

Affective Variables and Tendency towards *Sorting* among University Undergraduates in Cross River State

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Abstract: - This study investigated affective variables and tendency towards sorting among university undergraduates in Cross River State. The study adopted correlational research design. The sample for the study was 472 year three students out of a population of about 4,721 students. Data was collected using Affective Variables and Tendency Towards Sorting Questionnaire" (AVTTSQ). Data collected was analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression tested at .05 level of significance. The results revealed that affective variables had significant relationship with tendency towards sorting among the students and the affective variables collectively predicted tendency towards sorting. It was recommended that the students should be counselled on the need to manage their anxiety so as to boost their emotional intelligence and reduce their tendency towards sorting.

Key words: Affective variables, emotional intelligence, anxiety, attitude and tendency towards sorting.

Chairman of Independent Corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC) Nta (2012) lamented that corruption has eroded creativity, played down the value of hard work, and enthroned mediocrity in the nation's university system. He added that some university teachers in Nigeria have sunk into the shameful abyss of moral decadence, becoming sex bullies as a result of their unbridled lust for female undergraduates they are paid to teach. He asserted that education is directly responsible for developing strong character, and universities are set up to push forward the frontiers of knowledge, transform people's lives and contribute to health and wealth of our nation through their deep involvement in wider society and the economy.

According to Salisu (2006), corruption constitutes or affects over 60 per cent of the gross domestic product of the country when estimated by the size of the hidden economy. Indeed, Transparency International has consistently rated Nigeria among the most corrupt nations in the world since it began publication of its annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI). Jang (2005) reports that corruption transverses the Nigerian political, economic, and social landscape. The education sector features prominently in corruption in Nigeria. For example, in 2004 a Federal Minister of Education was dismissed from office for attempting to bribe members of the country's National Assembly, and both the Nigeria Corruption Index and the Examination Malpractice Index show that certain forms of corruption as well as citizens' perceptions of corruption are on the increase (Independent Advocacy Project, 2005, 2007).

There are various degrees of corrupt practices in Nigeria. For instance Nta (2012) reported that from petitions from students, members of staff, unions and other stakeholders, corrupt practices in the university system include: admission racketeering, examination misconduct, falsification of academic records such as transcripts, sexual harassment and victimization of applicants, victimization of students by officials, lack of commitment to work by lecturers, syndicated plagiarism by students and staff, delay or non-payment of gratuities and pension to pensioners and non-adherence to bidding processes in award of contracts. Others include, illegal accreditation process through deception, running unapproved study centres, affiliating programmes to accredited schools, establishing and operating unapproved and

I. INTRODUCTION

Among the factors generally implicated for the current deplorable quality and state of higher education in Nigeria is corruption among politicians, bureaucrats, and faculty and staff of many higher education establishments. Corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal activity undertaken by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority often to acquire unlawful benefits. According to Hallak and Poisson (2002), corruption in the education sector can be defined as the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and has impact on access, quality or equity in education.

Corruption is believed to be widespread in the Nigerian education system. Corruption in higher education is a universal problem (Hallak & Poisson, 2007; Heyneman, 2011; Johnson, 2007; Osipian, 2007b) which assumes diverse forms in the different regions of the world. The education sector is regarded as one of the most corrupt sectors in Nigeria. It was rated the fourth most corrupt at 63 per cent in 2005. By 2007 it had become the third most corrupt sector with 74 per cent of respondents reporting encounter with bribery in the sector (Adeniyi & Taiwo, 2011; Independent Advocacy Project, 2005, 2007).

Nigerian university education has been alleged to be afflicted by various corrupt practices. The then Acting

illegal universities (Nta, 2013; Admin, 2014). Hallack and Possion (2007) pointed out that corruption constitutes a serious threat to the successful achievement of educational goals. Okojie (2012) in acknowledgment of the corrupt practices existing in universities, submitted that corruption has taken different dimension ranging from cheating in examination, 'sorting' lecturers to earn undeserved marks and non-processing of students' results among others.

