

## **INFLUENCE OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP ON UNDERGRADUATES' DISPOSITION TO ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

**ABDULAZIZ, Isiaka (PhD)**

Department of Social Sciences Education,  
Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

**E-mail:** [abdulaziz.i@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:abdulaziz.i@unilorin.edu.ng)

**Phone No:** +234-803-205-5610

### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the influence of economic hardship on undergraduates' disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study made use of descriptive design of the survey type. Three research questions were raised, and two research hypotheses were postulated. The population for this study comprised all undergraduates of the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University Malete. While the target population were one hundred and seventy-three (173) from each level of 300 and 400 level undergraduates of the Faculty of Education of the two universities. Respondents were drawn from 300 and 400 level students in the Faculty of Education of the two universities using purposive sampling technique. Three hundred and forty-six (346) undergraduates were sampled using simple stratified sampling technique to sample one hundred and seventy-three (173). A self-developed questionnaire which contained eight (8) items structured in a four-response type was used for data collection. The face and content validity were ensured and the reliability coefficient of 0.71 was obtained. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question raised while the hypotheses postulated were tested with the use of independent t-test at 0.05 alpha level. Findings revealed that the contemporary economic hardship influenced undergraduates' dispositions to academic activities. The study recommended that parents should provide as much as possible for the needs of their children in tertiary institutions. School management in conjunction with Student Union (SU) should provide highly subsidized means of transportation for students. The study recommended that further studies be carried out to include other variables such as food-insecurity and parental neglect.*

**Keywords:** Economic hardship, Undergraduates', disposition, Academic, activities

### **Introduction**

Education is an indispensable tool in every human society. It provides a means of achieving the aims of a nation by equipping its citizens with functional requisites skills such as values, attitude and knowledge that will make them to imbibe the spirit of patriotism and as well contribute their quota to the development of the society. Education provides for the students the professional knowledge which will allow them to provide alternatives for economic hardship. The availability of educational resources, lifestyle and level of motivation of students globally is shaped by the economic situation of the larger society (Komolafe, 2016).

The impact of the global financial crisis on the Nigerian economy is multifaceted as it leads to dwindling in government revenues, affects the Nigerian currency, decline in capital inflow, capital market down turn, investment by foreign investors with tightness and possible second round effects on the balance sheet of banks by increasing provision for bad debt and decrease the profitability, weakens the banking sector, stock market crash and undermines confidence in the financial sector (Ngowgwugwu, 2018). The economics health of a nation is a great determinant of the general affairs of such nation because the dwindling in economic activities

can affect all other aspects of the economy and thereby result to difficulty in having too little money or too few resources to cope with.(Abdullahi,2019)

According to National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER, 2012), economic hardship is defined as "a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting for a period of time, normally visible in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production. Business cycle analyst generally use the conception of economic hardship to refer to weak economic phases, of which duration, depth and diffusion exceed the usual bounds: thus one speaks of the three key dimension of a recession, known as the depth and diffusion (Faruta, 2013). This means that in an economic hardship, economic activities decrease substantially, and the decline affects wide portions of the economy and it has some permanence.

Dornyei (2017) defined recession as "a decline in the seasonal and calendar adjusted real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in at least two successive quarters". Many factors contributing to economic recession, but the major cause is inflation. Inflation refers to a general rise in the prices of goods and services over a period of time. The higher the rate of inflation, the smaller the percentage of goods and services that can be purchased with the same amount of money. Inflation happens for reasons when there is increase of production costs, higher energy costs and national debt. In an inflationary environment, people tend to cut out leisure spending, reduce overall spending and begin to save more. But as individuals and businesses curtail expenditures to trim costs, this causes the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to decline.

