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## Patterns of University Graduating Students' Attitude to Research Work

**BANDELE S.O. and ADEBULE S.O.**

Faculty of Education

Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti.

E-mail: doctorolufemiadebule@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the patterns of graduating students' attitude to research work at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti in order to have insight into how they carried out their research work. The study employed the research design of the survey type. A sample of three hundred and sixty graduating students from three faculties, Education, Arts and Social Sciences was selected using stratified random and judgemental sampling techniques. A-35 item questionnaire tagged University Graduating Students' Attitude Towards Research Work (UGSATRW) served as instrument for data collection. Face and content validity of the instrument was ensured by experts in psychometrics, research, tests and measurement. A reliability coefficient of  $r=0.952$  was got using CronbachAlpha. The findings revealed that research work makes the students anxious, nervous, bored, scared and that they would not have enrolled for the course if opportuned. Also the findings show that irrespective of type of gender and faculty of the students they are similar in their pattern of attitude to research work. It can be concluded that almost all the graduating students had negative attitude towards research work which is not a welcomed development if a nation is to have a breakthrough in technology and research. Thus stakeholders in tertiary education in Nigeria should put in place incentives and means of motivating the students towards research work.*

**Keywords:** Attitude, research work, graduating students, project supervision, gender parity.

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### INTRODUCTION

Attitude is the readiness to act in a certain way to certain issues. What constitutes these could be moods, feelings, prejudices, fear and anxiety. Attitude is not an innate tendency but it is learnt. Attitude develops and is organized through experience. It is assumed that the appearance of an attitude is dependent on learning or social interactions. Attitude refers to a person's feeling thought and predisposition to respond to an object. Some researchers like Aborisade (2008), Adebule (2002), Omirin (1999) and Idu (1988) indicated many but similar patterns of attitude formation, that the main sources of attitude include assimilation from the environment, emotional effects of certain kinds of experiences and direct intellectual processes.

According to Webb (1972) attitude is one of the greater predictors of achievement in Mathematics and other science subjects. A man's attitude towards any job or task is very important towards the successful execution of such a task. If one develops a poor attitude, the project may fail, but if the attitude is positive, success is achievable. Omirin (1999) and Oloyede (1984) stressed that poor attitude of students contributed more than anything else to the poor performance in school subjects. Osakinle (2001) is of the opinion that the development of positive or negative feeling towards an object means that an attitude has been formed which is in conformity with the submission of Bandele (2004) that attitude is an abstraction formed from the feelings of people. Halloran (1970) identified three main sources of attitudes to include direct experience with objects and situations, explicit and implicit learning from others and personality development.

Research can be loosely explained as a hyphenated compound word re-search connoting a new search or a repeated search for something (Bandele, 2004). It is a way or process of solving problem or resolving issues. It is an attempt to push back the frontiers of ignorance thereby advancing the frontiers of knowledge. Kerlinger (1977) defined scientific research as a systematic, controlled,

empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among national phenomena. This implies that a haphazard and unorganized process of solving a problem will fail the test of being a research activity. A research process entails solving knotty problems through organized and systematic application of standard procedures that will lead to the solutions of the problems. Research exists because a problem exists; where there is no problem the process of research is unnecessary. The joy of researchers is that when solutions are proffered to problems, ignorance fizzles out and the frontiers of knowledge is pushed forward.

Nigeria as a country is bedeviled with many unresolved problems. The education system is bewildered with poor academic performance and abysmal failures. The quest for technological advancement and industrial growth has not been fruitful. Developmental breakthrough seems to be a mirage.

According to Ojo (2007) citing Nwapachu (1995), research serves as a springboard for innovation and subsequent development. Research work demands clear understanding of what is to be done, needs determination and effort. It builds on existing data, which require adequate use of textbooks, journals and library facilities.

