

Age, Gender and Students' Attitude Towards the Study of Economics in some selected Secondary Schools in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this research work was to examine the effect of age, gender and students' attitude towards the study of Economics in some selected secondary schools in Calabar municipality of Cross River state of Nigeria. The sample for this study was 120 senior secondary two students selected from four secondary schools in Calabar municipality, thirty students were randomly selected from each of the four schools using simple random sampling technique. Four hypotheses were postulated as a guide to this study and a 20 items questionnaire divided into four sections was used to get the required information. A simple Pearson's product moment correlation was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05% level of significance. It was found out that there is significant relationship between ages, gender, interest and motivation of the students and their attitude towards Economics. Based on these findings, it was recommended that since there is a significant relationship between students, ages, gender and their attitude towards economics, both sexes should be encourage and motivated to study Economics. Also, the existing examination bodies and Ministry of Education should use the knowledge embedded in this work to improve on the contents of their syllabuses in order to make it more relevant to the needs of the students. Given its importance in a world like ours, the authorities of our various schools and even the Ministry of Education should endeavour to make Economics a core course in the secondary school programme.

KEYWORDS: Attitude, interest, motivation, economics, education, age, gender, involvement.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Economics education deals fundamentally with the impact of education on such phenomena as the occupational structure of the labour force, the recruitment and promotion practices of employers, the migration of labour between regions within a country and between different countries, the patterns of international trade, the size and distribution of personal income, the propensity to save out of current income and most general of all, the prospects of economic growth. It is an essential component of the learning process of secondary school students and in line with the policy of education that secondary education is designed to diversify the knowledge and skills, which young boys and girls should acquire to be able to actualize their varying motivations, interests and attitudes [3 pp. 5]. This quality is often lacking in most economic teachers, the result of which leads to poor attitude towards the subject by students. Where economics is taught, much is left to individual teacher's taste and initiative. Sometimes, the teachers involved in the teaching of this subject are unqualified teachers. The other common reason which generates a total neglect of economics education and poor attitude towards the subject in schools is the involvement of economic teachers in teaching other subjects in the secondary school curriculum, thus allowing them little or no attention to economics. The undue emphasis on science subjects has also led to the negligence of economics education and this has reduced the value we tend to place on it in our indigenous culture. It is also noted that the period for economic lessons are diverted and used by the teacher for other subjects. This poor method of economics education inhibits students' application of basic economic tools and encourages them to be completely dependent in later life.

[6] Noted that the position of economics as a school teaching subject has been deteriorating to the extent that even those who qualify in it abandon it for other subjects – being looked upon as inferior and unintellectual. Thus the talented student in economics education is denied the opportunity to excel in economics. It is important also to mention that the study of economics especially in secondary schools is important because it sets out a foundation which initiates students into a particular way of thinking and eventually responding to situations. Emphasis has been laid on the attitude dimension of larger personality variables as they relate to the overall school achievement. According to [11 pp. 216], attitude is “a developmental state of organismic valence, created by psych-biological processes, exerting a motivational influence upon the individuals’ responsive behaviour in situations directly and indirectly related to it”. Attitude depends on self-concept, interest, student involvement, motivation and students’ perception of the subjects. To help students understand the study of economics in the classroom requires an understanding of their effective behaviour such as interests, attitude, values, and personality, as well as their cognitive skills and knowledge. Students should have a sound foundation in the study of economics right from secondary school level to be able to fit into economic, social and business life since secondary education, according to the National Policy of Education, is aimed at preparing students for working life and for higher studies.

This research work therefore intends to examine the issue of students’ ages, gender and attitude towards economics and how their attitude, interest, involvement and motivation influence their study of economics.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This segment is aimed at reviewing related literature and views espoused by some authors on students’ ages, gender and attitude towards the study of economics in secondary schools and will be done under the following subheadings; the historical view point of economics as it relates to its study in schools, students’ attitude towards the study of economics, students’ involvement in ethno economic activities, students’ interest and their attitude towards economics, motivation and students’ attitude towards economics:

THE HISTORICAL VIEWPOINT OF ECONOMICS AS IT RELATES TO ITS STUDY IN SCHOOLS

According to [9], the early curriculum experts Dewey (1913), Stratemeyer (1918) and Tyler (1949) have expressed in their different articles the necessity of relating the content of the school curriculum to the needs, interest and experience of the learners as well as goals, needs and values of the society.

