

Gender Difference in Academic Performance in SSCE Economics Subject among Senior Secondary School Students in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria

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Abstract The study determined the gender difference in academic performance in SSCE economics subject among senior secondary school students from 2006 to 2010 sessions in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. Two objectives were stated, two research questions were answered and two hypotheses were tested. Ex-post factor research design was used. The population of the study consisted of all senior secondary school students who offered economics SSS 111 in Maiduguri metropolis from 2006 to 2010 sessions and all available students who took economics subject in SSCE, WAEC and NECO from 2006 to 2010 academic sessions. A purposive sampling technique was used to select sample from twenty-eight co-education secondary schools. The total number used for the study was 50715. A total of 8699 students' results were used for academic performance, 5679 male students and 3020 female students, results in WASSCE. While in SSCE, NECO the total results used was 9074 males results was 5491 and females was 3583 in economics for 2006 to 2010 sessions. Descriptive statistics of percentages was used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses. The results of the analysis revealed that male students in senior secondary schools in Maiduguri metropolis have better grades than their female counterpart in economics for 2006-2010 sessions. The results further showed that there was no significant gender difference in the academic performance of students in SSCE, WAEC and NECO in economics, while SSCE, WAEC and NECO for 2006/2007 session in economics for 2008 to 2010 sessions showed consistent significant gender difference in the academic performance of students in favour of male students. Based on the findings it was recommended that there should be public enlightenment by the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOS) to address the issue on the need for gender equality in public schools in terms of enrolment to have equal chance for female students to do well as their male counterpart in economics.

Keywords: gender difference and academic performance

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1. Introduction

Researchers in the field of education to unravel gender gap (inequality) in academic performance have recorded much. Observations had shown that there are differences between male and female in the pattern of education. These difference in participation and performance between male and female were found in several different subjects examined at the secondary school level [30].

The importance of economics in any educational system especially in academic performance cannot be over emphasized. This has been buttressed by Adu [2] that the study of economics serves a useful purpose in modern life. It gives facts and shows what maybe expected to be the outcome of certain lines of conduct. It helps us to decide

which of several alternatives to choose. It charged its recipients to make wise choice that will satisfy their needs in the presence of unlimited wants and resources.

According to Obemeata [23] economics as a subject has various values to the learners, it connects learners to the essentials of everyday life and it widens the mental horizon of learner because it increase mental capacity to understand various problems of life and to analyze a situation and then draws conclusions which provides a guideline for successful life. That is, economics is not primarily a body of knowledge, it is a method rather than a doctrine, an apparatus of mind, a technique of thinking, which helps its possessors to draw correct conclusion, and at the end to acquire cultural values, intellectual training and vocational training.

Obemeata [22] stated that the importance of economics education to any nation is to enable both leaders and

citizens to understand basic economics concepts, principles as well as to understand appreciate and seek to improve the economic situation for their own social good. The understanding of economics is a pre-requisite for good citizenship and to be responsible citizen which involves the ability to take rational decision on important economic issue with a good basis for doing so. Dutuma [11] revealed that economics prepares one to deal with issues in variety of fields, including business, law, politics, history and accounting. To understand how society affects purchasing decisions helps in a civil servants office. Furthermore, Dutuma [11] said economics helps to prepare for future that affects career prospects, investment decisions and retirement strategies.

Most researchers on gender difference in academic performance revealed that there is difference between boys and girls. Studies by Finn Peterson [13] and Wamdeo [30] observed that there are differences between the males and females when it comes to mathematical, spatial and verbal abilities. Halpem [17] and Stump [27] confirmed the above statement by observing that females showed superiority especially in measures of verbal fluency (vocabulary, listening, speaking, comprehension, fluency and spelling) and that male's showed superiority in mathematical and spatial abilities. Contrary to this observation, however, Arnot, David and Weiner ([6]: 30) observed that U.K and Scotland have enjoyed formal "gender parity" in education for number of years. The proportion of girls and boys achieving top grades at 18 (A-levels) is broadly equal, though girls seem to be gaining a slight advantage over the boys.

Academic performance refers to an expression used to represent student's scholastic standing [4]. According to Shuaibu [25] academic performance refers to what an individual can obtain within a specific criteria domain. Abba [1] observed a significant sex difference in academic performance among Pre-NCE students in Colleges of Education in Borno State. The female students had a higher mean score than their male counter parts.