Educational research is conducted to increase human knowledge, solve contemporary problems, create basis for decision making, make new discoveries, enhance contemporary status evidence, aid educational innovations and improve educational services (Bandeled, 2004). However, Ojo (2007) observed that there are symptoms of downward trend in research performance and that the gold standards of excellence that were explicitly sought by elitist Universities have gradually been compromised. Studies have shown that attitude has strong influence upon behaviour, kinds of satisfaction and value which individuals choose (Idu, 1988). Once an attitude is formed, it persists for a long time and might require great pressure for possible alteration.

In Nigerian higher institutions of learning, students are expected to be exposed to research method and rigorous academic exercises for some years depending on the type of courses. A student is also expected to conduct a research study or project or write a long essay before graduating from the institution apart from passing the other courses. The long essay or project is a useful vehicle to test the capacity or capability of the student to embark on independent study. Thus the importance of positive attitudes of students towards learning cannot be overemphasized.

According to Ojo (2007), Onwuegbuzie (2003), Faghihi (1998), Phillips & Russell (1994) in recent years, studies conducted on graduate students enrolled in research methodology and statistics classes have been the subject of doctoral dissertations, journal articles and other publication outlets. Research in this area has found that many students are extremely frightened about taking such courses. These students deem research courses to be the most difficult in their programme of study, often revealing that they would not have enrolled in these classes if they had not been required to do so. Also Elena (2013) research finding indicates that some of the students struggle in research classes leading to negative attitudes, feeling and poor performance.

This study therefore is out to investigate the pattern of University graduating students' attitude to research work. This would shed more light on how they were able to carry out their research work.

The following question was raised to assist the study:

- (1) What is the pattern of University graduating students' attitude to research work?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Two research hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 level of significance

- (1) There is no significant difference between the pattern of male and female graduating students attitude to research work.
- (2) There is no significant difference in the pattern of education arts and social sciences graduating students' attitude to research work.

### **Research Method**

This study employed the research design of the survey type. The population for the study consisted of all graduating students for the 2010/2011 academic session of that State University, Ado-Ekiti. A sample of three hundred and sixty graduating students from three Faculties Education, Arts and Social Sciences was used. A combination of stratified and judgemental sampling techniques was used in the selection of the sample across the faculties.

The instrument used to gather data for the study was a - 35 item questionnaire tagged University Graduating Students Attitude to Research Work Questionnaire (UGSATRW). The instrument was

adapted from Interest in Research Questionnaire (IRQ), developed by Bishop and Bieschke (1994), Past Attitudes toward Research (PATR), developed by Royalty, Geslo, Mallinckrodt and Garrett (1986), Students Attitudes towards Research scale by Elena (2013), Research Outcome Expectations Questionnaire (ROEQ), developed by Bieschke and Bishop (1994), Disposition of Students to Research Inventory (DRSI) by Ojo (2007) and Attitude Toward Research Design Survey (ATRDS) by Onwuegbuzie (2003). Experts in Psychometrics, Research, Tests and Measurement ensured face and context validity of the instrument before usage. To test the reliability of UGSATRW, it was examined on 25 students who were

not part of the study from faculty of sciences. Using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient as a measure of internal consistency of the items of the scale, the 35 items produced a reliability coefficient of 0.952, which is very satisfactory. The instrument was administered to students who had completed their projects in the last semester of their respective programmes. The data gathered were analyzed using percentages and frequency counts to indicate the number of students who agreed or disagreed to statements on attitudes to research work.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentage Analysis of Item by Item**