Milton Friedman (intellectual father of the Monetarist school of thought) recommended economics strongly as did Keynes who said that the study of economics lets one understand many things about life. In another perspective, Keynes (1936) recorded that there are so many things a person really cannot understand without some “scientific knowledge” of economics, and that economics usually does not seek to predict the behaviour of a specific individual, instead it focuses on the general behaviour of a large number of individuals. Tradition played a very important role in economics in ancient times and, infact throughout most of history. It still plays a very important role in some of the less developed countries of the world. Its influence still can be seen even in modern society in such things as the economic relationship.

According to [10], the growth of economics in the school curriculum spans through what constituted curriculum in the pre-historic time, Greek, Romans period to the present. By the period of the Roman imperialism, economics has been included in the writings of most philosophers from the very beginning [10 pp 3]. The Old Testament and the New Testament of the bible contain much economics, as do the writings of religious other than Christianity. Every religion has been concerned with the issues of the right and wrong economic behaviour and with social choices. The bible, the Talmud, the Koran and other sacred scriptures and religious writings contain much economics.

The end of the 19th century witnessed the colonization of the present Nigeria. The British tradition in education is steadily planted in Nigeria schools through the curriculum that was western world oriented. [2]remarked that “one clear inheritance from the past of the persistent official desire to justify economics (or, as it was always called in the early days, common sense) as a ‘useful subject’”. Teachers were offered economics courses in the ‘Normal Schools’ and colleges and given welcome incentives. Step by step, the teachings of economics entered the secondary schools. Within the apparently rigid and stable society, dynamic forces were at work as Darwin, Charles, Marx; etc turned the world into an unquiet position. Many eminent people began to have interest in the notion of children’s economic work as a valuable activity in its own right. St Thomas Aquinas, a medieval philosopher was one of the writers who insisted that economics was a process, important to individual development.

Tyler (1949) as quoted by [9], suggested that since learning results from the active involvement of the learner, the teacher should have adequate information about his students to know whether their present achievements, their present background and their present mental sets are such that the desired behaviour is possible for them since the drive for further achievement results from the satisfaction of past achievements.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STUDY OF ECONOMIC

According to [11pp216-217], "attitude is a developmental state of organismic valence created by psycho-biological processes, exerting a motivational influence upon the individual's responsive behaviour in situations directly and indirectly related to it". He further contended that attitude possesses intellectual, biological, social and emotional components derived from experience, which exercises a determining influence upon behaviour. Numerous experiences that show in individual, certain stimuli are responsible for satisfying state of affairs that predispose him to readily accept such stimulations as beautiful. Biological limitation and visual impairments hinder this appreciation. The school aims at helping learners to perceive the aesthetic structure of objects to sense and love beauty whenever encountered. This creates positive attitude. Children learn such appreciation when they perceive themselves as constituting part of the experience, teachers who are sensitive to beauty in nature and art can influence the development of appreciation of expression in others, through subtle teaching, comments and facial and body movements as they share their aesthetic experiences with the learners.

In consonance to [11] proposition, [6] adds sharing something of value, with students (such as humor and personal experiences) listening to them with empathy, treating them with warmth and acceptance, showing interest in the subject, communicating positive expectations and encouragement and ensuring that students set realistic goals. Positive attitude enhance learning as they create interest in the tasks viewed as beautiful. This attitude could be generalized to the teacher, other subjects, other teachers and the entire school or even the education system. Negative attitude creates dislike and leads to opposite responses.

To buttress [6]'s idea, [7] as quoted by [12 pp. 208] sees attitude as a "learned internal state which influences choices of personal actions towards some category of persons, objects or events". He further opined that attitude is a desire or tendency to approach or avoid something, persons or situations. It has intensity and direction. Attitude affects instructional communication through the various components of the process. Conversely, [14], (as quoted in the journals of Faculty of Education, University of Calabar (2003, vol.2) in his HIV/AIDS awareness, attitude and behaviour) defined attitude as "a person's position or disposition with regards to an individual or thing". It can be viewed as a predisposition to perceive things, events, persons and action. Our attitude towards a thing or event determines our relationship with the situation, he contended. Here, attitude has been conceptualized to be the manner and state of mind, behaviour or conduct regarding matters and indicating opinions and purpose.