Keynesian economics (Keynesianism) are the various theories about how in the short run, and especially during recessions, economic output is strongly influenced by aggregate demand (total spending in the economy). In the Keynesian view, aggregate demand does not necessarily equal the productive capacity of the economy; instead, it is influenced by a host of factors and sometimes behaves erratically, affecting production, employment, and inflation (Sobowale, 2016). The theories forming the basis of Keynesian economics were first presented by the British economist John Maynard Keynes during the Great Depression in his 1936 book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (Humphrey, 1989). Keynesian economists often argue that private sector decisions sometimes lead to inefficient macroeconomic outcomes which require active policy responses by the public sector, in particular, monetary policy actions by the central bank and fiscal policy actions by the government, in order to stabilize output over the business cycle (Sobowale, 2016). Keynesian economics served as the standard of economic model in the developed nations during the part of the Great Depression, World War II, and the post-war economic expansion (1945–1973), though it lost some influence following the oil shock and resulting stagflation of the 1970s (Shea 2002). The advent of the financial crisis of 2007–08 caused resurgence in Keynesian thought, which continues as new Keynesian economics. The following are the key points to an economic hardship in the society, these are: consecutive decline in quarterly real gross domestic product below zero, decline in economic activity spread across the economy in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sector, decline in income and profits reported by business, dip in government revenue. Job losses as a result of massive lay-off for companies to cut cost to remain afloat. (Abdullahi, 2019).

Transversely, students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are experiencing a level of economic hardship one way or the other during the period of economic hardship of 2015. In modern-day

societies, societal glitches are created by school system and also affected by it. In the academic environment, economic hardship has been found to have significant effect on student's academic activities and social interactions within the school location. School serves as social and academic arena quite well receive input not only from government but from parents, teachers, and administrators (Anwaka, 2018). He further said that in this case if schools, as social settings, are to be responsive to the needs of students whose families may be experiencing economic hardship as a result of the economic changes, it is important to determine the level of economic difficulties experience by the students.

Komolafe (2016), stated that oil prices have crashed to less than \$ 50 per barrel; Nigeria's production output has tumbled over 400,000 barrels due to militancy activities in the Niger Delta region. Oil production plummeted to 1.69 million barrels per day in the second quarter of 2016, down from 2.11 million barrel per day in the first quarter, with oil – based GDP contracting by 17.5% in quarter two compared to 1.9% in the first quarter. The value of capital imported into Nigeria in the second quarter of 2016 was estimated to be \$647.1 million, which represents a fall of 75.73% relative to the second quarter of 2015. The impact of the economic hardship in Nigeria is multifaceted as it cuts across all institutions of the nation. Social institutions are interconnected and interdependent as each sector affects the other positively or negatively. The current economic hardship has its toll on the educational institution as both parents and students are victims of the economic recession (Komolafe, 2016).

Parental socio-economic status is a powerful predictor of children's academic attainment In Nigeria. Study has shown that millions of parents with children in school are battling with unpaid salaries, half salaries, partial shutdown of plants, retrenchments, higher fuel, food and transportation charges, unemployment and low level of industrial production and productivity (Sobowale, 2016). Educational assimilation and constructive learning is greatly dependent on economic factors. A decline in economic activities that may lead to unemployment fall in industrial productivity, low circulation of currency and a visible fall in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of that might have a negative toll on attitudes of undergraduate towards education. Economic hardship that families experience are often transferred to one's children unintentionally and can attribute to their overall low academic achievement. Socio-economic status tends to be consistent throughout generations (Shea, 2002). It is impossible to overlook the fact that price of books, laboratory sets, calculators, materials, photocopy, printing, and other educational resources climbed when the currency was officially devalued (Sobowale 2016).

The economic hardship in Nigeria is spelling doom on class attendance of tertiary institutions across the nation. Sobowale, (2016) lamented that the bus ride which drilled a N100 hole in students' pocket in July 2016 now drills a bigger one of N200 with no prospect of a salary increase in sight. Students who have no means of paying for transportation have no choice but to be absent from school. As a result of inflation emanating from economic recession, the transportation cost in many cities in Nigeria has doubled (Sobowale, 2016). Parents, particularly civil servants and retirees from public sector have been so impoverished by months of unpaid salaries, pensions and other allowances accruing to them, which is from where they finance their children's education (ANON, 2016). This economic hardship makes schooling unbearable and classroom attendance almost impossible and change the students' disposition towards academic activities in the school.

