

Postgraduate Students' Economic Status for Academic Performance in University of Port Harcourt

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Abstract

The study examined postgraduate students' economic status for academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The research adopted descriptive design. The population of the study comprised all the 1320 postgraduate students of 2022/2023 academic session. The sample of 235 student respondents was drawn through stratified sampling technique. Postgraduate Students' Economic Status for Academic Performance Questionnaire (PSESAPQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by experts in test and measurement. The following reliabilities were determined through Cronbach method. Postgraduate Students' Economic Status for Academic Performance was 0.82. Out of 235 copies of questionnaire administered, 230 copies were properly filled and retrieved. The research questions were answered using mean, standard deviation (Sd) and rank order statistics while hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test statistics with criterion mean of 2.50. The findings among others showed that all the items in table 1 were accepted as the extent poor remuneration negatively influence postgraduate students' academic performance and there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. The researcher concluded that components of economic status (poor remuneration and cost of living) are possible factors that negatively influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. It was recommended that government should adequately remunerate the employees for academic performance.

Key Words: Postgraduate, economic, status, performance, residence.

Introduction

Education is an essential tool for personal, social and economic development. Every country, including the developing ones believes education to be a vehicle with which they can use to achieve their manpower needs. The purpose of education in most developing nations like Nigeria has been conceived and perceived as that of developing the individual and the nation at large. Educational revolution is now the new economic order with the recognition that knowledge and intellect are the critical ingredients in economic equation.

The recent focus on Postgraduate students' economic status has been a major factor for globalization of business, competition and ability to easily keep track of who know that, why and know? It thus implies that economic status has widened the complexity and depth of ignorance about what to do such that it becomes easier than before to easily identify who knows the solution to a particular problem. However, the use of favorable working environment and staff competition have made it necessary to find out the strengths leading to

improved Postgraduate students' economic status using informed decisions for success (Gary, 2017).

Therefore, Karmon (2017) opined that it has become more complex that facts and figures are required for various informed decisions in our workplaces. The paradox of economy is that knowledge about analytical understanding of causes, consequences and cure of most problems are in existence somewhere and with somebody who has that scientific knowledge; but global competition coupled with the drive for ownership of intellectual property has increased our free access to scientific knowledge about analytical understanding of the causal sequence required to breakdown a problem (Kauppi, 2019).

Worse still, Marcus (2017) was of the view that African society, where people hide knowledge because it is power, is particularly plagued with ignorance about tacit, unspoken, and unstated or craft knowledge not because this knowledge is not available but mainly because it is difficult to unveil it since it is unspoken or unstated by the person(s) possessing such knowledge and information. As a result of these levels of ignorance associated many knowledgeable people started thinking of how to commoditize their knowledge as a tradable service. Consequently, intellectual property and intellectual capital have occupied a central position in today's knowledge-based economy.

Monash University (2019) outlined the followings as the benefits of university education:

- a. Students are given the chance to travel and experience life overseas through study abroad programs.
- b. University life exposes students to other cultures and background.
- c. Students conquer intellectual challenges and develop a sense of achievement.
- d. University build initiative and leadership skills that can be used for life.
- e. University is where students build their first adult networks.
- f. Students meet friends and mentors that become future contacts and colleagues.

World Bank (2019) documented that higher education also known as university education refers to all post-secondary education, including both public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes and vocational schools. They maintained that higher education is instrumental in fostering growth, reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity; a highly-skilled workforce, with a solid post-secondary education is a prerequisite for innovation and growth and that a well-educated people are more employable, earn higher wages and cope with economic shocks better. Herald (2016) itemized the following points as the reasons why university education is so important:

1. Countries with better educated citizens are more equipped to deal with new challenges and technological advances and are able to compete with other countries on a level playing field.
2. Innovation and economic growth is almost totally dependent on university education.
3. Post-secondary education is the key to employability.
4. University education can be the factor that allows the financially challenged but intellectually gifted, to be on par with more financial fortunate individuals.
5. University education is necessary for the discovery, proper dissemination and application of knowledge.

