Determinants of Students' Aspiration for Higher Education in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the determinants of Students' Aspiration for Higher Education in Rivers State. Two research questions and Two null hypotheses were used for the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 1,200 Business students with sample size of 360 respondents were selected using stratified random sampling from higher institutions of learning in Rivers State. A structured and validated instrument titled "determinants of Students' Aspiration for Higher Education Questionnaire" was used to elicit data for the study. Cronbach Alpha procedure was used to establish the reliability of the instrument with a coefficient of 0.82 which showed that the instrument was reliable.

Keywords: Higher Education, Aspiration, Business students,

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, Education for all has become the major concern of education stakeholders, the government, educational administrators, teachers, parents, and the wider society. Thus, the perception and aspiration for education has moved to a new dimension. This can be ascertained in the level of demand and aspirations for higher educational programmes among the youths. Education has a broad and comprehensive curriculum at primary, post-primary and institutions of higher learning that provides students with meaningful instruction for and about aspiration, enrollment and achievement in education and its goals (Egbunefu, 2014). The purpose of education is to facilitate the integration of a students' total personality. The activities, procedures and aspiration in education is a process that brings change. An individual, who has learnt something, acts in a different fashion from the person who has not learnt (Nwafor, 2007). The aspiration for higher education by some students is being ignited by some factors, which propel students' aspiration for higher learning.

Education therefore, means the process of bringing up people to know their environment and how they can contribute in the development of society. Education is also the stimulus that can trigger man's potentials to their proper use. A student who is privileged to come from a responsible and well to do family will be properly focused in achieving a higher level of educational enrolment. Sompri (2014) stated that for a student to be successful at the level of higher education, he needs strong financial support. Inadequate financial support and lack of motivational backup both from the academic environment and parents may hinder the academic pursuit of such student.

Quality attainment of higher education has become a reality. Not only is education being offered more widely, but it now has different goals associated with its pursuit. Some environmental changes in the society as well as social political and economic activities have brought changes and influence in pursuit of students in the higher education in Nigeria. The last fifteen (15) years of Nigerian uninterrupted democratic government has witnessed a progressive transformation in areas of technology, social activities, politics as well as economical activities, which led to increase in academic demand for

aspirations and enrolment into higher education. Some years back aspiration for higher education was based on parental status. Education serves as a means of socialization and social control and it helps to encourage young people to develop as good citizens and prepare them for employment and for productive contributions to society. Education in whatever form is indispensable for the production and repositioning of a given community.

Education simply means an act or experience that affects the character, mind and vision of an individual that may bring about positive changes in a man's life. It is a process where an individual learns something new. Education in general and particularly in higher education provides high level man power required for different sectors of national economy. As such, the aspiration for higher education needs not to be neglected.

Education is a universal practice or phenomenon engaged in all societies at all stages of development. Education is also described as the total processes of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, valuable skills developed and trained (Aminigo & Douglas, 2013). The interest in aspiration of students in higher education has been attributed to demand for social stratification and competitive salary wage in the labour Market. The increase in number of applicants (students) in higher education programme call for expansion and continuous opening of both public and private higher institutions of learning as well as job opportunities.

Statement of the Problem

Education has remained a social process in capacity building, utilization and maintenance of societal order for decades; it is a weapon for acquiring skills, relevant knowledge and habits for survival in a changing world order. Education and aspiration of youths into higher education programmes is therefore aimed at preparing and producing teachers, entrepreneurs. medical doctors, scientists. Financial experts, lawyers, accountants etc, that will contribute to economic development, self-reliance and societal growth through quality teaching and learning in conducive learning environment. However, there seems to be a continuous increase in students' aspiration for higher education in Rivers State and Nigeria at large. It is becoming clearer that the increase of students' aspiration for higher education programmes in Rivers State is generating interesting questions. The backlog of illiterates, touts and school drop-out has drastically reduced. What must have been the sudden change?

The Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (2006) opined that there is an increase in students' aspiration in higher education in Nigeria. More so, there seems to be an increase in unemployed graduates in Nigeria due to an increase in number of graduates being produced by institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. That being so a research-based knowledge gap seems to have been created, which this study attempted to fill empirically. Therefore, the problem of this study was to examine factors that determine students' aspiration for higher education in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate variables that determine students' aspiration for higher education in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are;

1. To determine whether the personal interest of students can influence their aspiration for higher education.
2. To identify whether parental status can influence students' aspiration for higher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent does the personal interests of students, influence their aspiration for higher education?
2. To what extent does parental socio-economic status influence students' aspiration for higher education?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated from the research questions:

Ho$_1$: There is no significant relationship between students' interest and aspiration for higher education.

H0$_2$: There is no significant relationship between students' parental Socio-economic status and students' aspiration for higher education.

