

# PERSONAL FACTORS INFLUENCING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' STUDIES

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## **ABSTRACT**

*University students face a lot of challenges that influence their academic activities. Such challenges are observed to be caused by personal or institutional factors which could lead to poor performance if not addressed. This study examined personal factors affecting students' studies that could result in low academic performance among education students in Ekiti State University. The population comprised all education students in the Faculty of Education. A sample of 195 students was selected from 400 level through convenience sampling technique. A self-designed and validated questionnaire was used to solicit response from respondents while split-half method was employed to test for reliability which yielded 0.79 coefficients. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics at 0.05 alpha level. Findings revealed that low study habit, overload of academic work, lack of learning materials, living off campus, influence of social media, and inability to manage time were personal factors affecting students' studies in the university. The study recommended among others that students need to manage and prioritise time spent on academic tasks in order to work more efficiently to achieve desired academic goal.*

## **KEYWORDS**

*Personal factors, Students' studies, University, Academic activities, Performance*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Education is a process through which individual acquires knowledge, skills, competences and aptitudes to fit properly into the society and contribute meaningfully to its growth. Education is germane to sustainable development as it imparts the knowledge and skills that drive the economy. Adeoluwa (2017) was of the view that it is with sound education that the society reviews its goals and methods and charts a new course for the attainment of its development. University education is an advanced level of education offered after successful completion of secondary education. University education is important due to its numerous benefits such as award of certificate to prove proficiency in a specialised field of study, provision of gainful employment, acquisition of real life experiences, acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills for ensuring financial freedom and helping individuals live redefined, purposeful and self-discovery life. World Bank (2021) highlighted the benefits of tertiary education to include higher employment, higher wages, greater social stability, increased civic engagement and better health outcomes. Higher education is instrumental in fostering growth, reducing poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

Offer of admission into university by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in Nigeria is usually met with gladsome mind and a lot of jubilation by parents and most especially the ward concerned. It is a known fact that this offer cannot come without the ward having put in

all their best at the various stages of examinations prior to writing the ultimate JAMB examination. A good performance that earns a child university admission without much stress usually comes as fulfilment of the expectation of the parents as the child commences a journey into another new life of campus rigorous academic activities that would determine their future prospect. In the past, any grade after completion of university education was worth celebrating and capable of securing a well-paid job. Currently, companies that pay well do scarcely require anything less than second class upper division grade. To complete university education with a good grade presupposes that students must have painstakingly engaged in study activities that ultimately result in exceptional performance. In view of this, Kapur (2018) declared that in order to attain educational qualification and to enhance one's skills and abilities, it is vital to do well academically and obtain good grades.

Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti is a non-residential state owned institution where students pay moderate school fees and pay for accommodation in hostels owned by private individuals. As a common practice in higher institutions of learning in this digital age, students are mandated to register on the University portal on semester basis. A duly registered student will have access to information on academic matters, progress report, information from management and other matters. Portal registration strictly requires mandatory payment of acceptance fees (for new entrants only), tuition fee, smart school fee among others. Being a non-residential institution, the students have options of living in the university hostel, outside the campus (but within school environment) or in town. Living around campus means getting accommodation in hostels belonging to private individuals who charge exorbitant prices. Those living close to the school can easily walk to get there within few minutes; those living far always spend money on commercial motorcycle while those in town pay transport fare. All these expenses form part of cost of University education.

For the money invested in education to yield positive outcome, students have to put their best into studies or academic activities to ensure that sponsors are not ultimately disappointed. Students' studies refer to whatever student does in relation to learning which is usually termed academic activities. Academic related activities performed by students as highlighted by Federal Student Handbook (2020-2021) are: physically attending a class for direct interaction between instructor and students, submitting assignment, taking examination, an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, attending study group assigned by the school, participating in online discussion about academic matters and initiating contact with a faculty member to ask questions about academic subjects being studied. For a student to record high performance, persistent and active study, setting appropriate goals, a good study environment and effective time management were considered important by Killen and Fraser (2003).

