TEACHER'S VARIABLES AS A DETERMINANT OF STUDENTS' INTEREST IN ECONOMICS IN BENDE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study was carried out to find out the extent teachers' variables determined students' interest in Economics. The study was carried out in Bende L.G.A. of Abia State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The sample for the study consisted of 458 students drawn from the population of 1527 Senior Secondary Schools Students from 15 Public and Mission schools in Bende L.G.A. of Abia State. This sample size represented 30% of the population. A 15-item interest inventory titled "Teachers' Factor and Students' Interest in Economics Inventory (TFSIEI)" which was developed by the researchers was used for data collection. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to answer the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found among others that teachers' age, gender as well as teaching experiences influence students' interest in Economics. Based on the findings, the study recommended among others that government and Private school-owners should organize conferences, seminars and workshops to young and inexperienced teachers on ways of arousing the interest of the students in the subjects they teach.
Keywords: Teachers' variables, Determinants, Students' interest, Economics.

Introduction
Economics is the study of scarcity, how people use resources, or involve in making rational decisions. Economics is the Social Science that analyses the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Etymologically, Edwin and Chukwuka (2016) also submitted that the term Economics comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, meaning 'management of a household, administration.' It is derived from the combination of two words – *Oikos* (house) and *nomos* (law or custom). Hence, Economics implies laws, customs or rules of the house. Above all, a more generally accepted definition of Economics was given by Robbins as quoted by

Anyaele, (2003) Economics as a Social Science that studies human behaviour as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses. In line with this submission, Onwukwe and Agwu (2002) defined Economics as a science concerned with those institutions which are involved in the use of scarce resources to produce and distribute goods and services in the satisfaction of human wants. According to Ede (2015), the knowledge gained from Economics as a subject at secondary school enables one to manage resources effectively as well as be in the right position to understand and analyze Economic policies and programs of the government. Mermen, Papa and Webber (2010) threw more lights on other benefits students could gain from studying Economics to include: better decision-making skills, a better understanding of human behaviours and capacity for self-employment**.**

Considering the numerous benefits of studying Economics, Students' interest in the subject at the secondary school level seems to be very low. For instance, Balogun in Ede (2015) noted that when students choose elective subjects in a broad sense, subjects like History, Geography, Music, and Agricultural Science are more likely to be chosen for the fear that Economics is a difficult subject. Hence, this might have made them lose their interest in Economics either completely or partially and might have as well created their poor impression towards Economics. Such impressions include the belief that Economics is a very difficult subject, lack of skilled teachers to take up the challenges of the mathematical aspects in Economics, lack of necessary instructional materials and poor motivation among others. Those factors affect teachers and students alike and the result is always students' poor performance in Economics. The level of students' interest, aspiration and motivation towards readiness to learn and even achieving their goals may be dependent upon the teachers' ability in shaping and directing the teaching-learning process of a classroom especially in a subject like Economics. In other words, the extent the teachers' factors influence the low interests which students have in learning Economics is still in doubt. This being that the teacher according to Skinner (2012) is the chief agent in a democratic community's efforts to improve itself by helping individual students to develop their potentials and become productive citizens.

Teachers' factor could be described as those inherent characteristics of a teacher that influences teaching and learning. It is an aspect of the environment-related factors that determine the success or failure of the learning process. The learning situation entails the connection between the teacher and the learner at both ends of the teaching-learning pole, the teacher inevitably is entrusted to act in such a way as to obtain the desired flow of the teaching-learning activities in the classroom. Hence, teacher-related factors in the teaching-learning situation are encapsulated in the following elements: mastery over the subject matter (qualification and experience), personality traits and behaviour of the teacher (gender, age, and integrity, socioeconomic class, ethnic group), level of adjustment and mental health of the teacher and the type of discipline

and interaction maintained by the teacher in terms of praise, clarity, enthusiasm, variability, among others (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). The scope of this study covered such teachers' factors like the teachers' age, gender and teaching experience.

Age as one of the factors that affect human life and activities may have a lot to determine the efficiency of the teachers in the learning environment as well as their compatibility with their students. This is because it has raised arguments on whether it affects the extent students learn. For instance, while Goebel and Cashen (2009) held that old teachers were rated lower on teaching skills than young or middle-aged teachers, Abrami and D'Appollonia in Zuzovsky (2003) on the other hand have the opinion that there is no significant difference between the ratings of old and younger teachers.

