

The Attitudes of Students towards General Studies courses at the Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti.

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Abstract

Students' attitude towards subjects influences the participation rate of learners. This study is a survey of students of Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti to determine their attitude towards General Studies Courses (GST). Students of both genders constitute the population of this study. Sample of the study was 187 students (male=90 and female=97). The research instrument used was questionnaire structured in two sections. The analyses were done with both descriptive and inferential statistics, all were tested at $p=0.05$ level of significance. Findings showed that class size will significantly influence the attitude of students towards GST courses; the Null hypothesis was thus rejected. Also, the study shows that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards GST courses. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the class size needs to be reduced for more effective results in terms of student learning.

Keywords: General studies, students, attitude, participation

Introductuion

The General Studies Programme is designed to expose students to a variety of knowledge across disciplines. It is aimed at enabling students appreciate the inter-relationship among disciplines in an integrated world, which is now a global village.

The general purpose of the General Studies Programme in Nigeria universities is closely similar to the aims of General Studies courses in other parts of the world, which is, to make university graduates more versatile in outlook by enlarging their context and perspectives. According to Whitehead (1929:32), "a man who knows only his own science, as a routine peculiar to that science, does not even know that science. He has no fertility of thought, nor power of quickly seeing in particular application". Thus, a man who understands only his own area of knowledge is likely to be a narrow-minded individual.

The goal of GST courses in ABUAD is to produce well rounded, morally and intellectually capable graduates with vision and entrepreneurial skills in an environment of peace and social cohesiveness.

Although the programme appears laudable, one would expect the students to display some degree of satisfaction with the course, but according to Qureshi (1979):

.....experience of students participation in General Studies courses of the existing Universities suggests that the courses are regarded as no more than mere University requirement which bears no significant relationship to their chosen disciplines. Thus, attendance is itself poor.

What then is the student's attitude towards General studies courses at Afe Babalola University?

Attitude is a wide psychological concept which has to be subjected to research finding before any definite conclusion could be made. This is because attitude has different definitions.

Also according to Eagly and Chaiken (2011), an attitude as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavor. Thus, these definition of attitude allows for ones evaluation of an attitude object to vary from extremely positive, to extremely negative.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Find out the students attitude towards General Studies courses(GST)
2. Make appropriate recommendations

Limitation of study

The study is limited to students who had taken courses in GST Department for at least a full academic session as at 2012/ 2013 academic session

Research Questions

1. Will there be significant relationship between the attitude of students and their academic performance in GST courses.
2. Will class size significantly influence the performance of students in GST
3. Is there any significant difference in the attitude of male and female students and there performance in GST courses.

Hypothesis

1. Class size will not significantly affect the attitude of students towards GST courses
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards GST courses.
3. Course of study will not significantly influence the attitude of students towards GST courses.

Population and Sample

Students of both gender constitute the population of this study. Sample of the study was 187 students (male=90 and female=97) which were randomly drawn from 2001, 3001, and 4001, all the colleges in the university.

Instruments for the study

The major instrument used for this study was 15-items used to sort information on the student's attitude. All items were on a four-point Linkert Scale of Strongly Agree, No opinion, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The instrument elicited information from major areas.

1. Whether there is relationship between attitude and class size
2. Whether there is difference in the attitude of male and female towards GST courses.
3. Whether course of study has influence on their attitude towards GST courses.

A section of the questionnaire also demanded for demographic data like Gender, Course of study, and Level.

The reliability of the instrument was determined by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis and reliability co-efficient of 0.8 was obtained, and this was considered good enough for the study according to Alonge (2004) and Bamidele (2012).

Data Analysis

An item by item analysis of questionnaire respondents who picked the same type of responses were counted, scores were assigned to each point on the Linkert Scale as follows: Strongly Agree=4, Agree=3, Disagree=2, and Strongly Disagree=1, then Simple Percentage, Pearson Correlation and t-test Statistic were computed for each group

Results: Results of the findings are presented below

Hypothesis 1

Class size will not significantly influence the attitude of students towards GST Courses.

Table 1: t-test of class size and students' attitude towards GST courses

Variable	N	Mean	SD	R	df	t cal	t table
Class size	187	13.02	2.73	0.711	186	102.424	1.960
Attitude towards GST Courses	187	44.48	5.68				

$P < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that t_{cal} (102.424) is greater than t_{table} (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that class size will significantly influence the attitude of students towards GST courses.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards GST courses.

Table 2: t-test of Gender and attitude towards GST courses

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	tcal	Ttable
Male	90	43.84	5.71	185	1.470	1.960
Female	97	45.06	5.61			

$P > 0.05$

The null hypothesis is accepted ($t=1.470$, $p > 0.05$). This implies that there is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female students towards GST courses.

Hypothesis 3

Course of study will not significantly influence the attitude of students towards GST courses:

Table 3: One way ANOVA showing students attitude towards GST by Course of study.

Source	SS	Df	MS	F cal	F table
Between Groups	105.845	4	26.461	0.818	2.42
Within Groups	5886.797	182	32.345		
Total	5992.642	186			

$P > 0.05$

Table 3 reveals that course of study do not significantly influence the attitude towards GST courses ($F=0.818$, $P > 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypotheses is accepted.

Discussion

Findings in table 1 showed that there is statistically significant difference in the class size and students attitude towards GST courses. The analysis revealed that a high percentage of the respondents affirmed that class size has influence on the attitude of students towards GST courses. The assertion of Clark (1975) corroborated the finding of this study that small classes are preferred over large classes when other variables are held equal. J Edgell (1981), in his own research discovered that students in large classes had a significant negative change in attitude. Edgell does state, however, that other factors may have contributed to the negative change in attitude in those students enrolled in large classes. The other factors may include instructional material facilities, no assigned laboratory experiences, and the way in which the experimental classes were formed (ad hoc methodology).

In Table 2 above T-test statistical method was used to determine whether there was significant difference between male and female attitude towards GST courses; but surprisingly, the result indicated that no significant difference exist between the male and female students in each category of the observable behavioural indices.

In Table 3 where emphasis was on whether course of study will not significantly influence the attitude of students towards GST course. The result of the (ANOVA) analysis as shown in table 3 indicated that there is no significant difference based on the categories observed.

Recommendation and Conclusion

1. The class size needs to be reduced for more effective results in terms of student learning
2. Students should be more involved in the teaching –learning process. The lesson should be more practical than theoretical

The results of this finding lead us to an important conclusion.

The male and female students of Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti have same type of attitude towards General Studies Courses. It means that gender differential has no impact on the attitude of students towards General Studies courses. Also a large percentage of the students believed that the program has introduced them to areas outside their major fields and it has broadened their horizon. Majority of the students accept the intrinsic value of the GST courses. In all the findings from the questionnaire show a positive attitude to the GST courses.

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