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Many students record low performance due to some factors that affect their studies in academic environment. Such factors are categorised as personal, social, institutional or academic factors. From observation, personal factors otherwise known as individual factors that affect students' studies are living off campus, poor family background, lack of learning materials, problem of time management, low study habit, irregular lecture attendance, influence of social media and engagement in menial jobs. Students affected by any of these factors could end up with very low grade that may not be presentable for any good job application. This has an implication that such graduate will not be able to contribute meaningfully to economic development. Low performance at early stage such as having very low GPA could lead to withdrawal from the system which might force such drop out students to be involved in social vices that inflict pain and sorrow on other people and cause restlessness in the society. Wasting all educational efforts and financial supports could result into psychological problem for parents and guardians.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have attested to the fact that many factors affect students' studies that contribute to low academic performance. Ogbogu (2014) identified factors influencing students' performance majorly as social, economic, institutional, environmental, psychological and personal factors which vary across individuals and regions. Zikhali, Chauraya, Madzanire, and Maphosa (2015) revealed that institutional, academic, social and personal factors were affecting students' studies while Oladebinu, Adediran and Oyediran (2018) found that student factor, parental background, school and teacher factors affected academic performance of colleges of education students.

Schmelzer, Schmelzer, Figler and Brozo (1987) and Killen and Fraser (2003) found that academic failure was attributed primarily to lack of study, poor time management and inadequate goal setting. In the study of Hashim, Khalid and Yahya (2010), it was revealed that laziness, last minute study, inability to focus on study, weak calculation skill as well as failure to seriously study for final exam were directly related to students' weak performance. Ali, Haider, Munir, Khan, and Ahmed (2013) found age, parent social economic status and daily study hours as significant predictors of the academic performance of university students in a Pakistani university. Fagbola, Adeyanju, Oloyede, Obe, Olaniyan et al. (2018) declared that poor performance have ravaged the academic institutions due to indices of those factors which influence students' performance. Alam and Khatun (2021) indicated that non-academic issues such as time spent on social media, part time job to meet educational expense and residential status were additional factors that determine academic performance.

Time management is the ability to effectively use time in such a way that the right time is allocated to the right activity. It is using time wisely and productively. It is the strategy of consciously planning and controlling the amount of available time spent on specific tasks in order to work more efficiently to achieve desired goals. Gloe (2000) maintained that time management techniques are the best ways for managing course materials e.g. group study method and that it is important to learn how to study for multiple choice, true/false, short answer and essay tests. Through proper time management, students can have discussions, exchange ideas on topics and memorise key points which help them to do better in examinations as observed by Talib and Sansgiry (2012). The authors indicated that students found difficulty in managing their study and leisure time. As rightly observed, students have the habit of trivialising academic matters while dedicating more time to inconsequential social activities as well as spending quality time on social media. Students who aspire to be great in life do not have to waste time on frivolities when they should set priorities, plan their time well and work towards success.

In the university where lecturers teach large number of students, it may not be possible for all students to properly understand difficult concepts. There is need for materials for more explanation to aid teacher's teaching and enhance students' understanding. In the light of this, resources such as textbooks, notes, learning materials, hand-out, and access to library/laboratory facilities are required. Lacour and Tissington (2011) declared that poverty directly affects academic achievement due to lack of resources for student success. Kapur (2018) added that lack of essential learning resources can contribute to student's inability to improve grade.

Poor family background has been observed to be another factor that negatively influence students' studies. Poverty is a major barrier to academic achievements and it is the main cause of financial problem. Inability to pay (or late payment) of service charges prevents students from being allowed into the examination venue. This has been observed to be problem suffered by many students from low socio-economic background. Due to non-payment or late payment, such students fail to write exam, fail to meet the required number of units for result computation, have

their number of years in the university extended and eventually graduate with very low grade or drop out of the system. Oladebinu, Adediran and Oyediran (2018) identified parental background as one of the factors that had serious influence on students' academic performance.