Gender on the other hand means male and female. Men and women tend to behave or act differently in certain situations. This however may also manifest even in the classroom teaching/learning environment. There have been divergent opinions on which of the gender that encourages learning most. According to Norlander – Case, Regan and Case in Ewetan and Ewetan (2015) women tend to perform better in teaching than their male counterparts. This view is also supported by Mwamwenda and Mwamwenda (2002) who opined that pupils taught by female teachers performed significantly better than pupils taught by male teachers in English Language, Mathematics, Science and Social studies in Botswana. Zuzovsky (2003) also reported that in her study in Israel, students taught by female teachers achieved more than those taught by male teachers. However, D'Appollonia and Abrami in Zuzovsky (2003) opined that teachers' gender characteristics may not influence student's learning. Meanwhile, the studies of Arbuckle and Williams (2003) found that male teachers performed better than female teachers in areas of asserting authority and using meaningful voice tones during teaching. This finding is not different from that of Martin and Smith in Alufohai and Ibhafidon (2015) who opined that male teachers were rated higher in their performance than their female counterparts.

Teacher teaching experience refers to the length of time a teacher has been involved in teaching and the resultant mastery of the pedagogical ideology required for effective teaching and learning (Ihendinihu, 2014). It is how long and how well a teacher has taught and understood what is involved in teaching. Odumbe, Simatwa and Ayodo (2015) noted high teacher experience as one of the factors that enhance performance in day secondary schools. Ong'ele (2007) also established that teachers with more teaching experience performed better in actual classroom teaching than those with less teaching experience. This can be made more explicit by the fact that experienced teachers who have a mastery of subject areas and scope are well versed in examination techniques, take keen interest in revision and examination techniques (Omariba, 2003). Rosner (2011) observed that teacher experience varied among teachers and had an effect on what happens in the classroom when a teacher interacts with her students. Bruce, Hersh and Mckibbin (2006) however have a different

opinion, stating that however experienced the teachers are, without a high quality of effort, other factors alone make little difference.

With the presence of male and female Economics teachers of different ages and teaching experiences in our schools, one still wonders why students loiter around, play truancy and show different signs of disinterest in Economics during teaching and learning Economics. Hence, this study determined the influence of teacher variables on students' interest in Economics in Bende LGA of Abia State.

The study was guided by the following research questions and hypotheses:

1. To what extent does teachers' age influence students' interest in Economics?
2. To what extent does teachers' gender influence students' interest in Economics?
3. To what extent does teachers' teaching experience influence students' interest in Economics?

The following hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance:

HO$_1$ There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of teachers' age on their interest in Economics.

HO$_2$ There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of teachers' gender on their interest in Economics.

HO$_3$ There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of teachers' teaching experience on their interest in Economics.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in Bende L.G.A. of Abia State. The sample for the study consisted of 458 students drawn from the population of 1527 Senior Secondary Schools Students in four out of eight Public schools in Bende L.G.A. of Abia State (Abia State Secondary Education Management Board, Umuahia (SEMB), 2017) using multi-staged sampling technique. This sample size represented 30% of the population. In the first stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select four out of the eight public secondary schools in the L.G A. In the second stage, proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of students selected in each sampled school. In the third stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select out students from sampled schools.

A 15-item interest inventory titled "Teachers' Factor and Students' Interest in Economics Inventory (TFSIEI)" which was developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The instrument which was presented in three clusters addressed the issues of teachers' age, teachers' gender and teachers' teaching experience as they concern students' interest. Four-point scale of Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE) and Very Low Extent (VLE) with values 4, 3, 2 and1 respectively was used. The instrument was face validated by one expert in

Measurement and Evaluation and two in Economics, all in the College of Education, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Abia State. The reliability of the instrument was determined using a test-retest procedure. Data obtained from the two administrations were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.71. Mean and Standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to answer the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The real limit of numbers of 0.05-1.49 (VLE), 1.50-2.49 (LE), 2.50-3.49 (HE), 3.50 and above (VHE) guided the decisions taken while answering the research questions. Also, the decision rule for the hypotheses was that any P-value above 0.05 significant level was not rejected while below 0.05 level of significance was rejected.

