



## INFLUENCE OF COURSE LOAD AND MARITAL STATUS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION STUDENTS IN NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of course-load and marital status on business education students' academic performance in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria. The study had three objectives, and three null hypotheses. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Purposive sampling procedure was used to select five Federal Colleges of Education in North-West, Nigeria and Random sampling was used to select the one hundred and eighty-two Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE III) students of business education. Data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to the sampled respondents. The collection of data was done through personal administration by the researcher and research assistants in each respective colleges of education. Null hypotheses one and two were tested using simple regression analysis while hypothesis three was tested using step-wise regression analysis. Findings of the study revealed that course load and marital status influenced academic performance of Business education students in colleges of education. However, course load (-0.911.) at  $p \leq 0.000$  was the strongest variable with predictive capacity to influence academic performance of business education students and marital status at (-0.627 at  $p \leq 0.001$ ). Based on the study findings, it was concluded that excess course load and family responsibilities lead to poor academic performance of business education students in colleges of education. It was recommended among others that, management of colleges of education should device a stronger means of checking students' course load so that students do not register more than the stipulated maximum credit units prescribed by NCCE minimum standards. Married coupled should learn to help each other either with children care or with household chores. This will go a long way in improving academic performance of married students.

**Keywords:** Course load, Marital status, Academic performance

### INTRODUCTION

Business education is one of the programmes in colleges of education in Nigeria that provides the students with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. For some time, there has been a downturn in the performance of students in business education in colleges of education in the North West Nigeria. This downturn in performance has lead to student's poor performance in business education and a low grade in their CGPA. The situation has lead to a drop in the performance in students' graduation point in the colleges. The poor performance of students could be attributed to excess course load carried and responsibilities in respect of their marital status. Many researchers have tried to investigate into the factors affecting business education students' performance in colleges of education in Nigeria. However, the extent to which course load and marital status influence students' performance in business education is yet to be determined. The focus of this study is to find out the influence of these variables on performance of business education students in colleges of education in North West, Nigeria.

Academic success has a great influence on a student's self-esteem, motivation, and perseverance in higher education. Poor academic performance or high failure rates may result in unacceptable levels of attrition, reduced graduate output and increased cost of education. This also reduces admission opportunities for tertiary students seeking higher degrees. Hence, students' academic performance has always been a topic of interest for educators. Educators and researchers have long been interested in identifying and understanding the variables that contribute to academic excellence. Owen (2007) identified demographic, socio-economic, family and school factors as variables contributing to students' academic performance.

Academic performance is the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important. The academic performance of colleges of education students currently is explained in terms of success or failure of course units, number of courses failed or passed, and

the quality of the grades obtained in terms of the Grade Point Average (GPA) or Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). In some colleges of education in Nigeria, some students are experiencing poor academic performance as their CGPA is usually below 3 (three) points at the time of graduation. Thomas (2012) stated that while other students perform well, a substantial number of students performed poorly. Colleges of education in the North West are no exception to these high failure rates. Over the past five years, many supplementary examinations (Amnesty) were registered per session. This clearly shows the levels of academic performance of the colleges of education.

Research further shows that, course load is one of the major leading cause to poor performance of students (Thomas, 2012). To complete a programme of study successfully, students are required to engage in a number of teacher and/or self-directed learning activities. Learning activities can be divided into three main types: modes of instruction (teacher-directed) Lectures, online, seminars, research seminars, practicals, laboratory work, guided personal study, tutorials, internships, placements, fieldwork, and project work, learning activities; (student-directed) Attending lectures, performing specific assignments, practicing technical or laboratory skills, writing papers, independent and private study, reading books and papers, contributing to online discussion forums, and learning how to give constructive criticism of the work of others, and Assessments; Oral/written examinations, oral presentations, tests, papers/essays, portfolios, reports, continuous assessment, and (final) thesis/dissertation.

Again, research has shown that student workload is one of the most crucial factors affecting student engagement with a course, and overload is one of the main contributors to student drop-out Owen (2007). As a result students have limited time to study. The students also differ in their abilities and will spend different amounts of time on coursework, but they are expected to move at a pace that meets the teacher's expectations of the amount of work that should be completed at each stage of the course.

Marital status refers to whether or not a person aged 15 or over is living in a common law union as well as the legal marital status of those who are not living in common law union (Oniye, 2008). Marital status could mean whether one is married, single or divorced. A person's marital status therefore, indicates whether the person is married or single. It may also apply in some jurisdictions to alternative relationships, such as civil unions and de facto relationships. In most cases, the marriages become chaotic because of the constraints the wife or husband experience to allow the spouses a significant time and peace to pursue their educational career.