Again, [5] opined that attitude underlies behaviour in such a fundamental way that if we wish to understand behaviour, it is necessary to first understand the nature of attitude. Attitudes are formed as a result of experience and can hardly be represented as a single construct [14]. Hence, they are said to have cognitive, affective and behavioural dimension [5 pp45]. [8] Had earlier demonstrated the multi-dimensional rather than uni-dimensional nature of this construct when he related sex, age, educational and other background factors to it.

Finally, attitude which is an expression of likeness or dislikeness plays a significant role in learning all subjects, particularly economics. Since economics involves a little of mathematics in learning it, students' attitude is a major factor because their thinking or behaviour towards it will determine the levels of their diligence and achievement. In essence, without positive attitude, it is almost impossible to perform well in economics.

STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN ETHNO- ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Students' involvement refers to being involved in activities that are connected to learning. The liberating factor in this definition is the freedom of the classroom. The learning does not have to be restricted to a classroom setting, but can encompass all areas. According to [4 pp 23] in his "A Development Theory for Higher Education" opined:

"Quite simply, student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological Energy that the student devotes to the academic experience".

Freud 1967 believed that people invest psychological energy in objects and persons outside of themselves. In other words, people can cathect for their friends, families, schoolwork and jobs. According to Freud's definition, involvement here refers to people placing lots of energy into outside activities. This energy translates into learning. By cathecting, or investing emotional energy on their schoolwork, they become more involved in the schoolwork and thus are more psychologically

invested. Involvement refers to investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. It speaks how much physical and mental energy you put into an activity. Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum; that is, different students manifest different degree of involvement in a given object. For the purpose of this study, students' involvement in ethno – economic activities such as drawing scale of preference to rank their demands, saving money in the bank, attending quizzes, debates and economic conferences, bargaining for the prices of goods and services in the market will help sharpen and ginger positive attitude towards economic.

As Austin [4 pp23] put it, “the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational programme is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that programme.” The more and better the student involvement is, the more and better the student learning will be. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. To ginger positive attitude towards economics, student involvement in ethno – economic activities should be encouraged. It turned out that virtually every significant effect could be rationalized in terms of the involvement concept, that is, every positive factor was likely to increase student involvement in school experience, whereas every negative factor was likely to reduce involvement.

STUDENTS' INTEREST AND THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS ECONOMICS

The mental state called interest has received much attention in recent literature. Psychologists have disputed as to the exact meaning to be assigned to the term and the precise nature of mental state. Interest has been variously defined as a kind of consciousness accompanying and stimulating attention, a feeling pleasant or painful directing attention – the pleasurable or painful aspect of a process of attention and as identical with attention itself. Thus it may be said; “I attend to what interests me”, and again that to be interested and to attend to are identical.

To [17 pp24] in their description of normative interest sees interest in the sphere of action that has a legalistic connotation. According to them, in the sense of the usage of the term, they refer to action to which one has right, actions that are appropriate and worthwhile for the person concerned. In the school system, they contend that the teacher in the normative sense of the use interests ought to pursue the concerns of his student. His actions and teacher – pupil relationship in the course of doing his job as a teacher should be intent in guidelines; and he is indeed following the curriculum? What are the expected achievements of the programme and is he equipped to achieve those set goals? Consideration of interests in this sense refers to those aspects of school activities that are beneficial to the children to which, by rules and regulations of the school system, the school pupils have a right to benefit from.

Again, [17 pp25] also described the psychological usage of the term “interest” as what a child in school for instance is interested in, what he pays attention to, and what he is inclined to participate in, take notice of or even contribute to. They further added that there is a reference to interest in a more dispositional sense, dispositions that are somewhat permanent as in the case of hobbies like reading, gardening, walking, and singing. There are activities we could be interested in and disposed to in a somewhat permanent way.

Furthermore, [15] defined interest as “a preference for one activity over another.” This definition emphasizes two points: first, interest involves the selection and ranking of activities along a like – dislike dimension. One student, for instance, may prefer listening to records to working arithmetic problems. Second, interest involves activities or behaviours engaged in by individuals. Interest is expressed by actions verbs, such as reading a book, playing a phonograph or planting flowers. Regardless of the method used to measuring interests, the components of indicating preferences for activities along a like-dislike dimension will be present.