Results

The results of the study were presented in tables and in line with the research questions and hypotheses that guided the study as below:

Research question one: To what extent does teachers' age influence students' interest in Economics?

Table 1: Mean Analysis of Responses of Students on the Influence of Teachers' Age on their Interests in Economics.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	X	SD	REMARKS
1	I like Economic taught by older teachers than the younger teachers.	3.05	.072	High Extent
2	Because older teachers are more approachable than the younger teachers, I attend classes and pay attention	3.15	0.61	High Extent
3	I feel comfortable and motivated when older teachers teach me Economics than the younger teachers	3.30	0.76	High Extent
4	The younger Economics teachers make me to be punctual and active in class than the older teachers.	2.41	0.61	Low Extent
5	I am always willing to say my views on topic when an older teacher is teaching Economics	3.41	0.74	High Extent
	Pooled Mean	**3.01**	**0.69**	

Table .1 reveals that the mean responses in all the items except item 4 ranged from 3.05-3.45 which indicated a high extent mean response by the real limit of numbers. These implied that they agreed among others that they: like Economics taught

by old teachers than younger teachers and feel more comfortable and motivated when older teachers teach them Economics than younger ones. The pooled mean of 3.01 indicated a high extent in the real limit of numbers affirmed that respondents agreed that teachers' age influences students' interest in Economics. The pooled standard deviation value of 0.69 indicated that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean and one another.

Research question two: To what extent does teachers' gender influence students' interest in Economics?

Table 2: Mean Responses of Students on the Influence of Teachers' Gender on their Interest in Economics.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	X	SD	REMARKS
6	I like and enjoy learning Economics because our female Economics teachers are more friendly and lively in class than the male ones	3.29	0.64	High Extent
7	I enjoy learning Economics when I am taught by male teachers because they make the classes orderly and comfortable than the female teachers	2.41	0.76	Low Extent
8	I pay more attention to male teache than female teachers.	2.55	0.65	High Extent
9	Male teachers who show current knowledge of Economics makes me like Economics always.	2.68	0.57	High Extent
10	I am often absent-minded when taught by female Economics teachers than male teachers	2.68	0.57	High Extent
	Pooled Mean	2.76	0.68	

Table 2 reveals that the mean responses in all the items except item 7 ranged from2.41-3.29 which indicated high extent mean responses. This implied that students agreed among others that they: enjoy learning Economics from friendly female teachers, pay more attention to male teachers than the female teachers as well as like Economics taught by male teachers who show current knowledge of Economics than the female teachers to a high extent. The pooled mean of 2.76 indicated a high extent mean responses which imply that they agreed

that teachers' gender influences their interest in Economics to a high extent. The pooled standard deviation value of 0.68 indicated that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean and one another

Research question three

To what extent do teachers' teaching experiences influence students' interest in Economics?

Table 3: Mean Analysis of Responses of Students on the Influence of Teachers' Teaching Experience on their Interest in Economics

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	X	SD	REMARKS
11	I do not like Economics because my teacher is new and always tensed when teaching us	2.78	0.73	High Extent
12	I hate Economics because my Economics teacher does not show mastery of the contents in Economics due to inexperience	2.79	0.94	High Extent
13	My teacher finds it difficult to questions in the class because she is inexperienced.	2.75	0.86	High Extent
14	I like Economics because my teacher is experienced and can answer every question we ask.	2.73	0.86	High Extent
	Our teacher communicates very in the class, because he is has taught for a long time.	2.65	0.95	High Extent
	Pooled Mean	**2.74**	**0.87**	**High Extent**

The data in table 3 shows that the mean responses in all the items (11-15) ranged from 2.65-2.75 which indicated by the real limit of numbers a high extent mean responses. This means that respondents agreed among others that they do not like Economics when taught by new teachers or inexperienced teachers but like it when taught by experienced teachers to a high extent. The pooled mean of 2.74 which indicated a high extent by the real limit of numbers equally showed that students agreed that teachers' teaching experience influence their interest in Economics to a high extent. The pooled standard deviation value of 0.87 indicated that the responses of the respondents are close to the mean and one another

Hypothesis one

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of teachers' age on their interest.