Sorting is a process by which students pay in cash or kind to be awarded unmerited marks by lecturers after examination or test. Osunde (2012) observed that 'sorting', a nickname for academic corruption has lately become endemic in our tertiary institutions. Osunde (2012) defined *sorting* as a system through which deficient students engage in gratification of their lecturers with items such as money, expensive gifts and even sex in the case of female students, in order to obtain good grades in examinations. He further observed that some lecturers frustrate students for refusing to cooperate making them to have carry-overs, extensions, missing scores and even poor grades because of failure to sort. *Sorting* has been noted as one of the corrupt practices that is fast destroying the rubrics of academic standards in the universities. This form of academic corruption constitutes threat to the standards and goals of university education. It has been alleged that university managers and administrators are paying lip-service towards stemming the menace. For instance, Osunde (2012) observed that school authorities are not helping matters as they know lecturers who are involved, but nothing is being done.

Admin (2014) sees *sorting* as a situation where students liaise with their lecturers and other officials to inflate grades in exchange for money or other form of gratification. *Sorting* also known as 'runs' or 'blocking' has become a campus culture in the universities such that a student will never graduate if he or she fails to sort or pay the project supervisor or invigilator. The situation has gone so bad that there is hardly a graduate from Nigerian university who never sorted in one way or the other. Various tactics are adopted by lecturers to arm-twist students: irregular attendance of lecture, teaching very large class without public address system, announcing through the course representative (Course Rep) that anyone who pays certain amount will get extra mark and by setting questions out of course contents. These are some of the ways this act is being perpetrated. This trend has compelled students to keep a good proportion of their up-keep allowance from their parents for that purpose.

The rate of sorting in Nigerian universities has become worrisome especially when those (university managers and administrators) who are to manage it are involved. Orizu (2014) stated that there is concern that students are no more committed and dedicated to their academic work due to the belief that even after 'burning the night candle', you will still be compelled to sort. This is a simple way of grooming lazy youths who will not believe in hard work, who will be deficient in knowledge and skills

required to develop the economy of Nigerian nation. No wonder if you visit some campuses during examinations you hardly see students reading, preparing for examinations. They are only eager to enter the examination hall, register their names and the rest will be done later. Admin (2014) noted that some students spend hours in the library studying academic materials and burning the mid-night candles, while some students simply sort their ways to the top. Herald (2014) argued that nowadays, it is not through reading that people pass courses, that students read from morning till night, work very hard but at the end of the day they will not have good grades. He lamented that a lot of lecturers no longer bother to come to class to teach. Students are no more interested in acquiring skills and knowledge for sustainable development.

Students' affective variables might have a role to play in their tendency towards *sorting*. The affective variable is a learning motivation aspect which is part of the affective domain. Affect refers to the emotions, attitudes, feelings and beliefs that condition behaviour. A primary affective variable is motivation. That is, one's emotions, feelings and attitudes influence one's perceptions of an event; thereby determining what one thinks about and does before, during and after the event. Research has found that when students are motivated, they are more likely to be successful. Motivation has been conceptualized many ways, and several theories have been posited to explain what motivates students. Other affective factors have also been identified. There are many ways teachers can use their knowledge of the affective variable to help students in the classroom.

Purpose of the study

Specifically, the study investigated the following:

1. The relationship between the affective variables (emotional intelligence, anxiety and attitude towards learning) and undergraduates' tendency towards *sorting*.
2. The combined and relative predictive impact of affective variables on tendency towards *sorting* among undergraduates of University of Calabar.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between affective variables (emotional intelligence, anxiety and attitude towards learning) and undergraduates' tendency towards *sorting*?
2. What is the combined and relative predictive impact of affective variables on tendency towards *sorting* among undergraduates of University of Calabar?

