

Family Size and Age as Determinants of Academic Performance of Married Women in Delta and Rivers States Universities, Nigeria

Grace Francisca Afe, Ph.D

Department of Guidance and Counselling

Delta State University, Abraka

Delta state, Nigeria

samuelakpokiniovo@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between family size and age as determinants of academic performance of married women in Delta and River States universities. Two research questions and two null hypotheses were answered and tested. The correlational research design was employed, with a sample of 528 participants drawn through purposive sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were the Family Size and Age questionnaire (FSAQ) and Cumulative Grade Point Average. The reliability of the FSAQ was tested using Cronbach alpha which yielded 0.76. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research question while Regression statistics was employed in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed that there was no significant relationship between family size and academic performance, and there was no significant relationship between age and academic performance of married women. Based on the findings, it is therefore recommended that married women should be encouraged to embrace education early so that they can contribute adequately to the economy. Also government should encourage married women to explore the internet so as to boost knowledge of what has been learnt and to access relevant and current information relating to academics.

Keywords: Family, size, age, academic, performance, married, women

Introduction

Women scarcely arrive at highest points of education because they are confronted with challenges such as gender discrimination at almost every career stage. Women are continually known for dropping off academic pursuit midstream, poor academic performance and having more difficulty accessing even part-time educational programmes (Gaidzanwa, 2012). This could be as a result of saddled responsibilities on women as they are home keepers and care givers to the family; and this gender role poses extra burden on their academic performance. The recognition of academic performance of women pursuing part time programme would be profitable if such determinants of academic performance are investigated. Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE, 2009) succinctly declared that women academic performance is still averagely low because under performance is recorded in most disciplines and these include science, engineering and technology. Ayodele and Adebisi (2013)

highlight several intricate and closely linked factors that make academic performance appear so challenging to women who strive to pursue higher education. These include students' factors, institutional factors, socio-psychological factors, physical and financial factors, emotional factors, psycho-social factor, demographic factors and family size. However, it is possible to arrive at sustainable development if women perform well in the various academic fields (Ayodele & Adebisi, 2013)

It is worthy of note that many women graduated from the part time primary level to the secondary level and eventually to the part time tertiary level especially, when universities kick-started part-time programmes. Some had husbands who were graduates while, others were holders of Higher National Diploma (HND), National Diploma (ND) or City and Guild Certificates. Yet, some had just primary six certificates. Women who took up the challenge of pursuing part time tertiary education appear to have a number of confrontational issues ranging from finance to household chores and emotional concerns. Some were saddled with the problems of increased family size, caring for husband, children and wards etc. According to Ushie, Emeka, Ononga and Owolabi (2012), a large family size has been found to interrupt school attendance of the girl-child because of house chores. The continued stay-off from school would translate into poor academic performance. If the girl-child could be this weighed down with challenges of a large family, how much more the woman who is the parent or mother but undergoing a part time programme? Ukwueze (2007) also observed that students from small family size perform better than those from large family size in their cognitive and adjustment outcome.

In the pursuit of a part-time university degree, women are likely to face challenges such as poor study habits that may result from family size, ageing process and its complications, husband's financial status and level of education and several other responsibilities of motherhood and house chores (Alele-Williams, 2011). These challenges would likely affect the academic performance of women on a part time programme in the university.

A pilot study conducted in the Department of Home Economics in Delta State University, Warri Study Centre, an institution outside this study for 2016/2017 session, showed fifteen married and seven unmarried women were admitted into the part-time programme. At the end of the programme in 2017, the number of the married women had dropped to twelve. Three of the married ones opted out as the programme progressed probably as a result of pregnancy hurdles, large family size; challenges that resulted in poor grades. In 2015/2016 session, hundred percent of the married women passed the exams during the first semester while the second semester was fifty five percent. In 2016, both semesters witnessed seventy seven percent and eighty eight respectively of the married women that passed, which was still high when compared

to 2016/2017 session which recorded fifty five percent in first semester and forty percent in second semester respectively.

Moreover, some married women might have dropped from the academic race because they might have considered themselves too old for such pursuit. They might have also attributed difficulty in understanding and coping with academic pressures to age challenges that has a negative pull on their health. This could further lead to poor grades, which may orchestrate opting out as the best alternative. Nevertheless, the thought of aging and what financial benefit would be derived after all the academic stress could bring discouragement. This aligns with Sadza's (2012) view that education as an investment should be made early in life for maximum profit, because late investment yields little or no economic returns. This aligns with Ng and Feldman (2008) who reported that intelligence crystallizes as a person gets older, although age has no impact in the frontiers of educational challenges.