Trow (2017) asserted that higher education is important to national economies, both as an industry, in its own right, and as a source of trained and educated personnel for the rest of the economy and that college educated workers have commanded a measureable wage premium and are much less likely to become unemployed than less educated workers. Odionye (2014) opined that the essence of establishing university education in the nation is among other things, to provide manpower needs of the society by the training of professionals in various fields of endeavors, all for the overall development of the nation. She added that institutions of higher learning that make up the tertiary education system have assigned roles which they are to accomplish in accordance with the national goals and philosophy and that it is not in contention that the most paramount role of the university education is to develop the human resources who in turn harnesses the natural and material resources of the nation for the benefit and even development of the society lest the society remain stagnate and backwards in the scheme of human development. According to Adeogun (2017), university education is considered throughout the world to be the key to both individual and societal aspirations and for individuals; education beyond secondary level is assumed to be the way societal esteem, better paying jobs and so on, while for the societies, it tends to be the key for technological development, productivity and economic growth. Higher education is recognized as a fundamental instruction for the construction of a knowledge economy and the development of human capital all over the world (World Bank, 2019). Higher education is the facilitator, the bed rock, the power house and driving force for the strong socio-economic, political, cultural, healthier and industrial development of a nation as higher education institutions are key mechanism increasingly recognized as wealth and human capital producing industries.

World Bank (2019) argued that higher education is fundamental to all developing countries if they are to prosper in world economy where knowledge has become a vital area of advantage and that the quality of knowledge which is generated in institutions of higher learning is critical to national competitiveness. Asiyai (2013) opined that it is only quality education that can sharpen the minds of the individuals and help transform the society economically, socially, and politically; and that countries can achieve sustainable development by improving through training in higher level, the skills of their human capital, and from a global perspective, higher level manpower training has been recognized as a primary tool for national development.

Academic performance of postgraduate students

Frimpong, Agyeman and Ofori (2016) documented the factors affecting students' academic performance are very numerous and a good number of researches have been done in this area. According to them, the economic status that affect students' academic performance of post graduate students include poor remuneration and cost of living within and outside the school. Aripin, Mohammed, Rohaizad, Yeop and Anuar (2018) identified parents' education, family income, learning preferences etc as factors. Abbasi and Mir (2012) posited that students' characteristics such as their age, entry qualification, self-motivation and work ethics could impact on their performance. They added that students themselves play critical role in getting good grades and must therefore explore all opportunities available within their academic environment (Asmawi, 2017).

Influence of Poor Remuneration on Postgraduate Students' Academic Performance

The best way to improve postgraduate students' economic status is through improved remuneration and compensation. It suffices to say that proper remuneration of staff is associated with higher performance and poor remuneration of staff is the reason for poor performance of students in universities. It should be noted that the good performance of students in postgraduate results were unconnected to examination malpractice. Therefore, staff remuneration is the core for effective performance in schools, implying that the government should improve on employees' remuneration in order to improve performance. Managers and administrators in institutions should always appreciate, evaluate positively and allocate rewards and incentives more appropriately to their staff for maximum performance. This shows that there is a clear link between economic status and academic performance (Ejeh, Okenjorn & Chizo-Woko, 2016).

Influence of Cost of Living on Postgraduate Students' Academic Performance

The cost of living in Port Harcourt is relatively low compared to many other cities in Nigeria. However, it is still vital for students to prepare for expected cost before they begin their studies. On average postgraduate student studying at University of Port Harcourt will spend between #566,000 and #710, 000 (over 52 weeks) on living costs. The level of these costs depends heavily on lifestyle and will vary from person to person, but it's always a good to have an idea of your budget before you begin your studies. As admission seekers, you must get the needed advice about how to fund your postgraduate degree. You may also wish to undertake field trips and conferences as part of your studies. These costs can vary massively depending on where you wish to go and how long is the field trip. In some cases, department can help subsidize any of these costs (Mohamud & Warsarne, 2018)

Depending on the course of study, there are a number of mandatory and optional costs students may be required to pay. When drawing up your budget be aware that tuition fees will also need to be covered, and must be factored in as a cost. Tables below showed estimated cost of a programme at postgraduate level in University of Port Harcourt.