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted correlational research design. Correlational research design according to Idaka and Anagbogu (2012) is a non-experimental research approach that attempts to find the nature of the relationships between a

set of variables. Basically, there are two forms of correlational designs namely: relational design and prediction design. For the purpose of this study, prediction design was adopted to identify variables that can effectively predict some outcome or criterion. The sample for the study comprised 472 year three students (225 males and 247 females) randomly selected in the area out of a population of about 4,721 students. The instrument used in data collection for the study was “Affective Variables and Tendency Towards Sorting Questionnaire” (AVTTSQ). The AVTTSQ comprised three sections: A, B and C.

Section A of the AVTTSQ collected data on the demographic information of the students such as sex while Section B was used in collecting data for measuring affective variables of the subjects with 18 items (six for each of the affective variable) and Section C measured their tendency

towards *sorting* with ten items. Sections B and C of the AVTTSQ were measured on a modified 4-point Likert type scale. The instrument was validated by three research experts while the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha reliability method which gave a reliability coefficient that ranged from .74 for anxiety to .78 for emotional intelligence. Data collection was done by the researcher and the data collected were analyzed using Multiple Linear Regression analysis tested at .05 level of significance.

III. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Research question one

What is the relationship between affective variables (emotional intelligence, anxiety and attitude towards learning) and undergraduates’ tendency towards *sorting*?

TABLE 1: Descriptive statistics and Inter-correlation among the variables (N=472)

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Tendency towards sorting	23.65	4.14	1.000			
Emotional intelligence	14.17	4.18	-.177*	1.000		
Anxiety	17.55	4.01	.685*	-.124*	1.000	
Attitude towards learning	12.66	3.56	-.334*	.415*	-2.73*	1.000

*Significant at .05 level of significance; p<.05.

The results of the inter-correlation coefficient analysis as presented in Table 1 showed that the mean scores of the subject in emotional intelligence, anxiety and attitude towards learning were 14.17, 17.55 and 12.66 respectively, while their mean score in tendency towards *sorting* was 23.65. The results in Table 1 further showed that emotional intelligence and attitude towards learning had significant negative relationship with the subjects’ tendency to *sort*. A further study of the results showed that anxiety had a significant positive relationship with students’ tendency

towards *sorting*. It was also observed that emotional intelligence had a significant positive relationship with attitude towards learning, while anxiety had significant negative relationship with emotional intelligence and attitude towards learning.

Research question two

What is the combined and relative predictive impact of affective variables on tendency towards *sorting* among undergraduates of University of Calabar?

TABLE 2: Multiple Regression Analysis showing the combined predictive impact of affective variables and tendency towards *sorting*

Multiple R	=	.703
Multiple R ²	=	.494
Multiple R ² (Adjusted)	=	.491
Standard Error of Estimation	=	2.950

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-level
Regression	4015.653	3	1338.551	153.791*	.000
Residual	4108.151	472	8.704		
Total	8123.805	475			

* Significant at .05 level of significance; p<.05.

As presented in Table 2, the results of the multiple regression analysis indicates that when the independent variables are taken together, they significantly predicted students tendency towards sorting ($F_{(2, 472)} = 153.791$ with a p-value of .000). The combined contributions of the independent variables to students' tendency towards sorting produced a multiple regression (R) coefficient of .703 and an adjusted (standardized) multiple R-square (R^2) of .491. The adjusted multiple R-square (R^2) of .491 implies that when the independent variables were taken together, they accounted for 49.1% of the total variance in students tendency to *sort*.

To find out the relative contributions of each of the independent variables to the students' tendency towards

sorting, a test of regression weight was carried out. As presented in Table 3, the results of the data analysis showed that with standardised regression weights (Beta) of -.038, .642 and -.143 respectively for emotional intelligence, anxiety and attitude towards learning, anxiety and attitude towards learning are dependable predictors of students' tendency towards sorting. Emotional intelligence on the other hand, is not empirically confirmed as a predictor of students' tendency towards *sorting*. In terms of magnitude of the contribution: anxiety contributed most to the prediction of students' tendency towards sorting followed by attitude towards learning and emotional intelligence respectively.