Disposition to academic activities can be, for some students, indicative of educational success and well-being. As such, this perception is treated alongside academic performance, an important outcome of schooling. However, many children express negative disposition to school as they do not tend to believe that the school and success in it will have a strong bearing on their future. Such negative feelings and dispositions may result in their becoming disaffected with school (Larson, 2000). Academic activity is any assigned work or project used to determine academic credit, including (but not limited to) an examination, writing of project, take-home test, etc. Schooling is traditionally associated with an academic curriculum taught between about eight o'clock in the morning and – at least one o'clock in the afternoon (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Academic activities provide students with a plethora of opportunities to learn and refine the skills necessary to positively affect students' current academic careers and become successful citizens after graduation (Barber, Stone, Hunt, & Eccles, 2005). The current economic hardship in Nigeria affects students at all level and this can be noticed in the academic behavior of students which has direct influence on their disposition to academic activities. For instance, students from low income parents, student from absolute poverty home, and students from unemployment parents tend to have negative disposition to academic activities in the university.

Gender is seen as the property that distinguish organism on the basis of their productive roles as female or male (Kolawole & Ala, 2014). Studies have shown that males from relatively low-income home are more prone to cope with academic activities during economic hardship than their female counterparts. Odok (2013) submitted that many male students have become part-time workers to meet their school expenses. Significant number of these students are reside off-campus so as to ensure work-school life balance.

On-campus living implies living in the territory of land that contains the primary structures of a college or school while living off-campus is an understudies' lodging situated outside of the school premises. Sen and Antara (2018) maintained that on-campus students are more focused on academic studies than their off-campus counterparts, though described students' (parental) limited economic status as one of the influencing factors to stay off-campus.

### **Literature Review**

Teixeira (2019) absenteeism is generally defined as deliberate or habitual absence from the classroom without valid reasons, excluding absence for valid reasons such as sickness or accidents. Teixeira further pointed out that the issue of absenteeism in higher institutions is increasing globally. Like documented high rates of class absenteeism at the university level, ranging from 18.5% and 25% to 40% and even as high as 59% and 70%, in two separate biology. Some contend that this wave of absenteeism is likely to jeopardize the teaching and learning environment at schools (Teixeira 2019). As such, it has been considered as a major problem by both staff and university administrators. Absenteeism of students from school during periods of economic recession is devastating as some students drop out of school to engage in small businesses to meet up with school financial needs, and this has occasioned researchers to investigate the causes (Ashimolow, 2018).

The effects of absenteeism on the educational achievement of students cannot be overemphasized. Schmulian,(2018) observed that in a large accounting class in South Africa there was a significant positive correlation between class attendance and academic performance. A similar result was obtained by (Marburger, 2007). This author gathered daily

attendance records from a small Macroeconomics class at a US university and kept track of each student's rate of absenteeism. Resorting to a probit estimation, he found that a student who had missed class on a specific day was 7.5 percent to 14.6 percent more likely to respond incorrectly to a multiple-choice question.

The reason for student absenteeism is mostly related to economic hardship globally. According to Barrera, (2016) stated that the pressure for more household members to earn income may increase in demand for children and youths to substitute for adults in home production, and for youth to find work outside the home. These effects could reduce school attendance, driving down student performance and increasing dropout rates. The great recession in Nigeria has made students enroll and use more of the entrepreneurial skills acquired to create products for sale to finance themselves instead of waiting on their parents money, for example Ankara ties, cake baking, bead making and the likes (Anwuka, 2018), stated that these students sometimes have to stay away from classes to provide avenues to use and trade with such skills. This problem seems to be a major one that requires urgent and serious solution since students' academic performance affects the quality of human resources within the society.