Cohn, Cohn, Hult, Balch and Bradley [9] found gender to be an insignificant determinant of success in microeconomics. Evans [12] despite controlling other factors, the result showed that female students perform significantly worse in economics than male students. Duff [10] investigated the relationship between 60 first year undergraduate accounting and business economics students' approaches to learning, their age, gender, prior academic performance and regression. The result indicated that age, gender and their academic performance and progression in economics approach found out that attendance was a determinant of students' performance in money and banking course. Jacklin and Maccoby as cited in Glawala [16] in their studies of sex difference in academic performance stated that there is no sex difference on quantitative ability, but when differences are found in the age 13 (thirteen) they tend to favour boys. Jebson [18] investigated on gender difference in relationship between students academic achievement. Six years were considered to determine difference to gender in relation to JSCE integrated science and SSCE in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. The results revealed that there is no significant difference in the relationship between grades in JSCE integrated Science and SSCE in Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

Ballard and Johnson [7] further observed that there is gender imbalance which is 42 percent women and 56 percent men, and women received a disproportionate percentage of the higher grades. 82 percent of the high distinctions and 74 percent of the distinctions went to male students in introductory economics.

William [31] found no evidence to support the hypothesis that significant and consistent gender difference exist in College students' performance in economic examination. Anderson, Benjamin and Fuss [5] observed that introductory economics course was the overall performance level of those that are taking a course in calculus in University. The result also showed that male students outperformed the female in introductory economics.

Young, Warrington and Williams [29] studied gender gap in secondary schools in English subject, their analysis was based on the performance of boys and girls in GCSE examinations in the UK and girls were reported to obtain better grades than boys. Similarly, the result of 2005 [3] test scores in the United States showed that females consistently outperformed males in English subject and reading they are only slightly behind males in Mathematics subject.

Myatt and Waddel [21] and Evans [12] despite controlling other factors the result showed that female students perform significantly worse in economics than male students.

William [31] found no evidence to support the hypothesis that significant and consistent gender difference exist in college student performance in economics examination. According to Ajobeje [4], academic performance refers to an expression used to present students' scholastic stand. According to Usman [28] the Senior Secondary Certificate (SSCE) results for government public senior secondary schools in Maiduguri Metropolis during the years 1998, 1999 and 2000 indicated that 0.5%, 1.4% and 1.8% of students out of 1,148, 1,898 and 1,771 candidates respectively who sat for examination had 5 credits and above while 65.82%, 41.2% and 51.3% of the students had no credit at all.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

One among the problems that are attracting public concern outcry in Nigeria today is the gender gap in academic performance of students in schools. This observable disparity has been blamed on a number of factors including social, economic and cultural stereotyping. The study was based on the researchers' experiences of over fifteen years of teaching and has knowledge of academic performance of male and female in secondary schools. Observation had shown that there are differences between male and female in the pattern of education. These differences are causing disparity in gender participation and academic performance in Nigerian secondary schools. From the researcher's point of view, it appears that not much research focusing on gender difference in academic performance in SSCE Economics have been conducted especially in Maiduguri Metropolis, Borno State, Nigeria. In addition, among the few researches conducted on gender disparity in academic performance of secondary schools in Borno state none of the researchers gave a conclusive answer to the problems.

It is against this that, this study was conducted to determine gender difference in academic performance in SSCE economics among senior secondary school students in Maiduguri Metropolis. However, it is important to note that there are several variables that can affect performance, rather than gender.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to determine;

1. Level of academic performance in SSCE (WAEC and NECO) economics among senior secondary school students in Maiduguri Metropolis from 2006 to 2010 sessions.
2. Gender difference in academic performance in SSCE, WAEC and NECO economics among senior secondary school students in Maiduguri Metropolis from 2006 to 2010 sessions.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions were answered;

1. What is the level of academic performance between male and female students in SSCE WAEC Economics from 2006 to 2010 sessions?
2. What is the level of academic performance between male and female students in SSCE NECO Economics from 2006 to 2010 sessions?

1.4. Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested;

Ho₁: There is no significant gender difference in academic performance in SSCE economics conducted by WAEC from 2006 to 2010 sessions in Maiduguri Metropolis.

Ho₂: There is no significant gender difference in academic performance in SSCE economics conducted by NECO from 2006 to 2010 sessions in Maiduguri Metropolis.

researchers then studied the independent variable(s) in retrospect for their possible relationship to and effects on the dependent variable(s) (Kerlinger, 1970). In this study, a gender difference which is the independent variable was examined retrospectively against academic performance (the dependent variable) with a view to establishing a link between them.