Table 1: University Halls of Residence Costs

Expenditure	Cost per week	Cost per academic year (52 weeks)
Rent	#1,115.38	#58,000.00
Gas/Elec/Water	Inclusive	Included in rent
Insurance	Inclusive	Included in rent
Total	# 1,115.38	#58,000.00

Source: Researchers' Field Study 2023

Table 2: Private Residence Costs

Expenditure	Cost per week	Cost per academic year (52 weeks)
Rent	#2,884.63	#150,000.00
Electricity/Water	#1,210.00	#62,920.00
Sanitation	#500.00	#26,000.00
Broadband	#705.00	#36,660.00
Transportation	#2100.000	#109,200.00
Total	# 739963	#384,780.76

Source: Researchers' Field Study 2023

Table 3: General Living Costs

General Living Costs	Costs per Week	Cost per academic year (52 weeks)
Leisure Spending	#2,100.50	#109,226.00
Laundry	#4200.00	#218,400.00
Food	#8,400.00	#436,800.00
Phone (Mobile)	#950.00	#49,400.00
Clothes	#1,700.00	#88,400.00
Childcare Costs	#16,800.00	#873,600.00
Total	#34,150.50	#1,775.826.00

Source: Researchers' Field Study 2023

Table 4: Course Costs

Course Cost	Costs per Week	Cost per academic year (52 weeks)
Books	#3800.00	#197,600.00
Printing and Binding	#980.00	#50,960.00
Course Equipment	#1,000.00	#52,000.00
Field Trips	#970.00	#50,440.00
Tuition Fee	_____	#133,000.00
Total	#6750	#484,000.00

Source: Researchers' Field Study 2023

From the above tables, cost of living on postgraduate students are high such that many of them engage in work and study system because their savings alone may not be able to them through. But it is unfortunate that some employers will deliberate own their employees without minding that they have their own needs. These prompted the researcher to X-rayed postgraduate students' economic status for academic performance in University of Port Harcourt

Statement of the Problem

It appears that many students who gain admission into postgraduate programmes dropped out because of their inability to finance or provide themselves with the necessary materials that will enhance the programme. Postgraduate students' economic status such as poor remuneration from where the work and cost of living in general have made some students to stay longer than expected in the university. Others who completed their study, graduated on deficit thereby owing the university and hopping to clear their indebtedness when their economic status improves. Base on the problems, the researcher X-rayed postgraduate students' economic status for academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Aim and Objectives of the study

The study examined postgraduate students' economic status for academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. The objectives sought to:

1. determine the extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.
2. identify the extent cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. To what extent does poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt?
2. To what extent does cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses formulated tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study

1. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent cost of living influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Methodology

The research adopted descriptive design for the study. The study area is University of Port Harcourt. The population of the study comprised all the 1320 postgraduate students of 2022/2023 academic session in all the department offering postgraduate programme in University of Port Harcourt. The sample of 235 student respondents was drawn through stratified sampling technique. Postgraduate Students' Economic Status for Academic Performance Questionnaire (PSESAPQ) was used for data collection. The instrument contains 10 items structured on a Modified 4-point Likert rating scales of Very High Extent (VHE) 4 points, High Extent (HE) 3 points, Low Extent (LE) 2 points Very Low Extent (VLE) 1 point respectively. Validity of the instrument was determined by two experts in test and measurement. The following reliabilities were determined through Cronbach method. Postgraduate Students' Economic Status for Academic Performance was 0.82, while 0.84, 0.87, were for poor remuneration and cost of living respectively. The instrument was administered to the sampled respondents with the help of two research assistants. Out of 235 questionnaire administered, 230 copies were properly filled and retrieved. The research questions were answered using mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation (Sd) and rank order statistics for all the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using z-test statistics. The criterion mean of 2.50 was used.

Results

Research question 1: To what extent does poor remuneration influence postgraduate students’ academic performance in University of Port Harcourt?

Table 1: Mean (\bar{X}), Mean set ($\bar{X} \bar{X}$) Standard deviation (Sd) and rank order (Rnk) scores on extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students’ academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	ITEMS	Male \bar{X}	Female \bar{X}	$\bar{X} \bar{X}$	Sd	Rnk	Dec
1	Inability of payment of personnel salaries.	2.78	2.97	2.81	1.08	1 st	HE
2	Lack of regular promotion to postgraduate students	2.64	2.78	2.66	1.15	4 th	HE
3	Too many deductions from postgraduate students salaries	2.56	2.85	2.61	1.08	5 th	HE
4	Lack of adequate allowances to postgraduate students who are working	2.75	2.97	2.79	1.08	2 nd	HE
5	Lack of logistic support to postgraduate students who are working	2.74	2.60	2.71	1.13	3 rd	HE