METHODS
The study employed a correlational research design. The study adopted a correlational design because it attempted to establish the relationship between the independent variables (Interest and parental background and the dependent variables students' Aspiration for higher education). The target population for this study consists of one thousand, two hundred (1,200) respondents (that is, 600 students from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, and 600 students from the Rivers State University of Education). The choice of the population is based on the fact that the two universities offer Business Education programme at undergraduate degree levels. The sample size used in this study comprised of three (360) hundred and sixty Business Education students as respondents (that is, 180 students from the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, and 180 students from the Ignatius Ajuru, University of Education, Port Harcourt) randomly selected for the study. The sample size is a representation of 30% of the target population for the study. Stratified random sampling procedure was employed to select the sample size. A structured research instrument was used to collect data for study. The first part of structured instruments contained personal data such as name of school and level of the class of the respondents. The instruments are of 4-point type of Likert type of scale. The research instrument has the options of Strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Disagree 2, and strongly disagree 1. The research instrument was face-validated. The research instrument was validated by two (2) specialists in Business Education department and one (1) specialist in Measurement and Evaluation all from the Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. The experts were selected based on the fact that they acquired the expert knowledge and experience in test construction and have been using similar research instrument in eliciting information for the purpose of study. They checked and studied the quality and relevance of the item including appropriateness, clarity and sufficiency of the instruments for collecting required information (responses) from the respondents for the study. All input which were in the form of correction or comments from the experts, were adequately utilized to modify the research instruments administered to the respondents. To establish the reliability of the five (5) structured instruments, test re-test method was employed by the researcher. The instruments were pre-tested through test re-test method, using forty (40) Business Education students. Twenty (20) undergraduate Business Education students were selected from University of Uyo, while the other twenty (20) undergraduate Business Education students were selected from University of Calabar. The choice of two universities used to test the reliability is that the two (2) universities offer business education as a course of study. The research instrument was administered to the respondents and after a period of two (2) weeks interval, the same research instruments were re-administered to the same group of respondents. The coefficient of the responses was computed using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient of data collected. The reliability of the five (5) structured instruments were found to be 0.73 and 0.75, thus confirming that the instrument is reliable hence measured what they purported to measure. The researcher employed the services of two (2) research assistants to administer the instruments to the respondents. The research assistants were trained on how to administer the instruments. The researcher ensured copies of the instruments adequately administered to the respondents were carefully filled, completely retrieved and used for the study. Data collected was analyzed based on item-by-item analysis. Mean and standard deviation scores were computed to answer the five (5) research questions. The five (5) null hypotheses for this study were tested the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation at a significant level of $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS
Research Question 1: *To what extent does the personal interests of students, influence their aspiration for higher education?*
Table 2: Mean scores of respondents' opinion on the influence of personal interest on students' aspiration for higher education.

S/N	ITEMS	REPONSES				TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
		SA	A	SD	D			
1.	I have personal interest for higher education	169	93	17	81	360	3.0	Accepted
2.	Higher education is a good venture	126	143	42	49	360	3.0	Accepted
3.	I will like to attend my higher education	155	146	50	19	360	3.7	Accepted
4.	Aspiration for higher education is my highest priority	112	162	49	37	360	3.0	Accepted
5.	I hate higher education programmes	12	43	119	185	360	1.8	Rejected
	Total	**575**	**587**	**277**	**371**	**1800**		

Table 1 above shows that personal interests of students significantly influence their aspiration for higher education. Mean scores of 3.0 and 3.7 were derived from the analysis of items one, two, three, and four respectively. These indicate that students have personal determination for higher education. They see higher education as a good venture and they will like to forward their studies. However, a mean score of 1.7 was gotten from item 5. This indicates a total rejection of the postulation that students hate higher education programmes.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does parental socio-economic status influence students' aspiration for higher education?*

Table 2: **Mean score of respondents' opinion on the influence of parental status on students' aspiration for higher education.**

S/N	ITEMS	REPONSES				TOTAL	MEAN	DECISION
		SA	A	SD	D			
6.	My parents are wealthy to sponsor me in higher education education	63	18	198	81	360	2.1	Accepted
7.	My parents are interested to fund my higher education.	43	57	142	128	360	2.1	Rejected
8.	My parents are poor so I cannot aspire for higher education.	177	86	17	80	360	3.0	Accepted
9.	My parents are illiterate and will not sponsor my higher education.	121	163	68	8	360	3.1	Accepted
10.	My parents are traders so I will like to be a businessman.	149	93	65	53	360	2.9	Rejected
	Total	**553**	**417**	**490**	**350**	**1800**		

Analysis of data in table 4.2 above indicates that parental socio-economic status influence students' aspiration for higher education to a large extent. Items si and seven of the research instrument yielded the mean score of 2.1 which means that a majority of the respondents lack the fund as well as interest to sponsor them in Higher institutions. On the other hand, items eight, nine, and ten yielded the mean scores of 3.0, 3.1, and 2.9 respectively. These scores indicate that the respondents' parents are poor and illiterate so do not have the zeal to cater for their children's higher education program.