MOTIVATION AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ECONOMICS

[6 pp3] defines motivation as “a theoretical construct used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour, especially goal-directed behaviour”. It refers to the subjective experiences of students particularly their willingness to be involved in learning activities including reason to or involvement. Also, [12 pp205] says “motivation is a trigger stimulus – it can be mere expectation.” Generally, it refers to a process of arousing, maintaining, controlling and channeling interest and attention towards or while performing a particular task.

In general terms, students' motivation refers to a students' willingness, need desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process. [16] developed the definition further, noting that students who are motivated to engage in school “select tasks at the border of their competences, initiate action when given the opportunity and exert

intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotion during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity and interest” (p3). Less motivated or disengaged students on the other hand, “are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges” [16].

Student motivation is often divided into two categories: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. A student can be described as extrinsically motivated when he or she engages in learning “purely for the sake of attaining a reward or for avoiding some punishment” [8]. He further contends that school practices that seek to motivate students extrinsically include publicly recognizing students for academic achievement; giving out stickers, candy and other rewards; and taking away privileges, such as recess, on the basis of students’ academic performance [7]. A student can be described as intrinsically motivated when he/she is motivated from within. Intrinsically motivated students actively engage themselves in learning out of curiosity, interest or enjoyment or in order to achieve their own intellectual and personal goals. According to [8], “a student who is intrinsically motivated will not need any type of reward or incentive to initiate or complete a task; “ this type of student is more likely to complete the chosen task and be excited by the challenging nature of an activity”. While any kind of motivation seems preferable to none, there is compelling evidence that students who are more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated fare better [7].

To further buttress [8]’s proposition, [1] opined that students’ attitude about their capabilities and their interpretation of success and failure further affect their willingness to engage themselves in learning. For example, students who understand poor performance as a lack of attainable skills, rather than as some innate personal deficiency, are more likely to re-engage themselves in a task and try again. Students whose self concept is bound up in their history of failure, on the other hand, are less likely to be motivated to learn. To motivate students in the study of economics, teachers should tend to magnify students’ initial level of motivation. This is fine for students who enter the classroom motivationally “rich”, they will “get rich”. However, for students whose motivation is low, their typical classroom experiences may result in its further deterioration, also, promotion of mastery learning [1]. When a student completes an assignment that does not meet the expected criteria, give him or her opportunity or more to tackle the task again, with guidelines on how to achieve the desired result” [8]. Evaluate students’ work as soon as possible after a task completion, and be sure that feedback is clear and constructive.

Research has it that the teachers who are more successful in engaging students develop activities with students’ basic psychological and intellectual needs in mind [2], will motivate them to study economics eagerly.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Following theories were advanced to support the research topic:

1. The Stimulus- Response Theory of Pavlov, Thorndike and Skinner.
2. Abraham Maslow Motivational Theory.
3. Clark Hull S-R Theory.

The stimulus – response theory split into classical and operant conditioning theories of Ivan Pavlov, Edward Lee Thorndike and Burrhus Skinner, which has it that all responses are subject to stimulus within the environment, supports the age, gender and students’ attitude towards economics.

Generally, students have a strong aversion for mathematics and mathematics related courses such as economics, so to be able to develop their interest for economics one has to pair what they (students) like by praising every effort they make in solving any economics problem in the class.

Edward Lee Thorndike (1874-1949) was one of the earliest American educational psychologist and the first that systematically carried out experiments to study how non- reflexive behaviours can be modified from experience. In his operant conditioning of stimulus- response theory, he considered the strengthening of the connection between stimuli and responses as being responsible for the formation of habits. He performed some experiments to demonstrate how this happens and used an apparatus called puzzle or problem box where he placed hungry animals such as rats, cats and tested them to create a stronger stimulus – response connection from them. The educational implication of Thorndike operant conditioning theory as it relates to study is that the teacher is to ensure that once an appropriate response is made, it is important to reward it. Continuously rewarding the correct response ensures the establishment and strengthening of the stimulus response connection or bond [11 pp217].

Abraham Maslow motivational theory of 1954 as described in his hierarchy of needs proposes that every human being has needs which are consistent with the theory of learning. According to his self actualization needs theory which involves the drive to become what one is capable of becoming – includes growth, achieving one’s potential and self – fulfillment will

motivate a student performance and attitude in a given subject. The educational implication is that performance motivation may thus be considered as a latent disposition which involves a persistent desire to get involved and perform.