Abdullahi (2019) carried out a study on 3,763 Students and established that the main cause of students' absenteeism was that some of them can't afford school fees and have no option than to stay away from school. This is most common in private secondary schools where debtors are sent home while their mates are in school.

### **Theory of Economic Hardship**

Keynesian economics (Keynesianism) are the various theories about how in the short run, and especially during recessions, economic output is strongly influenced by aggregate demand (total spending in the economy). In the Keynesian view, aggregate demand does not necessarily equal the productive capacity of the economy; instead, it is influenced by a host of factors and sometimes behaves erratically, affecting production, employment, and inflation (Sobowale, 2016). The theories forming the basis of Keynesian economics were first presented by the British economist John Maynard Keynes during the Great Depression in his 1936 book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (Humphrey, 1989). Keynesian economists often argue that private sector decisions sometimes lead to inefficient macroeconomic outcomes which require active policy responses by the public sector, in particular, monetary policy actions by the central bank and fiscal policy actions by the government, in order to stabilize output over the business cycle (Sobowale, 2016). Keynesian economics served as the standard of economic model in the developed nations during the part of the Great Depression , World War II, and the post-war economic expansion (1945–1973), though it lost some influence following the oil shock and resulting stagflation of the 1970s ( Shea 2002). The advent of the financial crisis of 2007– 08 caused resurgence in Keynesian thought, which continues as new Keynesian economics.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The economic hardship experienced in Nigeria has its toll on individuals, families, firms, societies and social institutions of the nation. Individuals, firms and the society at large are compelled to make major changes so as to cope in the face of economic recession (Graetz, 2017). However, these economic and lifestyle changes may have an excruciating effect on individuals, the society and the nation at large. In the face of poverty, young age in the society nationwide could be facing serious hardship to cater for themselves. As a result, some youths of



secondary school could find it difficult to pay for transportation, absent from classrooms and have no means of paying for educational materials needed as a result of the hardship facing their parents in the society (Basu, 1999; World Bank 2002; Adamu, 2016).

Sobowale (2016) opined that students who have to earn a living take part-time jobs that compete with lectures, study, time and rest. It is logical to think that if this problem persists, it may be difficult for students to obtain good academic performance there is also a tendency for increase in anti-social activities and behavioural problems among undergraduate students in and outside the campus. The effect of the economic hardship on educational attainment of students has drawn attention of various researchers and scholars. A recent research conducted by Kormos and Kiddle, (2015) on 740 students belonging to different social classes in the capital of Chile, Santiago revealed that students facing economic recession perform below their contemporary in English language examination. Also, Hilton, (2010) reported that food insecurity has the potential to affect academic performance, student's behavior, and engagements in the university; these educational outcomes are linked to retention and graduation rates. Despite several researches on hardship and students' performance, no research has been carried out on the effect of the contemporary economic hardship on undergraduate students of the universities in Kwara state Nigeria. Therefore, the objective of this study was to examine the influence of economic hardship on undergraduates' disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide this study

- (i) What influence does economic hardship have on undergraduates' disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria?
- (ii) Is there any difference in the response of male and female undergraduates on the influence of economic hardship on the disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria?
- (iii) Is there any difference in the response of on- and off- campus undergraduates on the influence of economic hardship on the disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria?

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the in the mean response of male and female undergraduates on the influence of economic hardship on the disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference mean response of on- and off- campus undergraduates on the influence of economic hardship on the disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Methodology**