NCE III business education students' work-load may be important factors when trying to establish the relationship between their course-load to academic performance. As a result of the above, there is a need to investigate the influence of course load and marital status on performance of business education students in colleges of education in north-west

Nigeria, and this therefore constitutes the background to which the study was conducted.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The poor performance of business education students in colleges of education has become an issue of concern to the students, lecturers and other stakeholders in business education. Performance of students in business education had been dwindling for almost a decade. The researcher's personal observation as regards performance of business education students in colleges of education in North-West Nigeria revealed that students' performance in business education remains poor. Through the researcher's observation over the years only few married students could meet high academic performance of 20% in business education, which to the researcher is far below average and raises serious concern. The work load and family responsibility attached to married students on their academic performance is very pertinent and deserves special attention.

Business education students' statistics has proved over the years that 35-45% performed better in the colleges of education in the North West, while 46-70% performance is relatively poor in the colleges of education in the North West geo-political zone (Hoyle, 2006). It is based on the realization of these circumstances that it became imperative for the researcher to find out the influence of course load and marital status on academic performance of business education students in North West Nigeria.

### Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to assess the influence of course load and marital status on academic performance of business education students in North West Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. determine the influence of course load on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria.
2. assess the influence of marital status on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria.
3. determine the interactive influence of course load and marital status on performance of business education students in colleges of education in north west, Nigeria

### Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a significant level of 0.05.

HO1 Course load has no significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria.

HO2 Marital status has no significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria.

HO3 Course load and marital status have no significant interactive influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Ex-post facto research design was used for this study. The researcher adopted this design because it is a method in which groups with qualities that already exist are compared on some dependent variable. Also, the design uses data already collected not necessarily amassed for research purposes, and in the design less time is involved in conducting the study than by creating new data. Thomas (2012) affirms that ex-post facto design is a design where a researcher obtains existing information from the independent variables. This design is appropriate for the study as the major instrument is students’ result which is already an approved document.

The population for the study was nine hundred and thirteen (913) students, made up of NCE III students from the five (5) federal colleges of education that offer business education programme in North-west, Nigeria for 2016/2017 academic session. In order to get reasonable representation for the study,

the researchers targeted twenty percent (20%) of N.C.E III students from each of the five federal colleges of education using random sampling techniques. A sample of one hundred and eighty two (182) N.C.E. III students was involved in the study. Furthermore, this study employed simple random sampling technique in order to avoid bias and to ensure that each NCE III student had an equal chance of being selected. Two instruments were used for data collection. First, a structured questionnaire titled the influence of course load and marital status on academic performance of business education students in North West Nigeria was used to collect data from the respondents. Regression analysis was used to achieve the specific objectives of the study and to test the null hypotheses, this is because according to Osuala (2004) it is used to test hypothesis on influence between independent and dependent variables. For the students’ scores (results), weighted mean score of 50 and above was considered as accepted, while a weighted mean score of below 50 was considered as not accepted. In the test of null hypotheses, where the calculated values were less than the percentage level of significance, the null hypotheses were rejected

**RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

**Hypothesis one:** Course load has no significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria.

**Table 1: Regression analysis of influence of workload on academic Performance of Business education students in colleges of education students in North West zone, Nigeria**

Model	Coefficients	SE	T	Sig
Constant	37.395	2.097	17.833	0.000
course load	-0.416	0.128	-3.250	0.000

R squared 0.685  
R squared adjusted 0.671

The regression analysis in Table 10 above shows that the R<sup>2</sup> of 68.5 percent and the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> 67.1 percent which explained the total contribution of the independent variable (workload) on the dependent variable (performance of business education students). The variable coefficient (-0.416) which shows the percentage contribution of the variable’s influence on the dependent variable indicated that one unit increase in students

course loads during the semester will decrease students’ academic performance by -0.416 units. The result shows that the probability level of 0.000 was lower than the set *a priori* value of 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which states that course load has no significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in North West Nigeria was rejected

**Hypothesis two:** Marital status has no significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria.

**Table 2: Regression analysis of influence of marital status on academic performance of Business education in colleges of education students in North West zone, Nigeria**

Model	Coefficients	SE	T	Sig
<b>Constant</b>	33.142	2.797	11.849	0.000
<b>Marital status</b>	-0.066	0.041	-1.609	0.002
<b>R squared</b>	0.633			
<b>R squared adjusted</b>	0.601			

As shown in Table 11, the findings of the study revealed that 60 percent of students academic performance has been explained by marital status of the students while on the other hand, the variable coefficient of marital status (-0.066) had inversely influenced student's academic performance and statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.002$ . The probability level of 0.002 was lower than the set *a priori* value of 0.05 percent level of significance. The null hypothesis which states that marital status has no significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria is rejected.

