

Examination of Learning Difficulties on Students Academic Performance in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examines learning difficulties on student's academic performance in higher education institutions in Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis guided this study. Population of this study is 8,000 which comprised 4,500 males and 5,500 female students of Imo state select 40 male students in two departments. On the other hand, 45 female students were selected University Owerri. Sample size of this study is 170. Stratified random sampling technique was used to in two departments, which gave a total sample size of 170 staff selected as sample size. Researcher developed questionnaire titled "examination of learning difficulties on students' academic performance in higher education institutions in Nigeria" was used, with four rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The instrument was validated by two specialists in Business Education, Madonna University Nigeria, Okija Campus, Anambra State. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability coefficient of this study at 0.78 and 0.97, which shows that the instrument is reliable for this study. Staff responses were analyzed with the use of mean and standard deviation. Chi Square -test of independent was used to test the hypotheses. Findings from this study revealed varied effects of learning difficulties among students in Nigeria. The effects are: Difficulty in pronunciation of words, poor grades in quiz and examinations, aggression, reporting late to lectures, carefree attitudes to academics, staying isolated, laziness, troublesome, moody, unemployment after graduation among others. It was recommended from this study that government and parents of students should provide learning equipment to students with learning difficulties. This would enable students suffering from learning difficulties to overcome their learning barriers and measure up with intelligent students in higher

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education institutions. Also, campaigns against the use of hard drugs should be emphasized. This would help to exonerate students from use of drugs and face their studies for the sake of the future.

Keywords: Meaning of Learning Difficulty, Characteristics of learning difficulties on Students, Symptoms of learning difficulty, Major Causes of learning Difficulties among Students, Other Cause of Students Learning Difficulties, Responsibilities of lecturers on Students Learning Difficulties.

Introduction

Learning difficulty is a barrier that prevents students from actualizing their academic pursuits. Learning difficulty is an inhibition to student's academics careers. It is a neurological disorder whereby some students are unable to meet up with their intellectual capabilities due to illness, learned behavior, economic constraints, and bad parental upbringing among others. Learning difficulties are exacerbated by the type of friends a student or group of students keeps at school, homes which deprive and compress those students' intellectuality with bad attitudes, low intelligent quotients IQ. Some students develop learning difficulty from birth, poor parental upbringing, inadequate use of technological learning equipment, illness, use of hard drugs among others. Difficulty in learning has no bound or age bracket. Both children and adult may suffer difficulty in their learning. Majority of students in higher education may develop learning difficulty due to unseriousness, poor attention to what a lecturer is conveying in the classroom. To learn is zeal or desire students can develop by themselves. Some students learn very well when they are in groups, while others learn when they are alone. Parent's gets worried and dis- appointed when they discover that their children are not coping with or comprehending to lectures delivered to them by lecturers (Salam, 2021)

Meaning of Learning Difficulty

Learning difficulty is observed among children and adults of school ages at home, in the classroom and lecture halls. It is a situation whereby a student or group of students are unable to cope with the normal teaching and learning offered by a school or higher education institutions due to neurological differences, negative attitudes inability to have access to technology or acquire technological learning equipment. It is a situation whereby a student or some group of students academic performance is poor due to poor coping, listening, note making, inadequate learning materials, ill health, intake of drugs, bad friends among others. Sometimes, learning difficulty students develop is caused by poor teaching skills possessed by a teacher or a lecturer. Learning difficulty is a disorder in which a student or group of students