This study made use of descriptive research design of the survey type. The population for this study comprised all undergraduates of the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University Malete. While the target population consisted of year three and year four (300 & 400) undergraduates in the faculty of education. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 300 and 400 level undergraduates of the Faculty of Education from the two universities sampled. These category of students were chosen purposely because they had been used to

school activities and may likely feel the most the effects of economic hardship being in the penultimate year. Three hundred and forty-six (346) undergraduates were sampled using a stratified sampling technique to select 173 students from each of the levels. Researcher-designed questionnaire (which contained 8 items) was used for data collection. The instrument face and content validity were ensured through the vetting from the experts in the field of Sociology of Education and Research Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was pilot tested on the 30 undergraduates from Al-Hikmah University at interval of two weeks using test re-test method of reliability and reliability coefficient of 0.71 was obtained. This adjudged that the instrument was reliable. Given that the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response-type of Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1), a cut-off score of 2.50 (i.e.  $4+3+2+1=10/4 = 2.50$ ) was therefore used as the baseline for determining participants' responses using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to answer the research question while hypotheses were tested with the use of independent t-test at 0.05 alpha level for data analysis.

## Results

Out of 346 undergraduates sampled for this study, 159 of the respondents were males while 187 were females. Also, 182 of the respondents were on-campus resident while 164 were off-campus resident.

**Research Question:** What influence does the economic hardship had on undergraduates' disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria?

A cut-off score of 2.50 was used as the baseline for determining participants' responses since the questionnaire items were structured in a four-response-type. Therefore, items found with mean scores equal or above 2.50 were 'affirmed as the influence of current economic hardship on undergraduates' disposition to academic activities while items with mean scores below 2.50 were remarked otherwise.

**Table 1: Influence of Current Economic Hardship on Undergraduates' Disposition to Academic Activities in Kwara State, Nigeria**

SN	As a result of current economic hardship	Mean	S.D.	Remark
3	I am often absent from lectures because I have no means of paying for transportation	3.27	1.26	Affirmed
4	I could not afford to do some of class assignments and projects	3.13	1.63	Affirmed
5	Prices of books, photocopy, other study materials have escalated beyond my capacity	2.74	1.49	Affirmed
2	I engage in business that sometimes compete with my classroom attendance	2.71	1.37	Affirmed
7	I hardly complete three daily meals not to talk of eating well and this makes it difficult for me to study well	2.68	1.42	Affirmed
1	I deliberately absent myself from school because of the cost, especially when I have only one course to attend	2.62	1.19	Affirmed
6	I could not pay and partake in departmental excursion in my school	2.57	1.35	Affirmed
8	I hardly subscribe to access some online reading materials to complement my class activities	2.53	1.28	Affirmed
<b>Cumulative Mean</b>		<b>2.78</b>		

As revealed in Table 1, the mean scores obtained for all the items were above 2.50. This shows that contemporary economic hardship affects undergraduates' dispositions to academic activities in the school. Due to this they missed several lectures; could not afford to do some of class assignments and projects; partake in departmental excursion and obtain necessary study materials.

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses were tested using independent t-test at 0.05 alpha level.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant difference in the mean response of male and female undergraduates on the influence of economic hardship on disposition to academic activities

**Table 2: t-test Analysis Showing the Difference in the Mean Response of Male and Female Undergraduates on the Influence of Economic Hardship on Disposition to Academic Activities**

Gender	No	Mean	S. D.	df	t-value	Sig	Remark
Male	159	16.821	3.409	344	1.714	0.122	<b>NS</b>
Female	187	17.975	3.454				

\*not significant at  $p > 0.05$

Table 2 shows the t-test Analysis of the difference in the mean response of male and female undergraduates on the influence of contemporary economic hardship on disposition to academic activities. As revealed in Table 2, the t-value of 1.714 was obtained with a p-value of 0.122 when computed at 0.05 alpha level ( $t_{\{344\}} = 1.714$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Since the p-value of 0.122 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis one is retained. Therefore, there is no statistically significant difference in the mean response of male and female undergraduates on the influence of contemporary economic hardship on disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant influence of economic hardship on undergraduates' on-campus and off-campus residents' disposition to economic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Table 3: t-test Analysis Showing the Difference in the Mean Response of On- and Off-Campus Undergraduates on the Influence of Economic Hardship on Disposition to Academic Activities**

Residence	No	Mean	S. D.	df	t-value	Sig	Remark
On-campus	138	17.551	2.722	344	1.278	0.201	<b>NS</b>
Off-campus	208	17.428	3.001				