The t-test analysis of responses of respondents on the above hypothesis was presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Teachers' age on their Interest in Economics.

Gender	N	X	SD	DF	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Male	250	16.13	1.54				
				456	-1.40	.16	NS
Female	208	16.38	1.60				

Table 4 shows the significant P-value of .16 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This implied that the hypothesis of no significance was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of teachers' age on students' interest in Economics.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent teachers' gender influences students' interest in Economics.

Table 5: t-test Analysis of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Teachers' Gender on Students' Interest in Economics.

Gender	N	X	SD	DF	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Male	250	15.61	1.58				
				456	-0.36	.72	NS
Female	208	15.67	1.47				

Table 5 shows a significant P-value of .72 which is greater than .05 level of significance. This implied that the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is

no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent teachers' gender influence their interest in Economics.

Hypothesis three

There is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the extent teachers' teaching experience influences students' interest in Economics.

Table 6: t-test Analysis of Responses of Male and Female Students on the Influence of Teachers' Teaching Experience on Students' Interest in Economics.

Gender	N	X	SD	DF	t-cal	P-value	Remark
Male	250	13.24	2.11	456	-0.61	.55	NS
Female	208	13.45	2.34				

Data in table 6 reveals a significant P-value of .55 which is greater than .05 level of significance. This implied that the hypothesis of no significance was upheld. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of male and female students on the influence of teachers' teaching experience on students' interest in Economics.

Discussions

The result showed that the age of the teachers influences students' interest in Economics. The result implied that how young or old a teacher is could influence interest of the learners. The above findings were in agreement with the views of Reev and Hyungshim (2006) who noted that students have increased motivation when they feel some sense of autonomy in the learning process and that motivation declines when students have no voice in the class structure, which is the case when older teachers teach students. The findings further agreed with Obasi and Okogbe (2015) whose findings indicated that teacher's age is a major factor that could affect and motivate students to learning Economics. An aged teacher may have gathered more experiences than the younger ones in the field as a result of several socio-economic changes within his or her immediate society and may use such wealth of experiences to buttress as examples while teaching Economics.

The results showed that teachers' gender influence students' interest in Economics. This implied that a teacher being a male or female could influence the interest of students he/she teaches. The above findings were in agreement with the views of Wiens (2003) who maintained that female teachers were more likely to arouse

the interest of students in school subjects. The result equally agreed with Margolis and McCabe (2006) who stated that in the context of peer motivation, students develop interest in subjects handled by teachers of their gender, since they see such teachers as role models.

Finally, the results showed that the teaching experience of the teachers influences students' interest in Economics. The result indicates that how young or old a teacher has been in teaching a particular subject in the school is capable of influencing the interest of learners. The findings were in agreement with the views of Freeman, Anderson and Jensen (2007) who held that the sense of belonging of students is fostered by an instructor that demonstrates warmth and openness, encourages student participation, enthusiastic, friendly and helpful, and equally organized and prepared for class. This view further agreed with Reeve and Hyungshim (2006) who maintained that teachers that have taught for a long time exhibit some supportive teaching behaviours such as listening, giving hints and encouragement, being responsive to students' questions, showing empathy for students and allowing for student autonomy which foster students' interest in the school subjects.

Conclusion

Based on the results, the study concludes that teachers variables such as the teacher's age, teacher's gender and the teacher's experience determine to a high extent students' interest in Economics in Bende LGA of Abia the analysis and the discussion of findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

The age of the teacher influence students' interest in Economics to a high extent.

The teachers' gender influences the interest of students in Economics to a high extent.

Finally, teachers' teaching experience also influence students' interest in Economics to a high extent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and Private school-owners should organize conferences, seminars and workshops to young and inexperienced teachers on ways of arousing the interest of the students in the subjects they teach.
2. Educational administrators should enhance teacher-student compatibility by considering the age and gender of teachers before assigning them to certain classes and subjects.
3. In the cases of lack of qualified Economics teachers, governments and proprietors of schools should allow aged and retired but not tired Economics teachers to teach to enhance students' interest in Economics.

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