The target population for this study comprised of all Senior Secondary School students (SS 3) who sat for SSCE Examination in Economics from 2006/07 to 2009/010 sessions in Maiduguri Metropolis. The schools were purposively sampled based on similar characteristics, such as oldest established public co-education secondary schools with high standard in terms of teaching and learning. Nine secondary schools students results were used for academic performance out of the twenty-eight secondary schools selected.

A total of 8699 students results was used for academic performance and 5679 males students results was used while female students results was 3020 used for the study in WASSCE while in NECO the total result of students used was 9074. Males' results were 5491 while female results were 3583 in economics for 2006 to 2010 sessions.

The data collected for this study was analyzed using percentages, mean and independent samples t-test statistics. Research questions one and two were analyzed by means of percentages to determine the level of academic performance of male and female students. Hypotheses one and two were tested by means of t- test of independent samples. Before the computation of independent sample t-test statistics the student's grades were re-ordered and subjected to square root transformation. This was a measure undertaken to guard against the possibility of the grades not meeting the independent sample t-test statistics requirement. This transformation according to Ferguson (1981), results in a set of transformed values, which conform more closely, to one or more of the assumptions, which the appropriate use of the analysis required.

2. Methodology

The study was an ex-post factor research whose design was causal comparative. An ex-post the independent variable(s) have already occurred and the researchers start with the observation of a dependent variable. The

3. Results

RQ1: What is the level of Academic Performance between male and female students in economics in WASSCE 2006 to 2010?

Table 1. Results of students' percentage distribution in academic performance in WASSCE 2006 to 2010

Year	Gender	Grades							
		Distinction			Credit		Pass		Fail
		B2 (%)	B3 (%)	C4 (%)	C5 (%)	C6 (%)	D7 (%)	E8 (%)	F9 (%)
2006/07	M	13(92.9)	36(87.8)	24(60.0)	58(78.4)	79(74.5)	269(72.9)	265(59.8)	512(52.9)
	F	1(7.1)	5(12.2)	16(40.0)	16(21.6)	27(25.5)	100(27.1)	178(40.2)	456(47.1)
	Total	14	41	40	74	106	369	443	968
2007/08	M	0	54(64.3)	15(75.0)	122(81.3)	127(66.1)	267(62.2)	468(70.0)	456(63.6)
	F	0	30(35.7)	5(25.0)	28(18.7)	65(33.9)	162(37.8)	201(30.0)	261(36.4)
	Total	0	84	20	150	192	429	669	717
2008/09	M	14(63.6)	84(63.6)	84(67.2)	31(59.6)	159(64.1)	154(58.6)	271(65.5)	646(68.8)
	F	8(36.4)	48(36.4)	41(32.8)	21(40.4)	89(35.9)	109(41.4)	143(34.5)	293(31.2)
	Total	22	132	125	52	248	263	414	939
2009/10	M	30(62.5)	106(66.3)	61(71.8)	58(73.4)	91(72.8)	181(72.1)	427(67.4)	517(64.1)
	F	18(37.5)	54(33.7)	24(28.2)	21(26.6)	34(27.7)	70(27.9)	207(32.6)	289(35.9)
	Total	48	160	85	79	125	251	634	806

M = Male, F = Female, (percentage) = percentage.

Table 1 shows that in 2006/07 session the high percentage grade scored by male students was B2 (92.9%)

while that of female students was E8 (40.2%). Male students high grade scored was C5 (81.3%), C4 (67.2%)

and C5 (73.4%) for 2007/08, 2008/09, and 2009/010 sessions respectively while the high percentage grade scored by females was F9 (47.1%), B3 (35.7%), D7 (41.4%) and B2 (37.5%) for 2006/07 to 2009/010 sessions respectively. This shows a greater proportion of male students scoring high grades than the female students in

WASSCE Economics. This indicated that male students scored more distinction and credit grades than the females having more credit and pass grades.

RQ2: What is the level of Academic Performance between male and female students in Economics in SSCE conducted by NECO from 2006/07 to 2009/2010?