develop difficulty in processing sensory information, spelling, reading, pronunciation of words and mathematical calculation (Eryilmaz, e tal, 2022). There are many symptoms of learning difficulty among students. Some of those learning difficulties include Conceptual perceptual deficit, difficulty in processing and sorting out items according to specific criteria, slow to respond to questions, often forgot the pronunciation of frequently used words, weak spelling, difficulty in memorizing items or words, difficulty from following rules (Karunanayake, e tal, 2020). Students with learning difficulty often show forgetful in some of their academic and non-academic activities. Students with learning difficulty show weak perceptions or receptivity of words. Use of English language by those students is weak; comments are sometimes off track, poor visual motor skills. Some students with learning difficulties complain about pains or eye problems. It is truism that students with learning difficulties can see, perceive, feel, at things but have different understanding to things in their own low level of taught (Nwamuo, Ugwuebulam & Okoro 2012). Some students develop extreme extroversion and emotional disorder that impedes their understanding or receptivity of concepts. Extroverted students think they know and fail to be methodic in their academics. On the other hand, emotionally disturbed students show some emotional disorder or retrogressive tendencies. Some of them are unable to speak, engage in social discussions let alone, ask questions to their lecturers in the lecture hall, due to inferiority complex. Students with learning difficulties are academically backward. Learning difficulty is observed from students' low scores in quiz and semester examinations.

Characteristics of Students with learning difficulty

There are many characteristics associated with students learning. Some learning difficulties observed among students include Trouble in encoding and decoding information, difficulty in spelling, poor use of grammar and sentence, poor memory, difficulty from following instructions. Other characteristics exhibited by students with learning difficulty include: Poor attendance to lectures, lack of learning equipment, lateness to lecture hall, careless and bitter over assignments giving by lecturers, noise making in the lecture hall, frequent use of phone to watch films instead of using the phone to search for solutions to their assignments and quiz, fire brigade approach to academic problems, poor preparation during examinations.

Symptoms of Learning Difficulty on Some Students

Some students suffer from auditory processing disorder; some students develop difficulty in understanding what a lecturer or another person has said or meant. Some of those students

input in conversations sometimes, end into off topic, off point or inappropriate, they process, interpret and turn jokes into riotous manners. Sometimes their contributions to the jokes end up into uproarious laughter, those students' academic discussions with their colleagues may be under rated. Those students' academic shortcomings end up giving them heart attack (Zakopoulo e tal 2019).).

Major Causes of Learning Difficulty among Students

Major causes of learning difficulties on students include Tetra genic factors, premature birth, adverse childhood experiences, malnutrition, traumatic brain injury, visual, hearing, verbal deficit, motor handicap, intellectual disability (Rosedahl, 2019). However, healthy students exhibit learning difficulties. Some learning difficulties students' exhibits in their learning are caused by the type of educational institutions some students are attending or have attended. Others include: the environment where some students are trained and poor family financial backgrounds, Poor parental upbringing, inadequate teaching and learning technologies, poor Management of educational institutions, bad academic peers some students associate with, poor pedagogical knowledge by lecturers. It is established that poor health results to poor receptivity of what a lecturer has taught in the lecture hall. Vast majority of facts, evidenced as what constitutes learning difficulties of students in higher education institutions, are explained below:

Lecturers Poor Pedagogical Knowledge

Effective preparation before going to lecture hall is a very good ideal for effective teaching. It is saddening that some lecturers do not teach themselves before going to the lecture halls. Effective preparations before delivery of lectures are key to effective delivery of learning outcomes. It is observed that poor teaching results to poor learning. No matter the level of academic quality possessed by lecturers, good command of the subject matter, ability of lecturers in weighing the ability of their students with effective classroom management, enables lecturers to deliver their lectures for effective mastery or students' comprehension (Nosiri, 2007). Effective delivery of worthwhile knowledge and skills is a fulcrum for being astute in lecturing responsibilities. Poor teaching dovetails to poor chiseling of learning difficulties from students. It is imperative that lecturers observe students' learning difficulties and offer immediate or remedial help. It is observed that during teaching and learning, some students at the back seats distract some students through some rumbles of noise making. It is the ability of

a lecturer to observe those shortfalls and separate the noise making students from the back seats to other seats where they can cope or comprehend.

