lack of the use of instructional materials by their teachers, lack of the use of library, and no excursion to economic institutions. The following suggestions will be of great assistance for further studies; the research should be repeated using wider population from more regions of the country; the type of economic concept and attitudes which citizens of the country should share. Finally; training more economics teachers, restructuring the economics syllabus, use of instructional materials by teachers of economics, and the use of library

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