Data on Table 1 results showed that the average mean scores of Male students range between 2.56 and 2.78, while those of Female students range between 2.60 and 2.97. The mean set average for both group of students range between 2.61 and 2.81. Judging by the results, table 1 revealed that all the items had mean above the criterion mean of 2.5. Thus, they were accepted as the extent poor remuneration negatively influences postgraduate students’ academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Research question 2: To what extent does cost of living influence postgraduate students’ academic performance in University of Port Harcourt?

Table 2: Mean (\bar{X}), Mean set ($\bar{X} \bar{X}$) Standard deviation (Sd) and rank order (Rnk) scores on extent cost of living influence postgraduate students’ academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

S/N	ITEMS	Male \bar{X}	Female \bar{X}	$\bar{X} \bar{X}$	Sd	Rnk	Dec
1	Cost of accommodation is high on postgraduate students	2.71	2.58	2.66	1.12	4 th	HE
2	Cost of daily commodities are high on postgraduate students	2.88	2.78	2.84	1.16	1 st	HE
3	Lack of government bursary to support postgraduate students	2.68	2.97	2.79	1.09	2 nd	HE
4	High cost of transportation on postgraduate students affect their studies	2.57	2.67	2.60	1.08	5 th	HE
5	Lack of philanthropic support for postgraduate students’ programme	2.61	2.92	2.72	1.17	3 rd	HE

Data on Table 2 results showed that the average mean scores of Male students range between 2.57 and 2.88, while those of Female students range between 2.58 and 2.97. The mean set average for both group of students range between 2.60 and 2.84. Judging by the results, table 2 revealed that all the items had mean above the criterion mean of 2.5. Thus, they were accepted as the extent cost of living negatively influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Table 3: Summary of z-test on difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Categories	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-cri	Level of sig.	Decision
Male	165	2.69	1.10	228	1.74	1.96	0.05	not rejected
Female	65	2.83	1.09					

Data on Table 3 showed that the z calculated value of 1.74 is less than the z critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom of 228. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This means showed that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Table 4: Summary of z-test on difference in the mean rating of male and female students on the extent cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Categories	N	\bar{X}	SD	DF	z-cal	z-cri	Level of sig.	Decision
Male	165	2.69	1.09	228	0.58	1.96	0.05	not rejected
Female	65	2.78	1.15					

Data on Table 4 showed that the z calculated value of 0.58 is less than the z critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom of 228. The null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent cost of living influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Summary of Findings

1. All the items in table 1 are High Extent and were accepted as the extent poor remuneration negatively influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.
2. All the items in table 2 are High Extent and were accepted as the extent cost of living negatively influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.
3. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.
4. There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Discussion of Findings

Extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance

Table 1 revealed that all the items had mean above the criterion mean of 2.5. Thus, they were accepted as the extent poor remuneration negatively influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. However, the respondents identified that inability of payment of personnel salaries affect postgraduate students. lack of regular promotion affects postgraduate students, too many deductions from postgraduate students salaries, lack of adequate allowances affect postgraduate students who are working and lack of logistic support to postgraduate students who are working influence their academic performance (William Peace University, 2019). There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent poor remuneration influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Extent cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance

Table 2 revealed that all the items had mean above the criterion mean of 2.5. Thus, they were accepted as the extent cost of living negatively influences postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. However, the respondents identified that cost of accommodation is high on postgraduate students, cost of daily commodities are high on postgraduate students, lack of government bursary to support postgraduate students, high cost of transportation on postgraduate students affect their studies and lack of philanthropic support postgraduate students influence their performance (Simiyu, 2021). There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the extent cost of living influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt

Conclusion

The study x-rayed economic status of postgraduate with reference to students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt. The researcher has in the process investigated two components of economic status which involved poor remuneration and cost of living as

possible factors that influence postgraduate students' academic performance in University of Port Harcourt.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Government should adequately remunerate the employees so as to pay their postgraduate fees.
2. Institutional Administrators should make hostel accommodation affordable to reduce cost of living on postgraduate students.

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