Poor Health Conditions

Poor learning sometimes may be due to illness. Some illnesses may be genetic why some are seasonal. Poor health devastates or truncates student's ability to learn. Some children suffering from emotional disturbance are unable to learn. They can easily tear their books and disrupt the lectures going on in the lecture halls. However, people believe that a student that is emotionally disturbed is usually a product of their environment. Others believe that the cause is neurobiological i.e., a particular area of the students' brain that is under- active (Ogonosky, 2005, Nichy 2006 & Emotionally Disturbed.net 2009). Poor health conditions of a student may be in the form of hearing loss, madness or emotional disorder or depression. The severity of hearing loss affects some students' academic performance. The student is impaired from processing information through hearing. Sometimes, those students make use of amplification. Though, the help those students receive from amplified instruments cannot be compared with the normal hearing students (Schidroth, Hotto, 1994 & Davis 1989). On the other hand, poor learning is caused by visual loss (Koestler, 1976). Visual losses possess limitation to learning. Visual loss is usually caused by diseases; the effects traumatize students because the affected students cannot visually see correctly (Arditi & Rosenthal, 1998). Lecturers should empathize with the sick students and as well, encourage them to seek both medical treatment and medical advice (Morris, 2000).

Use of hard drugs

Use of hard drugs causes poor learning among students. Use of hard drugs causes students to develop poor attention to their learning because their body temperatures have increased to certain level that receptivity of learning concepts becomes a herculean task. Hard drugs changes students reasoning. Intake of drugs causes lack of attention or concentration by a student. Use of hard drugs by a student inadvertently makes students to sleep while lectures are going on in the lecture halls. Students are advised to stop the use of hard drugs because; intake of drugs could result to students learning difficulties (Nwamuo, 2001).

Type of Academic Peers Students Associate with

Peer groups are play mates from home, colleagues from workplace, and classmates. Classmates or course mates can help their colleagues to learn. Academic mates or classmates can as well,

constitute learning difficulties to their fellow classmates or colleagues. A student who is immersed in the bad teachings and conduct offered by his or her unserious academic peers will find it difficult to go to lectures or participate in seminars, assignments given by their lecturers in their department. Vast majority of these misdemeanors discourages some students to learn or cope with the lectures offered by their lecturers (Christian, 2025).

Attitudes of Lecturers

Lectures are planned, organized, coordinated and controlled by lecturers in higher education institutions. Sometimes, negative attitudes of lecturers possess distractions, ill filling, and fears to some students in higher education institutions in Nigeria. Some lecturers resort to doing things with some selected students because they are intelligent. The un-intelligent students refuse to tender their problems to some lecturers that do not want to use two eyes to see them because those lecturers are harsh and easily irritated. Inadequate counseling and empathy by some lecturers to some students are significant reasons why some students possess learning difficulties that devastate them in their academic journey (Shertzer 1974, Telford & Sawrey, 1981).

Other Cause of Students Learning Difficulties

60% of learning difficulties some students possess are caused by sicknesses and diseases. 40% of the causes are from students. Some students do not go to lectures; rather, they prefer to stay at home or in their hostels. Some students start getting serious about their studies when they hear that quizzes or examinations will commence in two weeks' time. It is evident that majority of parents in civil service and trading businesses cough out little from their gains to pay for some students who feel so disgruntled to learn. For some students to exonerate themselves from the blames of failing their examinations from their parents, some of those students resort to carry out their academics under fire brigade approach. These have thus, caused poor academic performance to some of those unserious students (Nosiri, 2007).

Responsibilities of Lecturers on Students Learning Difficulties

Audibility and fluency are the skills of effective teaching. Lecturers should be audible or fluent in the lecture hall. Fluency of a lecturer enables students to digest the lectures delivered to them. Students can regurgitate what a lecturer has said because they listened very well when lectures are going on. Apart from poor parenting and inadequate teaching and learning equipment to learn, poor attention to lectures and lack of personal zeal to study are among the