In a book by Biggs (2003), it was confirmed that students faced with huge workloads resort to surface learning and that learning is only done to complete tasks at the expense of real understanding of content and mastery of skills. Zikhali, Chauraya, Madzanire, and Maphosa (2015) in their study in one Zimbabwe University affirmed that overload of academic work was a factor deemed to affect students learning negatively in a huge way. Kapur (2018) was of the view that students from parents with low per capital income experience problems not only in meeting the educational and school requirements but also in meeting their living requirements such as diet and nutrition, health, medical and so forth. In addition to this, lack of electricity, drinkable water and good food can disallow students to concentrate wholeheartedly on their studies. Alam and Khatun (2021) found that poor financial condition of parents acts as hindrance to performance at tertiary level and that higher family income positively affect academic performance. Some students spend money on candle when there is no electric power supply, drink untreated water and eat any food that is available. According to Jusoh, Rahim, Ariff, Masud and Paim (2011), students faced a plethora of financial problems that resulted in skipping meals in order to save, borrowing from others for daily needs and failure to have enough money towards end of semester. Such challenges, invariably, negatively affect learning.

Other factors identified by Zikhali, Chauraya, Madzanire, and Maphosa (2015) in their findings were lack of time management, lack of requisite materials, computer illiteracy and financial problems that negatively affected students' studies while factors such as student accommodation, relationships and command of the language of instruction did not have much effect. Shahjahan, Ahmed, Al-Hadrami, Islam, Hossain and Khan (2021) also declared that irregular class attendance, low education level of the father, partial family cooperation, excessive time spent for gossiping with friends and excess use of social media were factors responsible for low academic performance of university students in Bangladesh. In the study of Ajayi and Olaniyi (2022), poor access to internet facilities, incessant strike, closure of school, lack of well-equipped departmental and central library, overcrowded examination timetable were seen as institutional factors influencing students' academic performance. The authors also found students not writing continuous assessment, absence in class tutorials, English language proficiency and communication, low cumulative grade point and family problem as personal factors that influenced students' academic performance.

Living off campus is an observed factor that could affect students' studies and culminate in low performance. For instance, inability to meet cost of transportation could make student become irregular lecture attendant, perpetual late comer or unrepentant absentee. Such student would be known for late submission of assignment and missing of tests or not writing examination. This is what Awang et al. (2013) regarded as poor attitude towards learning. According to Awang, et al. (2013), students' poor attitudes towards learning have been found to have significant relationship with academic performance resulting in absenteeism and non-participation in continuous assessment. Omar, Abdulla, Yusof, Hamdan, Nasrudin, and Abulla (2011) and Zikhali, Chauraya, Madzanire, and Maphosa (2015) declared that students staying off campus experienced problems in expenses in transport and rentals. Such problems, invariably, negatively affect academic performance. Some female students in relationship who live with their partners are involved in household chores such as cleaning, washing clothes/utensils, preparation of food, fetching water, purchasing of groceries etc. which disallows them from creating time for studies. Engagement in menial jobs on campus seems to be another factor influencing students' studies. Such student would not be able to concentrate and devote time to study and prepare well for exam. The need to attend to customers, re-stock when necessary and meet other business needs will be promptly and

industriously attended to at the expense of reading. Any little time created for reading is taken over by sleep due to fatigue.

University students seem to be among the most active users of the internet and social media. The internet through social media gives students unrestricted access to journals and articles which may not be available in libraries and bookshops. Efficacy of social media in enhancing learning through readily available online education materials was emphasised by authors such as Flad (2010) and Fasae and Adegbilero-Iwari (2016). Akhtar (2013) opined that immoderate usage of internet can result to addiction and poor academic attainment among students. Mensah and Nizain (2016) and Gorhe (2019) revealed that careful use of social media is not harmful but unconscious use is detrimental to academic performance. Umar and Idris (2018) maintained that social media usage has negative influence on academic performance. Submission of the authors is connected with the common observation that most students do not use social network sites for academic advantage but waste a lot of their time chatting, pinging, uploading pictures, sharing videos, texting messages and passing unnecessary comments on frivolous matters especially on Facebook. Affum (2022) found negative impact of internet use which leads to distraction as time is spent on social media instead of studies.

#### **4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study identified personal factors affecting students' studies that could lead to low academic performance among education students in Ekiti State University. It also determined significant gender difference in their perception of the factors negatively affecting their academic activities.