Table 2. Results of Students Percent distribution in Academic performance in SSCE NECO 2006 to 2010

Year	Gender	Grades							
		Distinction		Credit		Pass		Fail	
		B2 (%)	B3 (%)	C4 (%)	C5 (%)	C6 (%)	D7 (%)	E8 (%)	F9 (%)
2006/07	M	0	35(46.7)	28(58.3)	70(61.4)	162(49.4)	195(48.6)	243(55.2)	416(51.6)
	F	0	40(53.3)	20(41.7)	44(38.6)	166(50.6)	206(51.4)	197(44.8)	390(48.4)
	Total	0	75	48	114	328	401	440	806
2007/08	M	0	48(47.1)	59(63.4)	248(57.3)	408(58.9)	198(64.5)	161(57.5)	176(64.0)
	F	0	54(52.9)	34(36.6)	185(42.7)	285(41.1)	109(35.5)	119(42.5)	99(36.0)
	Total	0	102	93	433	693	307	280	275
2008/09	M	25(59.5)	44(69.8)	30(57.7)	120(60.0)	191(60.6)	222(58.9)	362(56.7)	373(69.2)
	F	17(40.5)	19(30.2)	22(42.3)	80(40.0)	124(39.4)	155(41.1)	277(43.3)	166(30.8)
	Total	42	63	52	200	315	377	639	539
2009/10	M	30(61.2)	119(69.6)	82(66.1)	212(72.4)	307(69.3)	391(65.3)	309(65.6)	227(69.0)
	F	19(38.8)	52(30.4)	42(33.9)	81(27.6)	136(30.7)	208(34.7)	162(34.4)	102(31.0)
	Total	49	171	124	293	443	599	471	329

M = Male, F = Female, (%) =percentage.

Table 2 indicated that the high percentage grade scored by male students in SSCE, NECO economics was C4 (58.3%), D7 (64.5%), B3 (69.8%) and B3 (69.6%) in 2006/2007 to 2009/010 sessions respectively. While the high percentage grades scored by female students in economics was B3 (53.3%), B3 (52.9%), E8 (43.3%) and B2 (38.8%) in 2006/07 to 2009/010 sessions respectively. In B3 (53.3%), C6 (50.6%), D7 (51.4%), and B3 (54.9%) for 2006/07 and 2007/08 session respectively. The female students had higher percentage grades score than the

males in B3 (46.7%), C6 (49.4%), D7 (48.6%), and B3 (47.1%) for 2006/07 and 2007/08 session respectively. While the male students scored high in the remaining percentage grades, which is credit and pass grades. This shows that the female students have more distinctions grades in 2006/07 and 2007/08 sessions.

HO₁: There is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of SSCE Economics conducted by WAEC from 2006/07 to 2009/010 in Maiduguri.

Table 3. results of independent samples of gender difference in academic performance among senior secondary school student WASSCE for 2006 to 2010

Session	Gender	\bar{X}	Std	t-test for Equality of Means			Remark
				t	Df	P-value	
2006/2007	Male	61.04	25.17	1.229	80	.222	Not Significant
	Female	68.72	22.32				
2007/2008	Male	58.48	27.11	2.528	88	.013	Significant
	Female	60.28	16.46				
2008/2009	Male	59.51	32.19	2.059	92	.042	Significant
	Female	57.28	16.10				
2009/2010	Male	58.15	29.37	2.526	88	.013	Significant
	Female	58.73	14.85				

The Table 3 shows the results of independent sample for 2006/07 to 2009/010 academic sessions. It shows that there is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of male and female students in WASSCE for 2006/07. While in 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/010 academic sessions showed that there is a significant gender difference between male and female students academic performance in Economics in favour of male students.

Gender difference in Academic Performance in SSCE, NECO

The relevant hypothesis tested was:

HO₂: There is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of SSCE Economics conducted by NECO from 2006/07 to 2009/010 in senior secondary schools in Maiduguri? .

Hypothesis two was tested by session, gender and academic performance

Table 4. Gender difference in academic performance in NECO senior secondary school for 2006/07 to 2009/2010

Session	Gender	\bar{X}	Std	t-test for Equality of Means			Remark
				t	Df	p-value	
2006/2007	Male	58.44	21.54	0.327	90	.745	Not Significant
	Female	58.37	21.47				
2007/2008	Male	42.99	20.30	2.074	96	.041	Significant
	Female	42.66	20.14				
2008/2009	Male	54.95	22.32	2.153	96	.034	Significant
	Female	53.28	20.82				
2009/2010	Male	45.42	21.25	3.476	114	.001	Significant
	Female	46.08	21.53				

Table 4 above revealed the independent sample for 2006/2007 academic session. This shows that there is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of male and female students in SSCE, NECO. In addition, in the 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/010 academic sessions show the significant gender difference in the academic performance of male and female students in favour of male students in 2007/08 and 2008/09, while 2009/010 session indicated that the difference in academic performance was in favour of female students.