Hypothesis 1
There is no significant relationship between students' interest and aspiration for higher education.
Table 3: Computation of chi-square value of respondent's opinion on relationship between students' interest and aspiration for higher education

Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	$(Fo-Fe)^2$	$\dfrac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
163	115	54	2916	25.4
93	174	-81	6561	37.7
17	55	-38	1444	26.3
81	74	7	49	0.7
126	115	11	121	1.1
143	174	31	961	5.5
42	55	13	169	3.1
49	74	25	625	8.4
155	115	-40	1600	13.9
146	174	-28	784	4.5
50	55	-5	25	0.5
19	74	-55	3025	40.9
112	115	-3	9	0.07
162	174	-12	144	0.8
49	55	-6	36	0.7
37	74	-37	1369	18.5
13	115	-102	10404	90.5
43	174	-131	17161	98.6
119	55	64	4096	74.5
185	74	111	12,321	166.5

Total = 618.2

Table 4.5 above show that there is a significant relationship between students' interest and aspiration for higher education. The calculated Chi-square value (618.2) is greater than the tabulated Chi-square value (32.4 10) at 0.05 using 20 as the degree of freedom. Therefore, null hypothesis one is rejected.

Test of Hypotheses
Hypothesis 2
There is no significant relationship between students' parental socio-economic status and students' aspiration for higher education.

Table 4: **Computation of chi-square value on the parental socio-economic status and students' aspiration relationship between for higher education.**

Fo	Fe	Fo-Fe	(Fo-Fe)^2	$\dfrac{(Fo - Fe)^2}{Fe}$
63	110	47	2209	20.1
18	83	-65	4225	50.9
198	98	100	10,000	102.0
81	70	11	121	1.7
43	110	-67	4489	40.8
57	83	-26	676	8.1
142	98	44	1936	19.8
128	70	58	3364	48.0
177	110	67	4489	40.8
86	83	3	9	0.1
17	98	-81	6561	69.9
80	70	10	100	1.4
121	110	11	121	1.1
163	83	80	6400	77.1
68	98	-30	900	9.2
8	70	-62	3844	54.9
149	110	39	1521	13.8
93	83	10	100	1.2
65	98	-33	1089	11.1
53	70	-17	289	4.1
				Total = 576.1

Table 4 above shows that null hypothesis two is rejected. The tabulated chi-square value (31.410) is less than the calculated Chi-square value of 576.1 above. Thus, there is a significant relationship between students' parental socio-economic status and students' aspiration for higher education.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
Results from the study are shown below:
The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between students' interest and aspiration for higher education. The calculated Chi-square value (618.2) in Table 4.5 is greater than the tabulated Chi-square value (32.410) at 0.05 using 20 as the degree of freedom. Therefore, null hypothesis one is rejected. The result of the study is in consonance with the findings of Mallum (1990) who stated that the impact of association with close friends overrides the influence of the global norm structure in the school. It was also shown that there is a significant relationship between students' parental socio-economic status and students' aspiration for higher education. This is in accordance with the findings of Abdul (2007) who carried out a research study on 500 students among other variables such as intellectual ability and parents' expectations. Fafunwa (2000) also stated that parents who attain higher educational level would also expect and encourage their children to attain higher educational programmes. Similarly, Balogun

(2008) stressed that educated parents review their children's progress in school, review available evaluative information such as testing vocational and interest inventories. Performance of this function enhances the actualization of different plans, which children have for the future. In addition, Woger in Abdul (2007) studied the influence of parent's education and the level of job aspirations of adolescents in secondary schools. Her study revealed that adolescents whose parents were well educated aspire to tread highly.

CONCLUSION
Based on the results and findings of this research work, the researcher therefore noted that the personal interest of the students influences their higher education programme aspiration. It was also noted that students' interest propels them to aspire for higher education programmes in Rivers State. The results and findings of this study also revealed that parental socio-economic status influences students' aspiration for higher education and that parental educational background influences students' aspiration for higher education.
Conclusively, the results and findings of this research study revealed that peer group influences and societal value influence students' aspiration for higher education in Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:
1. Students should be allowed to make their choices of academic attainment of their interest.
2. Government should ensure adequate and easy aspiration and enrolment of students in higher education by giving scholarships, reduction of school fees and providing jobs to parents as to enable students to aspire for higher education.
3. Parents should monitor and investigate the company which their children are keeping, to avoid peer group that would mislead them.
4. The society should be educated on the importance of higher education programme.
5. Parents should ensure that their children aspire and enroll for higher education programmes, irrespective of their (parents) educational background their financial status.
6. Government should ensure that the importance of higher education is made known to the general public by providing employment for higher education graduates.

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