Findings from this study would sensitise students to individual factors influencing their studies and help them on the need to work on identified factors so as to improve academic performance. The study could also assist parents on the necessity of making adequate provision for educational materials and resources required by their wards a priority. This would help students (especially from low socio-economic background) concentrate on their studies for enhanced performance.

#### **5. RESEARCH QUESTION**

This research question guided this study:

What are the personal factors affecting students studies that could result in low academic performance?

#### **6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

This hypothesis was raised for the study:

There is no significant gender difference in the factors affecting students' studies as perceived by the students.

#### **7. RESEARCH METHOD**

##### **7.1. Research Design**

This study adopted descriptive survey research design.

## **7.2. Population**

The population comprised all education students in the Faculty of Education, Ekiti State University.

## **7.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A sample of 195 students was selected from 400 level through convenience sampling technique. The sample consisted of 91 male and 104 female students.

## **7.4. Research Instrument**

The research instrument was a self-designed questionnaire which solicited responses on students' perspectives on factors affecting their studies that could lead to low academic performance. Face and content validity of the instrument were ensured by experts in Social Science Education and Tests and Measurements who examined the items and effected necessary corrections to make the instrument useable for the research. To ensure reliability of the instrument, Split-half method was used and the result yielded 0.79 coefficients. The instrument comprised 10 items placed on a four point Likert type scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree and Disagree. Out of the 200 copies administered, 195 copies were retrieved and used for the study.

## **7.5. Data Analysis**

Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions were descriptively answered using frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation while t-test was employed to analyse the hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level.

# **8. RESULTS**

**8.1. Research Question 1:** What are the factors affecting students' studies that could lead to low academic performance?

Table 1. Factors affecting students' studies

Factors	N	SA	A	SD	D	Mean	Std.D
Low study habit	195	99 (50.77)	39 (20.00)	6 (3.08)	51 (26.15)	2.95	1.26
Overload of academic work	195	111 (56.92)	48 (24.62)	15 (6.69)	21 (10.77)	3.28	1.00
Poor family background	195	78 (40.00)	66 (33.85)	18 (9.23)	33 (16.92)	2.97	1.08
Lack of learning materials	195	81 (41.54)	78 (40.00)	15 (7.69)	21 (10.77)	3.12	0.96
Influence of social media	195	51 (26.15)	78 (40.00)	18 (9.23)	48 (24.62)	2.68	1.11
Inability to manage time	195	72 (36.92)	69 (35.38)	18 (9.23)	36 (18.46)	2.68	1.18
Living off campus (in town)	195	60 (30.77)	66 (33.85)	15 (7.69)	54 (27.69)	2.55	1.13
Love relationship	195	66 (33.85)	57 (29.23)	27 (13.85)	45 (23.07)	2.74	1.16
Engaging in menial jobs	195	18 (9.23)	48 (24.62)	81 (41.54)	48 (24.62)	22.61	1.21
Staying on campus	195	51 (26.15)	39 (20.00)	78 (40.00)	27 (13.85)	2.71	1.57

Table 1 shows that overload of academic work (81.54%), lack of learning materials (81.54%), poor family background (73.85%) and inability to manage time (72.80%) were factors negatively influencing students' studies. Other factors contributing to low academic performance are low study habit (70.77%), influence of social media (66.15%), living off campus (64.62%) and involvement in love relationship (63.08%). However, 66.16% and 53.85% of the respondents disagreed that engagement in menial jobs and staying on campus negatively influence students' studies respectively.

## 8.2. Hypothesis

There is no significant gender difference in the factors affecting students' studies.

Table 2: Gender difference in factors influencing students' studies

Sex	N	Mean	Std. D	Dftcal	Decision
Male	91	1.38	.487		Not
		1.93	1.099	Significant	
Female	104	1.42	.497		

Table 2 shows gender difference in factors affecting students' studies. The result obtained from the analysis shows that the value of t-calculated (1.099) was less than t-table (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. Based on this, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there was no significant gender difference in students'

perception of factors negatively influencing their academic activities that hinder good performance.