4. Discussion

The findings of the study, in respect of research question one in SSCE conducted by WAEC indicated that male students consistently scored high percentage grades of distinction and credit than female students from 2006 to 2010 sessions. For male students, the percentage high grades scored was B2 (92.9%), C5 (81.5%), C4 (67.2%) and C5 (73.4%) for 2006 to 2010 session respectively while the females percentage high grade scored was E8 (40.2%), B3 (35.7%), D7 (41.4%) and B2 (37.5%) for 2006 to 2010 session respectively. This showed that consistently male students outperformed the female students having scored high grades distinction and credit than the female students' grade of credit and pass. This agreed with the findings of Anderson and Benjamin [5] and Ballard and Johnson [7] where they found males outperformed the female students in introductory economics.

In SSCE, NECO Economics the high percentages grades scored by male students was C4 (58.3%), D7 (64.5%), B3 (69.8%) and B3 (69.6%) in 2006/2007 to 2009/010 sessions respectively. While the high percentage grades scored by female students in economics was B3 (53.3%), B3 (52.9%), E8 (43.3%) and B2 (38.8%) in 2006/07 to 2009/010 sessions respectively.

The female students had higher percentage grades score of distinction and credit than the male students in B3 (46.7%), C6 (49.4%), D7 (48.6%), and B3 (47.1%) for 2006/07 and 2007/08 session respectively. This was in conformity with the findings of Mallum and Magbo [20] in their study on female gender access and environmental impediments and performance in education, which revealed that girls tend to perform equally with boys and sometimes better. Similarly, Abba [1] reported that there is a significant sex difference in academic performance among pre-NCE students in Borno State Colleges of Education where the female students had higher mean score. The authors explained this by stating that the females tend to have stronger language abilities including essay writing skills, vocabulary and word fluency, which contribute to better course work. This observation maybe a possible explanation for the female students to have excelled in scoring distinction and credit grades than male students in SSCE, NECO economics. This revealed that the remaining sessions and percentage pass grade male students scored higher than female students did in SSCE, NECO Economics.

The finding in respect of hypothesis one indicated that there was no significant gender difference in the performance of male and female students in SSCE conducted by WAEC in 2006/2007 sessions in economics.

This result can be attributed to changes that took place in the female students, which made them to work hard as their male counterpart in order to be equal in their performance in SSCE Economics for 2006/2007 session. This is consistent with William [31] and Cohin, Hutt and Bradley [9] that there is no significant gender difference in introductory economics while from 2007/2008 to 2009/2010 showed significant gender difference between male and female academic performance in economics. Ezellu, Abba [1], William [31] and Ballard and Johnson [7], found disparity or difference between the performance of boys and girls in introductory economics.

In hypothesis two the SSCE, NECO in economics for 2006/2007 showed no significant gender difference between male and female students in economics. This result can be attributed to changes that took place in the female students, which made them to work hard as their male counterpart in order to be equal in their performance in SSCE Economics for 2006/07 session, while from 2007/2008 to 2009/2010 showed significant gender difference between male and female students. This also agrees with the findings of Myatt Waddel [21] and Evans [12] who found significant gender difference in economics despite controlling other factors.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made; that in SSCE, WAEC economics for 2006/2007 to 2009/2010 sessions shows that male students have more in their percentage grades of distinction than the female students. SSCE, NECO economics for 2006/2007 to 2009/2010 sessions also showed that both males and females scored high in their percentage grades of distinction and credit. The t-test for SSCE, WAEC economics for 2006/2007 shows that there is no significant gender difference while 2007/2008 to 2009/2010 sessions revealed significant gender difference in the performance of male and female students. SSCE, NECO economics for 2006/2007 sessions also shows that there is no significant gender difference in the academic performance of male and female students while 2007/2008 to 2009/2010 sessions showed significant gender difference in the academic performance of male and female students in SSCE, NECO economics in Maiduguri Metropolis.

6. Recommendations/Implication for Counselling

1. From the findings, it was observed that male and female enrolment in secondary schools was in favour of male students. In this regard, there should be public enlightenment by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGOS) to address the issue on the need for gender equality and equity in both private and public schools in terms of enrollment.
2. Government, teachers, guidance counsellors and the relevant authorities should find a means to motivate and counsel female students on the need to have equal chance to do well as their male

- counterpart in Economics subject. They should also be aware that Economics is not really a difficult subject as they thought.
3. School authorities in the State should organize workshops for teachers, admission officer's and principals so that they can improve in the criteria or admission of students and teaching economics in various schools.
 4. Ministry of Education and the State Government should organize capacity building development and workshops periodically in area of teaching, enrolment of students in economics into various schools and other subjects.

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