factors that constitute learning difficulties to students. Poor learning emanates from the inability of students to ask questions. An inferiority complex student cannot measure up with his or her colleagues because he cannot ask questions in the lecture hall. He avoids being ridiculed by his or her fellow students. Lack of public address system during lectures and lack of remedial classes to slow learners constitutes learning difficulties to students (Ogunu, 2000 & Hellen, 2006). It is observed that students learn very well when they are provided with learning equipment and facilities. Inadequate learning equipment constitutes learning difficulties to students (Ogunu, 2006). It is observed that some tertiary education institutions do not have adequate technological teaching and learning equipment. In this 21st century, students should be provided with and encouraged to use modern technology equipment in their learning. Those modern technologies include desktops, laptops, palm tops, digital notebooks, quality or android handsets, PCs, with internet friendly environment among others. Lecturers can facilitate the use of technological equipment by making the use of technological learning equipment as a norm to be imbibed by students. Oral and written quizzes are solved with the use of ICT equipment, mediated or enhanced with internet facilities. Use of laptops and desktops are a means of helping students to be conversant with the use of ICT facilities. It is also a means to know about students that have techno phobia.

In this 21st century, some students in developing and developed countries of the world have acclimatized themselves with the use of technological equipment. The functions of technological learning equipment are mediated or enhanced with the use of the internet. AI tools such as Chat bots and ChatGPT are very useful for students learning. Language learning, data logging, solutions to assignments, and quizzes are easily obtained from the use of Chatbots or ChatGPT learning resources. It is saddening that some students do not know how to use some technological equipment to learn. Some students still cannot afford laptops and desk tops, let alone pay for data subscriptions demanded with the use of internet. In the same vein, some students from remote communities and villages suffer from power outage. However, the use of electricity to power their laptops and internet facilities has been so encompassing in some communities and villages, because of these misfits, many students are yet to embrace the use of ICT resources in their learning. These have prevented students from developing their intelligent quotients. These are also, reasons why some students cannot measure up with other students from internet and electricity friendly homes and learning institutions because, they are technologically backward (Christian, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Learning difficulty is a problem that affects every level of students. Among the factors that constitute learning difficulties to students, 60% of them are caused by illness while 40% are bad attitudes developed by students. On the other hand, students develop difficulty in their learning by associating with bad friends or unserious course mates. However, poor parental upbringing, use of hard drugs, low tone of some academic institutions, inadequate use of technological equipment to browse, draw, plot graphs diagrammatize or visualize instructions are major causes of students learning difficulties. Other factors that constitute learning difficulties to students include Carelessness of some students. Learning difficulties cause the following extreme events to the affected students. Some of those extreme events include Anger, poor grades in quiz, examinations, feeling of dull and lazy on academics matters, troublesome attitudes, tantrums, moody, forgetfulness among others.

Methodology

This paper examines learning difficulties on students' academic performance in higher education institutions in Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis guided this study. Population of this study is 8,000 which comprised 4,500 males and 5,500 female students of Imo state select 40 male students in two departments. On the other hand, 45 female students were selected University Owerri. Sample size of this study is 170. Stratified random sampling technique was used in two departments, which gave a total sample size of 170 staff selected as sample size. Researcher developed questionnaire titled "examination of learning difficulties on students' academic performance in higher education institutions in Nigeria" was used, with four rating scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The instrument was validated by two specialists in Business Education, Madonna University Nigeria, Okija Campus, Anambra State. Cronbach alpha statistics was used to determine the reliability coefficient of this study at 0.78 and 0.97, which shows that the instrument is reliable for this study. Staff responses were analyzed with the use of mean and standard deviation. Chi Square -test of independent was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

What are the causes of learning difficulties on students in higher education institutions in Nigeria?

Table 1: Shows the causes of learning difficulties on students in higher education institutions in Nigeria.