## 9. DISCUSSION

Findings from the study revealed that overload of academic work, lack of learning materials, low study habit, poor family background and inability to manage time were factors negatively influencing students' academic activities that cause poor performance. Although the finding on overload of academic work corroborates Zikhali, Chauraya, Madzanire, and Maphosa (2015), it is a surprise to find that overload of academic work is perceived as the first factor affecting students' studies. As undergraduates, students are expected to be up and doing as they engage in strenuous and rigorous academic activities. This finding implies laziness on the part of the students who prefer frivolities, pleasure and socials to hard work and commitment to studies. These findings also agree with Killen and Fraser (2003) on lack of study and poor time management. It also supports Talib and Sansgiry (2012) that students found difficulty in managing their study and leisure time. Finding on poor family background as a contributing factor to poor performance is supported by Oladebinu, Adediran and Oyediran (2018) who identified parental background as one of the factors that had serious influence on students' academic performance. The finding is also in agreement with Lacour and Tissington (2011) and Kapur (2018) that poverty directly affects academic achievement due to lack of resources for student success and that lack of essential learning resources can contribute to student's inability to improve grade. The finding on low study habit implies that due to the total freedom from parents that the students enjoy when in the university, some have become very lazy and fail to prioritise their activities in favour of reading and studying. The finding on poor family background is further amplified by the economic recession and uncaring attitude of political leaders in the country which has led to high rate of unemployment, irregular payment of workers' salaries and impoverished many citizens. Other factors influencing students' academic activities that contribute to low academic performance are influence of social media, living off campus and involvement in love relationship. On influence of social media, this finding is in consonance with Mensah and Nizain (2016) and Gorhe (2019) who revealed that unconscious use of social media is detrimental to academic performance while Umar and Idris (2018) maintained that social media usage has negative influence on academic performance. The finding on influence of social media and time management as determinants of poor performance implies that social media being a sedentary activity takes large amount of time as students screen, surf the internet for activities that are time wasting and academically unprofitable. The finding on living off campus agrees with Omar, Abdulla, Yusof, Hamdan, Nasrudin and Abulla (2011) and Zikhali, Chauraya, Madzanire, and Maphosa (2015) declared that students staying off campus experienced problems in expenses in transport and rentals. Such problems affect students' academic activities as a result of inability to meet cost of transportation which could lead to irregular lecture attendant, perpetual lateness and absenteeism, late submission of assignment, missing of tests or not writing examination. Living off campus may also have the implication that students usually encounter transportation problem such as sudden hike in transport fare and scarcity of vehicles especially during fuel scarcity.

Large percentage of the respondents disagreed that engagement in menial jobs and staying on campus affect students' academic activities. Students' disagreement on engagement in menial jobs is not unconnected with the belief that they have to source for fund to supplement what parents provide and they do not see it as a problem. On staying on campus, their disagreement is not to say that students do not encounter problems such as cult activities, student demonstrations, lack of electricity, attack from unscrupulous elements among others that could affect their academic activities but they are of the view that such problems are not personal but institutional and do not significantly contribute to low performance.

The study also revealed that there was no significant gender difference in students' perception of factors negatively influencing their academic activities that hinder good performance. This could be attributed to the fact that both male and female students experience the challenges caused by personal factors since majority of them come from low socio-economic background.

## **10.CONCLUSION**

This study examined personal factors that affect students' studies and could result in low academic performance among university students. It can be concluded that low study habit, overload of academic work, lack of learning materials, living off campus, influence of social media, and inability to manage time are personal factors that influence students' performance.

## **11.RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study revealed that overload of academic work, lack of learning materials, low study habit, poor family background and inability to manage time as well as influence of social media, living off campus and involvement in love relationship were factors negatively influencing students' academic activities that could lead to poor performance.

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Students need to manage their time well by planning and prioritizing time spent on academic tasks in order to work more efficiently to achieve desired academic goal
2. Students should learn to use the internet and social media moderately and carefully for academic advantage.
3. Parents should make adequate provision for educational needs of their wards to enhance their academic performance.

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