Clark Hull, an American psychologist covered different areas in his studies, which include hypnosis, concept formation, test measurement, learning and motivation. He focused mainly on habit strength, drive reduction and intervention variables. Hull's 1943 theory was essentially a stimulus- response, in which he mainly sought to break this connection into a number of intervening variables that are responsible. He identified some positive factors that enable an individual to respond and some negative factors that hinder the response. The positive factors include the habit strength and drive while the negative factors include fatigue and conditioned inhibition. He further contends that the difference between the positive and negative factors determines the possibility, speed and intensity of the response.

Hull advocated for drive reduction theory of reinforcement when he classified reinforcement into primary and secondary reinforcement. The theory states that "strong stimulation of any sort is aversive to an organism and any reduction in this stimulus acts as a reinforce for immediately preceding behaviour.

The educational implication of Hull's theory as it relates to this topic is that it provides much value to school system. The school authorities can base the planning of their curriculum, syllabuses, scheme of work and the notes of lesson on means of drive reduction. It also reduces negative stimulation for students and made for positive reinforce building. From the above discourse, it is pertinent to state that since attitude, motivation, interest, self – concept and involvement can change according to circumstances and incentives and since they can act in both directions, the attitude of students towards economics can change positively or negatively thereby affecting performance. It is also imperative that this study be carried out since it is assumed that little literature on attitude exists with reference to behaviour change and achievement in economics.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is a non experimental survey design. This design is chosen because it is a form of descriptive research that is aimed at studying large and small population where large and small samples from population are collected in order to examine the distribution, incidence and interaction of educational, sociological and psychological phenomena or problems. The population of this study constitutes students in senior secondary two (SSS 2) from four (4) secondary schools randomly selected from fifteen (15) secondary school in calabar municipality which was randomly selected using simple random sampling techniques. The total of one hundred and twenty (120) students were randomly selected from the four schools, hence thirty (30) students were selected from each of the four (4) schools. It was however believe that these students have been taught and have gained some experience in the subject for at least one full year in their respective secondary schools. The instrument used to gather information was a questionnaire designed to test student's response on attitude, age and gender towards economics. The students were required to provide the researcher with correct information relating to their opinion and disposition about the study of economics. to ascertain the effectiveness of the learning of economics in the selected schools, there was a questionnaire designed to test students' interest, involvement and motivation towards the study of economics. This was meant to evaluate the students towards the study of economic as a subject. The questionnaire meant for the study contained 20 items which will be divided into four (4) sections. The first section will contain students' personal data, the second section will require their responses on interest, the third section will require their responses on involvement while the fourth section will be motivation and a space provided for their individual responses. The questionnaire was administered and the responses was collected, collated, tabulated, quantified and computed. A Spearman Correlation Coefficient was used in analyzing the items to test the hypotheses. The analysis was therefore meant to find out the relationship between students' ages, gender, interest, involvement and motivation. The result of the analysis is as shown on the tables below:

Table 1.1

Ages of students	Male (X)	Female (Y)
12 – 15 yrs	25	12
16 – 18 yrs	27	20
19 – 21 yrs	16	10
22yrs and above	7	3

Table 1.2

Variables	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-value
Student's Ages	77	45	1659	653	1021	0.980

Critical value = 0.176, calculated value $r = 0.980$, $DF = 118$, $N = 120$

Table 1.3

Gender		ΣX^2	ΣX	ΣY	ΣY^2	ΣXY
Male (X)	Female (Y)					
18	12	1593	75	45	693	657
30	0					
15	15					
12	18					

$\Sigma X = 75$ $\Sigma Y = 45$ $\Sigma X^2 = 1593$ $\Sigma Y^2 = 693$ $\Sigma XY = 657$;

Critical value = 0.176, calculated value $r = 0.980$, $DF = 118$, $N = 120$

Table 1.4

Variable	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-value
Students' interest	272	68	16696	1428	2940	0.590

Critical value = 0.176, calculated value $r = 0.590$, $DF = 118$, $N = 120$

Table 1.5

Variable	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-value
Students Involvement in Ethno – Economic Activities	338	106	17462	2260	4594	0.718