S/N	ITEMS	EDUCATION				ARTS				SOCIAL SCIENCES			
		AGREE		DISAGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE		AGREE		DISAGREE	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Research Study makes me anxious	88	73.3	32	26.7	93	77.5	27	22.5	80	66.7	40	33.3
2	Research should be taught to all students	85	70.8	35	29.2	70	58.3	50	41.7	100	83.3	20	16.7
3	Research Study is interesting	57	47.5	63	52.5	49	41.8	71	59.2	44	36.7	76	63.3
4	I feel insecure concerning the analysis of research data	68	56.7	52	43.3	76	63.3	44	36.7	61	50.8	59	49.2
5	Research work scares me	94	78.3	26	21.7	103	85.8	17	14.2	80	66.7	40	33.3
6	Research is useful for my career	69	57.5	51	42.5	56	46.7	64	53.3	40	33.3	80	66.7
7	I find it difficult to understand the concepts of research	101	84.2	19	15.8	105	87.5	15	12.5	109	90.8	11	9.2
8	I make many mistakes in research work	99	82.5	21	17.5	107	89.2	13	10.8	108	90	12	10
9	Carrying our Research work is stressful	92	76.7	28	23.3	104	86.7	16	13.3	111	92.5	9	7.5
10	Research makes me nervous	98	81.7	22	18.3	106	88.3	14	11.7	115	95.8	5	4.2
11	Research is irrelevant to my life	62	51.7	58	48.3	93	77.5	27	22.5	100	83.3	20	16.7
12	I was not allowed to choose my research topic	61	50.8	59	49.2	60	50	60	50	53	44.2	67	55.8
13	The number of units attached to research does not measure up to the amount of effort made on it	110	91.7	10	8.3	118	98.3	2	1.7	117	97.5	3	2.5
14	Research work should be made optional	66	55	54	45	89	74.2	31	25.8	97	80.1	23	19.2
15	I was scared when I had to defend my research project	82	68.3	38	31.7	115	95.8	5	4.2	101	84.2	19	15.8
16	The preparatory work to project writing was well handled	69	57.5	51	42.5	75	62.5	45	37.5	83	69.2	37	30.8
17	Inadequate materials hindered the progress on my research work	104	86.7	16	13.3	113	94.2	7	5.8	106	88.3	14	11.7
18	My project supervisor was not approachable	62	51.7	58	48.3	86	71.7	34	28.3	99	82.5	21	17.5
19	The cost of carrying out the research project was too expensive	102	85	18	15	117	97.5	3	2.5	111	92.5	9	7.5
20	Our academic environment is not conducive for research work	75	62.5	45	37.5	97	80.8	28	19.2	104	86.7	16	13.3
21	Time allocated to finish up writing the project was inadequate	82	68.3	38	31.7	95	79.2	25	20.8	97	76.7	28	23.3
22	Preparatory courses to project writing is not relevant to the actual experience	100	83.3	20	16.7	103	85.8	17	14.2	101	84.2	19	15.8
23	Students copy from already finished project write up	118	98.3	2	1.7	114	95	6	5	113	94.2	7	5.8
24	I am inclined to study the details of research procedures carefully	61	50.8	59	49.2	52	43.3	58	48.3	62	51.7		
25	There is nothing wrong in copying	56	46.7	64	53.3	83	69.2	37	30.8	91	75.8	29	24.2

	other project as new topics are scarce												
26	Poor organization of research teaching by some lecturers is frequent	67	55.8	53	44.2	86	71.7	34	28.3	88	73.3	32	26.7
27	I feel relaxed when embarking on research work	33	27.5	87	72.5	16	13.3	104	86.7	21	17.5	99	82.5
28	I am encouraged to work harder by research lecturers who are committed to teaching	69	57.5	51	42.5	87	47.5	63	52.5	48	40	72	60
29	Research hours are enjoyable	41	34.2	79	65.8	13	10.8	107	89.2	25	20.8	95	79.2
30	Bored by doing assignment on research	80	66.7	40	33.3	108	90	12	10	98	81.7	22	18.3
31	Time table planning in respect of research lectures is satisfactory	34	28.3	86	71.7	21	17.5	99	82.5	15	12.5	105	87.5
32	I have trouble with simple calculations	83	69.2	37	30.8	115	95.8	5	41.7	91	75.8	29	24.2
33	Research work is too challenging for me to really understand it well	85	70.8	35	29.2	100	83.3	20	16.7	101	84.2	19	15.8
34	Rapport with other students in area of research work is poor	60	50	60	50	72	60	48	40	61	50.8	59	49.2
35	To painstakingly follow every step that leads to a successful research project completion is umbersome	70	58.3	50	41.7	93	77.5	27	22.5	94	78.3	26	21.7

Table 1 shows the frequency counts and percentage responses of graduating Students on the 35 item instrument on attitude to research work. The graduating students from the three faculties agreed that research work makes them anxious, scares them, find it difficult to understand the concept of research, makes too many mistakes, makes them nervous, bored by doing research assignment, have trouble doing simple calculation and that it is too challenging for them to really comprehend. This could be seen in items 1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 30, 32 and 33.