Despite government's efforts to promote women education that could bring gender equality in the educational sector, the rate of illiteracy among married women is alarming. The family which is the first agent of socialization in the society supposed to promote girl child education, however, the rate at which the family increases seems to affect the promotion of girl child education, thus, when the family size is becoming so large, preference is given to the male child, leaving the female child to hard courses that may hinder the academic success which may linger up to university level as a married woman. One of the problems here is, could it be that family size affects married women academic performance? Age is another important factor to be considered when looking at the academic performance of married women on part time programme in the university; while some married women come to the university at early age with enough energy for their academic work, some who are seeking for promotion in their place of work, neglecting their age, do go to the university and end up having poor academic performance. With the rate at which married women clamour for degrees, there seems to be a link between age and academic performance of married women on part time programme in the university. The question here is, does relationship also exist between age and academic performance of married women on part time programme in the university? This research therefore, investigated the relationship between family size, age and the academic performance of married women in universities in Delta and Rivers states, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated to guide this study:

1. What is the relationship between family size and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states?

2. What is the relationship between age and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were generated to guide the study:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between family size and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between age and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states.

Methodology

The study adopts the correlational design. It examined the relationship between family size, age, and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states. The population for this study consists of every married woman registered as part-time student in the universities of Delta and Rivers states during the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 sessions whose programmes are still in progress. The entire population of married women running part-time programme from the three schools in Faculty of Education within the years under review totalled 2,640 (Source: 2016-2018 admission offices of Delta State University, Abraka, University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt). A purposive sampling design was used for this study. A total of three universities were used from both Delta and Rivers States, namely Delta State University, University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education on part time programme, Port Harcourt. Students from all available programmes in the three universities were used. A representative sample size was drawn from the population of 2,640 using a sample value of 20% giving a total of 528 sample size. The instruments used for the study was the Family Size and Age Questionnaire (FSAQ) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of women running part time programme. The family size is classified into small and large. The small size consists of two to four members, while the large consists of five persons and above. The instrument was administered to students on sight in lecture halls of the different programmes. The scores of the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of the women from the three universities was obtained from the universities. The table below shows the class of degree, the marks obtainable and the corresponding CGPA for each class of degree.

Table 1: Class of Degree

Class of Degree	Marks obtainable	Cumulative Point Average	Grade
First Class Division	70 – 100	4.50 – 5.00	
Second Class Upper Division	60 – 69	3.50 – 4.49	
Second Class Lower Division	50 – 59	2.40 – 3.49	
Third Class Division	45 – 49	1.50 – 2.39	

Source: 2017/18 approved document from the Faculty of Education, Delta State University, Abraka

In estimating the reliability of the questionnaire, the instrument was administered on fifty (50) female students drawn from the School of Health, Ofuoma near Ughelli outside the area sampled for this work which is also a tertiary institution. This was done to avoid contamination in the study. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach alpha for estimating the internal consistency of the instrument. This yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76. The researcher and six research assistants were involved in the data collection. The researcher handed the questionnaire over to the research assistants at every institution to administer after a short briefing. Within a day or two, they were turned in and the researcher collated the required data. Mean and Standard deviation was used for the research questions while the regressions statistics was employed in the data analysis to predict and account for family size which was grouped into two namely; small size made up of two to four members in the family, and was scored 0. The large family size was made up of five persons and above and it was scored 1. The analysis was run separately before drawing comparison. The two hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Presentation of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between family size and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states?

Table 2a: The correlation coefficient of family size and academic performance

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	r	Decision
Family Size	528	.76	.59	0.036	Low positive relationship
Academic Performance	528	2.36	.63		

As shown in table 2a, the computed regression statistics produced an $r = 0.036$. Therefore, the answer to research question 1 is that family size and academic performance have low positive relationship. This means family size has a relationship with academic performance which is low.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between family size and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states.

Table 2b: Model Summary of the regression analysis of family size and academic performance

R	R-square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.036	0.001	0.000	0.52539		
ANOVA					
	Sum of Square	of Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	0.269	1	0.269	0.687	0.408
Residual	205.718	526	0.391		
Total	205.987	527			
Coefficient					
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.250	0.137		16.444	0.000
Family Size	0.027	0.033	0.036	0.829	0.408

Predictors: (constant), family size,

Dependent variable: Academic performance of married women

* $p \geq .05$ level of significance

The result in Table 2b showed a correlation coefficient of 0.036 which revealed the fact that there is a low positive linear relationship between family size and academic performance of married women in universities. The computed $F(1,526) = 0.687$, $Sig. = 0.408$, hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that there was no significant relationship between family size and academic performance of married women in universities. The R^2 adjusted value of 0.001 shows that there was no variance. This is the effect size of the antecedent variable on the criterion, that academic performance indicates practical significance at 95% confidence interval. In other words, a unit change in the standard deviation of the measures of family size will

account for 1% change in the academic performance of married women. To remove the influence of other variables and avoid spurious relationship, the beta weight was computed. The computed beta weight of 0.036, $t = 0.829$, $Sig. = 0.408$ was observed. The conclusion was drawn that family size has no significant relationship with academic performance of married women running part-time programme in the universities.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between age and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states?