Critical value = 0.176, calculated value $r = 0.718$, $DF = 118$, $N = 120$

Table 1.6

Variable	ΣX	ΣY	ΣX^2	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-value
Students' motivation	392	110	23206	1956	4121	0.589

Critical value = 0.176, calculated value $r = 0.589$, $DF = 118$, $N = 120$

Table 1.7

VARIABLES	MEAN (X)	SD Standard Deviation	R- VALUES	DF Degree of Freedom	Capital values
Ages	8.50	2.89	0.980	118	0.176
Gender	5.47	2.73	0.615	118	0.176
Interest	24.5	11.26	0.590	118	0.176
Students' involvement	38.28	11.25	0.718	118	0.176
Motivation	34.34	13.30	0.589	118	0.176

RESULT

The result of the findings of hypothesis one as shown in table 1.1, shows that there is a significant relationship between students' ages and their attitude towards economics. This is true because the ages of the students will go a long way to determine their attitude towards the study of economics. In line with this, Pavlov (1849 - 1936), a cognitive theorist, argues that the age of a student determine his attitude and achievement in a particular subject.

The result of table 1.2 shows that gender has a significance influence in the attitude of students towards the study of economics. Studies have shown that female students are more conservative and prudent in their spending than male students. This could lead to the high level of females in the study of economics than male students, but according to this

finding, the attitude of both sexes towards the subject is the same. The result of table 1.3 shows that there is a significant relationship between students' interest and their attitude towards economics. In agreement with the result these findings, [15], observed that interest involves the selection and ranking of activities along a like – dislike dimension. One student may prefer listening to records to working arithmetic problems. He also alleged that interest involves activities or behaviours engaged in by an individual.

Also, [17] observed that if a student has an interest in a particular subject, it will be in his / her best interest to attend lessons, carry out class activities like participation in laboratory exercises, listen to the teacher, do assignments, look up references and so on. Again to Pavlov theory of stimulus – response, to elicit a students' interest is to award any positive response from him/ her. So interest goes a long way to determine the performance a particular student in a subject. The result of table 1.4 shows that students' involvement in ethno – economic activities is significantly related to their attitude towards economics. This implies that the students' involvement in ethno – economic activities will help shape their attitude towards the study of economics. Since economics involves the study of the optimal use of available resources, their (students') involvement in ethno – economic activities will build a positive attitude towards the study of economics. The result of table 1.5 shows that attitude of students towards economics is dependent on their motivation towards the subject. According to [12], motivation is a trigger stimulus- it can be mere expectation. Generally, it refers to a process of arousing, maintaining, controlling and channeling interest and attention towards or while performing a particular task. In line with result of this findings, [16], notes that students who are motivated to engage in school select tasks at the border of their competences, initiate actions when given the opportunity and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks; they show generally positive emotion during ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimum curiosity and interest. To motivate students in the study of economics, teachers should tend to magnify students initial level of motivation. [13] Further opined that to a very large extent, students expect to learn if their teacher expects them to learn. [1] Observed that students' attitude about their capabilities and their interpretation of success and failure further affect their willingness or motivation to engage them in learning.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of age, gender and attitude of students towards the study of economics in secondary schools in Calabar. From the findings as already stated above, the following conclusion can be drawn.

It was found out that it is not necessarily age and gender that can influence students' attitude in the subject but rather, other intervening variables such as students' involvement, motivation and the interest of the students towards the subject. Discrepancy in ages could also play a vital role in creating interest in the study of economics. Students' within the age bracket of 16 – 18 years could be showing greater interest in economics than students within the age range of 12 – 15 years. Also, female students are seen showing more interest and having a positive attitude towards economics than male students. This is because of the conservative nature of their lives.

Also, the role of interest in developing positive attitude towards the study of economics is very vital. Our study shows that eliciting students interest is to award any positive response he / she makes. Hence, there is a significant relationship between students' interest towards the study of economics. Interest and attention is one of the factors that affect students' perception towards a particular subject. Although there could be distinction between interest and attitude, these two terms are not entirely independent, one may have an interest in arranging flower and positive attitude towards flowers in general. Students' motivation affects their readiness to offer or choose economics as a subject. This is so because teachers and parents should magnify the students' effort in trying to solve economic problems.

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