\*not significant at  $p > 0.05$

Table 3 shows the t-test Analysis of the difference in the mean response of on- and off-campus undergraduates on the influence of contemporary economic hardship on disposition to academic activities. As shown in Table 3, the t-value 1.278 is obtained with a p-value of 0.201 computed at 0.05 alpha level ( $t_{\{344\}} = 1.278$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Since the p-value of 0.201 is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis one is retained. Therefore, there is no statistically significant



difference in the mean response of on- and off-campus undergraduates on the influence of contemporary economic hardship on disposition to academic activities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Discussion**

The study found that the economic hardship has a positive correlation with students' motivation, purchase of educational material and classroom attendance of undergraduate of the University of Ilorin. This is in line with the findings of Abdullahi (2019) on the impact of students' socio-economic background on academic performance in universities. It could be explained that university undergraduates have limited resources and educational provisions as a result of the economic hardship.

The possible explanation for this observed fact could be as a result of many variables such as inflation in prices of commodities and services, unemployment on the part of parents and guardians, hunger and food insecurity and lifestyle changes as a result of economic hardship. Benson (2007) asserted that economic factors such as learning resources at home and at school have impact on students' autonomous learning behaviour where students are motivated to learn on their own. Marzano (2007) explained that prolonged economic pressure and stress have negative effect on learning and on students' wellbeing; this effect is usually evident in lack of motivation.

Another possible explanation could be the fact that students have to run businesses during the period of economic hardship, thus being unduly absent from class. According to Barrera (2009) the pressure for more household members to earn income may increase demand for children and youths to substitute for adults in home production and for youths to work outside the home. Working and schooling is reported to have its toll on students' academic performance. Marburger (2011) kept track of students' rate of absenteeism in a Macroeconomics class and found that a students' who missed class on a specific day was 7.5 percent to 14.6 percent more likely to respond incorrectly to a multiple choice question.

It was evident that students have to make major lifestyle changes as a result of economic hardship. Komolafe, (2016) explained that negative lifestyle changes caused by economic hardship significantly decreases life satisfaction in young people. Parents are also tense and tend to be more aggressive during period of economic hardship, thus rendering them emotionally unavailable and inaccessible to their children in tertiary institutions.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study investigated the claim with respect to university undergraduates in Kwara state. 300 level and 400 level students of the Faculty of Education were used as respondents. The major findings showed that economic hardship had a negative effects on undergraduate students of the university of Ilorin, Kwara state Nigeria. Economic hardship is one of the factors. Other factors include the environment, the government, the school, the students study habit and many more factors.

A recommendation of the findings of this research work is that parents should as much as possible provide all needs of their children in tertiary institutions and provide them with the basic needs of students which go beyond food, shelter and clothing but extends to the cost of transportation, healthcare services, stationeries, reading materials, laptop and relevant text books that would help them to achieve their academic pursuit. The availability of these

resources and materials would go a long way in reducing the dire effect of the economic hardship on students.

The findings of this study also revealed that the school administrators in conjunction with the Student Unions (S.U) should regulate the cost of transportation by providing more highly subsidized means of transportation for students in the universities across Nigeria.

It is evident from the findings that economic hardship goes a long way in affecting students' interest to education, classroom attendance, and lifestyle of students in the research setting. Based on the findings and discussion, it was recommended that the government should look into the tertiary institutions by giving close mark and financial support as this can reduce the financial burden of education on parents and undergraduates. Scholarships should also be available for intelligent students as well as to encourage them. Also, school fees, acceptance fees, hostel fees and cost of reading materials should be highly subsidized by the government and the school management should promote access to qualitative education. Universities library should be enhanced to the world standard by removing outdated books out of the library and replace with the new once.

Furthermore, the government should map and implement economic programmes that will improve the nation's economy to facilitate a buoyant economy and by extension a more stimulating environment for students in tertiary institutions across Nigeria.

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