Table 3a: The relationship between Age and Academic Performance of Married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states

Variable	N	Mean	S.D	r	Decision
Age	528	3.43	.50	-0.108	Negative relationship
Academic Performance	528	2.36	.63		

As shown in table 3a, the computed regression statistics produced an $r = -0.108$. Therefore, the answer to research question 3 is that there is a negative relationship between age and academic performance of married women in universities.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between age and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities in Delta and Rivers states.

Table 3b: Model Summary of Regression Analysis of Age and Academic Performance

R	R-square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
0.108	0.012	0.010	0.62214		
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Regression	2.395	1	2.395	6.188	0.13
Residual	203.592	526	0.387		
Total	205.987	527			
Coefficient					
	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.821	0.187		15.106	0.000
Age	-0.134	0.005	-0.108	-2.487	0.13

Predictors: (constant), Age

Dependent variable: Academic performance

* $p > .05$ level of significance

The result in table 3b showed a relationship output of $r = -0.108$ which revealed that there is a negative relationship between age and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities. The computed $F(1,526) = 6.188$, $Sig. = 0.13$. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is a negative but insignificant relationship between age and academic performance of married women running part time programme in universities. The conclusion reached is that age is not significant for academic performance of married women. The adjusted R^2 value of -0.012 shows that 0.01% of variance in academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities was accounted for by age. To determine the practical relevance, the effect size estimate was tested for significance using the computed F statistics $F = 6.188$, $df = 1,526$, $Sig F = 0.13$, $P > 0.05$. To eliminate the influence of other variables and be free from erroneous relationships, the beta weight observed was -0.108 , $t = -2.487$, $P > 0.05$. The conclusion reached is that age is not significant for academic performance of married women

Discussion of findings

Based on the findings presented above, the following discussions were made in the study in relation to how the findings agree or disagree with reviewed materials in literature as well as issues under current trend in the area under study:

The result in hypothesis 1 revealed that there was no significant relationship between family size and academic performance of married women running part-time programme in universities. The findings of the study showed that a married woman having a large family size may perform excellently despite the great task involved in care giving. This could be cumbersome ranging from meals preparation and feeding under-age children, giving attention to children's take-home assignments, giving attention to house chores and husband. At the end of the day, she is exasperated, yet sits up to study in the night. This research finding aligns with the work of Ushie, Emeka, Ononga and Owolabi (2012) who worked on the influence of family size on students' academic performance in Agege Local Government Area. The result showed that family size did not determine performance despite socio-economic status. Similarly, the married woman who undertakes domestic, social and scholarship responsibilities concurrently forges ahead with an organized disciplined lifestyle, fully determined to strike her dream goal. The findings of this work do not align with the findings of Suleman, Aslam, Shakir, Akhtar, Hussain and Akhtar (2012) who worked on the effect of family size on academic performance of students in lower level of secondary school in Pakistan. It was discovered that large family size largely affected students' educational performance. The findings also differ from the findings of Ukwueze (2007), McGregor, Hilmes, Williams and Duff (1998) and Luster and McAdoo (1994) who discovered that family size was a predictor of students' academic performance.

The findings in hypothesis 2 showed that there was no significant relationship between age and academic performance of married women in universities. This implies that married women running part-time programme in universities can excel in academic work despite their peculiar challenges. The result of this finding disagrees with the findings of Adeyemo and Ogundokun (2010) who reported that age is a predictor of academic performance. It however agrees with Thomas, Raynor and Almarzooqi (2012), Abubakar and Oguguo (2011) and Ebinuwa-Okoh (2010) who reported from their findings that age is not a motivator of academic performance.

Age, in the researcher's opinion, is a thing of the mind. Therefore, a married woman who decides to resume academic pursuits would jettison negative mind set and orientation about age challenges. This actually might have accounted for good grades by some married women in the universities despite the issues associated with age.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher therefore concludes that family size and age are not determinants of academic performance of married women running part time programme. However, the success of educational performance of married women cannot be downplayed if they must keep up with the issue of placement within national goals frontiers and be purpose-driven with family life dreams. In this way, manpower of nations will not be concentrated on male folks alone, but a balance would be realized.

Recommendations

Married women should be encouraged to embrace education early so that they can contribute adequately to the economy. Government should encourage married women to explore the internet world to boost knowledge of what has been learnt and to access relevant and current information relating to academics.

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