The results also show that on item 13 the students agreed that the number of units attached to research work does not measure up to the amount of efforts made on it (Education 91.7%, Arts 98.3% and social sciences 97.5%) and that the time frame allocated to finish up writing of research project was inadequate (Education 68.3%, Arts 79.2% and social sciences 76.7%).

Also Table 1 indicates that the students are faced with some problems in the course of embarking on the research work. These include items 12, 17, 18, 20, 26, and 31. The finding of the study is in line with Ojo (2007) and Mosha (1998) that the key factors hampering adequate volume and quality of research in Universities are finance, inadequate facilities, quality of staff in terms of skills, equipment and motivation to do research.

### Hypotheses 1

There is no significant difference between the pattern of male and female graduating students attitude to research work.

**Table 2:** T-test Summary on the Pattern of Male and Female Graduating Students Attitude to research Work

Sex	N	Mean	SD	df	t <sub>cal</sub>	t <sub>critical</sub>
Male	183	78.59	16.92	358	1.23	1.96
Female	177	76.48	15.63			

$P > 0.05$  (Result is not significant)

Table 2 reveals that the  $t_{calculated}$  value = 1.23 while the  $t_{critical}$  value = 1.96. Thus  $t_{cal} < t_{critical}$  values i.e.  $1.23 < 1.96$ . Since the calculated value is less than the table value, the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is no significant difference between the pattern of male and female graduating students attitude to research work.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the pattern of Education, Art and Social Sciences graduating students' attitude to research work.

**Table 3:** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Summary on the Pattern of Education, Art and Social Sciences graduating Students to research work.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F <sub>ratio</sub>	F <sub>critical</sub>
Between Groups	41.628	2	20.814	2.3774	3.00
Within Groups	3125.5	357	8.7549		
<b>Total</b>	<b>3167.128</b>	<b>359</b>			

A critical look at Table 3 shows the  $F_{\text{calculated}}$  value of 2.3774 and  $F_{\text{critical}}$  value of 3.00. Here  $F_{\text{cal}}$  is less than  $F_{\text{critical}}$  ( $2.3774 < 3.00$ ) at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis is therefore accepted. Therefore there is no significant difference in the pattern of Education, Art and Social Science graduating students' attitude to research work.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from the study reveal that the patterns of graduating students attitude to research work irrespective of the gender are very similar. The findings support that of Ojo (2007) who submitted that there was no significant difference in the mean dispositional scores of male and female graduating students to research. However, Okwilagwe (2001) revealed in a research study that statistical difference exists between male and female gender in the degree to which they have always liked taking examinations. Also Oloyede (1984) and Ibitola (2003) reported that male students performed better than female in programme mathematics altitudinal tests.

This Study also revealed that graduating Students from Education, Art and Social Sciences faculties had several similarities in the pattern of attitude to research work. This finding corroborates Ojo (2007), Royalty et al (1986), Onwuegbuzie (2003) and Okwulagwe (2001) that there are several similarities in the pattern of undergraduates' attitude towards academic work across the various faculties sampled.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that graduating students whether male and female from the Faculties of Education, Arts and Social Sciences had negative attitude towards research work. This might go a long way to affect the nations quest for advancement. There is no way a nation can have a breakthrough in technology if the graduates from the tertiary institutions have no thirst for research breakthrough. Since the findings from research work if harvested properly could launch a nation to limelight the University authorities, lecturers and counselors need to encourage and sensitize the students to the relevance of research to development, expose them early enough to principles guiding conduct of research and possibly give financial assistance in form of bursary scholarships, loans and other incentives to needy students. The results of the study can be re-examined to determine if they can be replicated with other sample of students, as well as different population.

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