S/N	Statements	X	S.D	X	S.D	Mean	
1.	Students inability to Use of electricity in Their learning.	2.60	0.20	Agree	2.40	0.30	Agree
2.	Inadequate use of technological equipment	3.10	0.10	Agree	2.50	0.20	Agree
3.	Lecturers’ inability to have good command of the subject matter	2.80	0.00	Agree	2.60	0.10	Agree
4.	The type of friends students Students associate with	2.70	0.30	Agree	3.10	0.20	Agree
5.	Poor parental upbringing	3.30	0.10	Agree	3.00	0.30	Agree
6.	Use of hard drugs	3.50	0.40	Agree	3.10	0.20	Agree
7.	Illness	3.10	0.50	Agree	3.20	0.10	Agree
8.	Emotional imbalance	3.40	0.10	Agree	3.10	0.30	Agree
9.	Teachers negative attitudes	3.20	0.40	Agree	2.60	0.60	Agree
10.	Lack of students self-	3.90	0.50	Agree	4.10	0.30	Agree

Coordination

Total	27.10	2.60	Agree	27.00	2.60	Agree
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Test of Hypothesis

Table 2: Shows hypothesis test on the effects of learning difficulties on students in higher education in Nigeria.

Respondents	N	X	S.D	D.f	X0- cal	Xe-tab	Decision
Male staff	80	27.10	2.60	0.05	40.6	3.84	Rejected
Female Staff	90	27.00	2.60				

In table 3: Calculated X_o value is 40.6 which is greater than the table value of X_e of 3.84. Since the calculated X_{o-cal} is greater than the X_{e- table} value, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Learning difficulty is a disorder caused by illness or characters a student or group of students have developed by themselves. Symptoms of learning difficulties emanate from students' inability to comprehend, recall, interpret or explain concepts. It is a disorder caused by a student's inability to process, recall and interpret concepts taught by a lecturer or interpret information said by another person. (Nwamuo, Ugwuegbulam & Okoro, 2012. Identified that there are such students who are unable to engage in conversations as their conversions may end up inappropriate to a matter under discussion or off track. Learning difficulty is not only caused by a student suffering from health problems (Ogunu, 2000 & Hellen, 2006) averred that lack of effective classroom organization and management are caused by lecturers inability to re-teach their students, or organize remedial programmes to their students. On the other hand, (Nosiri, 2007) opined that teachers' quality is exhibited by having good command of the subject matter, On the other hand, knowledge of the ability of students is panaceas for effective teaching. Learning difficulty is not intentional, inability to cope or learn is also, caused by illness. (Ogonosky, 2005, Nichcy 2006 & Emotionally Disturbed .net 2009) encapsulated that other causes of students inability to learn are ill health or emotional disturbances which affect the brain of the affected students. However, learning difficulty is caused from the environment students hailed from, especially bade fiends students associate with (Christian, 2025). Students' inability to make use of electricity in their learning perhaps, to power their lap tops and internet facilities have been so encompassing in some communities and villages, because of these misfits, many students are yet to embrace the use of ICT resources in their learning. These have prevented students from developing their intelligent quotients. These are also reasons why some students cannot measure up with other students from internet and electricity friendly homes and learning institutions because they are technologically backward.

Recommendations

The following recommendations guided this paper

1. Advice is among the antidotes to students' learning difficulties. Lecturers and parents should advise students with learning difficulty to be serious about their studies. This would exonerate the affected students from developing more difficulty in their academic hurdles.
2. Students with learning difficulties should develop self-seriousness in their studies. This would help those students solve their assignments, write their quizzes and prepare on time before their examinations.
3. Learning difficulties can be overcome through group learning. Students with learning difficulties should study and associate together with brilliant students. This would help students with learning difficulties to overcome their deficiencies in their academics.

Conclusion

Learning difficulties are problems associated with students learning. Learning difficulties are distractions, laziness, un-seriousness, overriding the desires of students to engage fervently in their studies. Learning difficulties can be genetically developed or acquired. A student can develop learning difficulties from his environment. However, learning difficulties can occur to some students because of the inability of their parents to provide financial and non-financial logistics for the education of their children. Learning difficulty is a situation whereby a student or group of students possessed blunt brain to acquire the teaching and learning offered by their lecturers. Learning difficulty is a disorder that occurs to a student because the impulsiveness of the brain to calculate, interpret, retain and recall information is poor. Learning difficulty can occur to a student because of illness or disease that changed the student's posture thus, causing inability of a student to reason effectively or regurgitate learned concepts. A student with difficulty learning is always forgetful, lazy to school activities and sometimes, troublesome.

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