TABLE 3: Test of regression weights for contributions of each of the affective variables on students' tendency towards sorting

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-level
(Constant)	14.681	.951		15.445*	.000
Emotional intelligence	-.038	.036	-.038	-1.067*	.287
Anxiety	.662	.035	.642	18.857*	.000
Attitude towards learning	-.166	.043	-.143	-3.850*	.000

Dependent variable: Students' tendency towards sorting.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result revealed that emotional intelligence and attitude towards learning had significant negative relationship with tendency towards sorting while anxiety had significant positive relationship with tendency towards sorting. This result is not surprising because students' emotional intelligence and their attitude towards learning are expected to make them to have confidence in their study and this will make them not to hope on sorting while anxiety is expected to make the students to have less confidence about themselves which will make them to look for other avenue such as sorting to pass their examination. The result also revealed that the combined contribution of affective variables produced an F-ratio of 153.791 with a p-value of .000, which is statistically significant at .05 level of significance. This result indicated that self affective variables are significant predictors of tendency towards sorting among undergraduates of University of Calabar.

Affective variables accounted for 49.1 percent of the variance in students' tendency towards sorting. The result indicated that anxiety had the greatest and positive prediction in students' tendency towards sorting followed by attitude towards learning (negative prediction) and emotional intelligence having the least prediction on students' tendency towards sorting which is also negative. The finding is not surprising because these affective variables have a great role in students' education.

The finding as regards emotional intelligence is in agreement with researchers such as Parker, Creques, Harris, Majeski, Wood and Hogan (2003) who stated that emotional

competencies are crucial to excellent academic performance. Low and Nelson (2004) also propose that emotional intelligence competencies are crucial to the academic performance of students. The finding of this study also agreed with that of Maraichelvi and Ryan (2013) who found out that a positive connection between emotional intelligence and academic performance. Studying medical students, Chew, Zain and Hassan (2013) found that emotionally intelligent students performed better in both tests and examinations. This will make students not to have much tendency towards sorting.

The finding as regards to anxiety is in consensus with that of Bouras and Holt (2007) who stated that anxiety is a psychological and physiological state characterized by physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural components. Anxiety means trouble; in either presence or absence of psychological stress, anxiety can create a feeling of fear, worry, uneasiness, and dread. It is considered to be a normal response to stress. Also, Putman (2010) also agreed by stating that anxiety surrounding examination and other specific situations affects approximately 25% to 40% of individuals. The finding also concur with the view of Mazzone, Ducci, Scoto, Passaniti, D'Arrigo and Vitiello (2007) who stated that anxiety interferes with school functioning only when an abnormal level is reached, where as within normal range, being anxious does not automatically imply worst school functioning and indeed may to a certain extent be motivating and enhancing to academic performance.

Based on attitude towards learning, the finding is in agreement with the studies by Liu, Maddox, and Johnson (2004) who indicated that studies have suggested that

students' computer attitudes are related to their success in learning computer technology, and investigated how positive attitudes might transfer to increased achievement. The authors reported that four computer attitude variables (enjoyment, motivation, importance, and freedom of anxiety) have linear relationships with computer achievement (Liu, Maddux, & Johnson, 2004). They summarized by saying that at least from one perspective, positive attitudes are transferred into higher achievement.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that affective variables collectively significantly predicted tendency towards *sorting* among undergraduate students of University of Calabar. Anxiety had the greatest and significant positive impact on students' tendency towards *sorting* while attitude towards learning had significant negative influence on the students' tendency towards *sorting* and emotional intelligence had a negative impact on the students' tendency towards *sorting* but it was not statistically significant.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this, it was recommended that:

1. The students should be counselled on the need to manage their anxiety.
2. The students should also be encouraged to develop positive attitude towards their studies.
3. Challenging tasks should be given to the students which will boost their emotional intelligence.
4. Adequate investigations should be made by the Management Board of the university so as to identify and punish those greatly involved in *sorting*.

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