**Hypothesis three:** Course load, marital status and place have no significant interactive influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria

**Table 3: Stepwise regression analysis of interactional influence of workload, and marital status on academic performance of Business education students in colleges of education in North West zone, Nigeria**

Model	Coefficients	SE	R	T	Sig
<b>Constant</b>	41.135	2.035	-	20.214	0.000
<b>1. Course load</b>	-0.911	0.264	0.366	-3.451	0.000
<b>2. Marital status</b>	-0.627	0.385	0.274	-1.628	0.001
<b>R squared</b>	0.732				
<b>R squared adjusted</b>	0.716				

A stepwise regression analysis was used to select the predictors of student's academic performance in colleges of education with strong influence. The study findings in Table 13 show the strong order of influence of the two independent variables (course load, and marital status). All the two independent variables included in the model statistically and significantly influenced academic performance of business education students in colleges of education. Furthermore, the model was observed to be statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.000$  and accounted for approximately 72% of the variance of the academic performance ( $R^2 = 0.732$ ; Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.716$ ). Yet, the study findings show that course load (-0.911.) at  $p \leq 0.000$  was the strongest variable with predictive capacity to influence academic performance of business education students. Marital status (-0.627 at  $p \leq 0.001$ ) was the next variable in the strong order of influence. The probability values obtained at  $p \leq 0.000$  and at  $p \leq 0.001$  were lower than the *a priori* significance level

of  $p \leq 0.05$ . The null hypothesis which states that course load, and marital status have no significant interactive influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria is rejected.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study revealed that students who registered for the maximum credit units fall below the average score of 50 percent acceptable bench mark. This implies that course load has more likelihood to have influenced students' academic performance of business education students in colleges of education in North-West, Nigeria. A test of hypothesis one showed that the probability level of 0.000 was lower than the set *a priori* value of 0.005 percent level of significance, which means that course-load had significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding supports the earlier finding of Sajjad (2012) who found that student workload is one

of the most crucial factors influencing students' performance, and overload is one of the main contributors to student falling below average. Moses (2014) also discovered that course load influence the way students learn. A further test of the item using null hypothesis two revealed that marital status had significant influence on performance of business education students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria. Hence, the null hypothesis rejected. This agreed with Thomas (2012) who asserts that academic activities are times sacrificed in order to meet the expectations of the extended family and this is one of the pressures that the married students face in performing academic activities.

The study equally revealed that there is interactive influence of the independent variables on academic performance of business education students in colleges of education in North West, Nigeria. The stepwise interaction which analyzed the three variables together showed that the independent variables included in the model statistically and significantly influenced academic performance of business education students in colleges of education. However, course load (-0.911.) at  $p \leq 0.000$  was the strongest variable with predictive capacity to influence academic performance of Business education students followed by Marital status (-0.627 at  $p \leq 0.001$ ) and least influenced by place of residence (0.351 at  $p \leq 0.000$ ) in that order. The probability values obtained were lower than the *a priori* significance level of  $p \leq 0.005$ . Therefore, course-load and marital status have significant influence on performance of students in colleges of education in northwest Nigeria. The study contradicts the findings of Hosea (2011) who stated that course-load and marital status have no significant influence on academic performance of college students.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings, it was concluded that the independent variables (course-load, and marital status) negatively influenced business education students' academic performance in colleges of education. However, Course load was the strongest variable with predictive capacity to influence academic performance of business education students and least influenced by marital status in that order. This shows students excess course load, and at the same time faced with family responsibility faced and challenges concentrates less on their academic activities. This may result to poor academic performance of students academically.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were made:

1. To enable students perform better in business education in colleges of education, the 2012

NCCE minimum standard should be reviewed so as to replace some of the theory courses with practical or skills based courses.

2. Management of colleges of education should device a stronger means of checking students' course load so that students do not register more than the stipulated maximum credit units provided in the NCCE minimum standards.
3. The NCCE should as a matter of urgency caution any college of education that allows students to register more course units than the units stipulated in the minimum standard.
4. Married coupled should learn to help each other either with children care or with household chores. This will go a long way in improving academic performance of married students.

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