

PREDICTIVE VALUES OF SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE  
EXAMINATIONS, UNIVERSITY MATRICULATION  
EXAMINATION AND SOCIO-PERSONAL FACTORS ON  
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY FRESHMEN IN  
SOUTH WEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT.....

*This study, examined relationship among West African Senior School Certificate (WASSC), Senior School Certificate (SSC), University Matriculation Examination (UME) scores, age, sex and academic self-efficacy on academic performance of university freshmen in southwest Nigeria.*

*The study adopted a descriptive survey design of ex-post-facto type. The five federal universities in the southwest were selected using purposive sampling and 2518 university freshmen were selected at random (1423 males and 1095 females). Secondary data were collected from the selected universities' records office and admission office. The Academic Self-confidence Scale ( $\alpha=0.86$ ) was used as a measure of academic self-efficacy while personal data form was used to collect demographic information. Seven research questions were answered in the study. Correlation and Multiple Regression were used as tools of analysis.*



*The six variables (WASSC, SSC, UME scores, age, sex and academic self-efficacy) when combined, accounted for 54.6% of the total variance in the academic performance. There was also significant contribution of the independent variables (age, sex, academic self-efficacy, SSC, WASSC and UME scores) on academic performance of the participants [ $F_{(5,2512)} = 26.13$   $p < 0.05$ ]. Also, the WASSC made the most significant relative contribution to the prediction of academic performance ( $\beta = 0.349$ ;  $t = 8.134$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ); followed by SSC ( $\beta = 0.300$ ,  $t = 6.125$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); academic self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.153$ ,  $t = 3.812$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and then, age ( $\beta = 0.144$ ,  $t = 2.760$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However, sex and UME scores were not potent predictors of academic performance of University freshmen.*

*The six independent variables (WASSC, SSC, UME scores, age, sex and academic self-efficacy) considered in this study were potent factors to academic performance of university freshmen. Based on these findings, WASSC and SSC could be regarded as adequate entry qualifications into the university. Counselling intervention programme aims at enhancing academic self-efficacy of freshmen should be mounted during orientation programmes in the universities.*

**Key words:** *Academic performance, Freshmen, Senior School Certificate Examinations, Socio-personal factors, University Matriculation Examination.*



## INTRODUCTION

Entering the university creates a lot of excitement for university freshmen. This is particularly so when the competitive nature of admission into the university is considered (Adeyemo 2010). The joy and the boasting associated with gaining admission into tertiary institution are not limited to the students alone as their parents and relatives are part of the celebration. As fresh students enter the university environment, however, they might find that there is a huge gap between their initial expectation and the situation on the ground. The discrepancy between the conceptualization of what the university might be and what it actually is becomes quite obvious (Breder, 1997). Adjustment therefore, becomes essential.

As a person is leaving home to attend University, he or she is faced with the challenges of coping with environmental demands, inability to see the parents as usual, very different daily experiences, different academic structure, and the need to adjust to new social relationships. The transition to university, which necessitates the need for the students to repackage their personality so as to meet the emerging demands and realities, can indeed impact significantly on their physical and mental health (Tao, Dong, Pratt, Hunsberger & Pancer, 2000). The universities all over the world recognize this fact as it is evidenced in the various orientation programmes put in place for the fresh students so that they can navigate successfully their transition from high school to the university. However, transition into the university is compounded by the fact that majority of these freshmen are at the same time making a transition into adulthood. The additional stressors of university life further accentuate this developmental transition. These stressors range from environmental adjustment to psychological and psychosocial adaptation. In line with this preceding view, Gall, Evans, and Bellerose (2000) identified novel living arrangement, establishing social network, and meeting the expectation of academic demands as examples of a few of the challenges to which students must adapt.

Education transition is a process of change that students experience from one level of education to another. As defined by Wesley (2001), transition implies change from one style, from one state, or from one place to another. It involves changes in relationships, teaching style, environment, space, time, context for learning and learning itself, all of which combine together at the time of transition to make intense and accelerate demands on the lives of students (Fabian & Dunlop, 2005) and this can have significant impact on academic performance of individuals.

When students make transitions, they experience the so-called number one experience. This experience as conceptualized by Fabian and Dunlop (2005) has to do with: (i) circumstance of moving from high school seniors to fresh undergraduate in the university; (ii) these positions are from being the oldest, biggest, and most powerful to youngest, smallest, and least powerful.

The examination of existing perspectives on transition will further heighten our understanding of transition. As conceived by Bronfenbrenner (1979) transition is an interlocking set of system of home, nursery, and school through which children travel in their years of education. This perspective, as beautiful as it is, fails to take into account the transition from high school to university. Other theoreticians have



viewed transition as a 'ritual of passage' (Van Gennep, 1960), as border crossing (Campbell, 2000), and as means of institution (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Yet another perspective situated transition within the context of life course theory, which places children, and families within the context of social structure, culture, and population, which affect them over time and place (Elder, 2001).

Transition is a mixed-blessing in the sense that it brings along with it a great level of excitement, a sense of worth and pride, freedom and achievement for children and their parents. For example, when children move to university, there may be concern about missing friends, parents, siblings, teachers, and the home environment. The 'honeymoon', which initially characterized transition from home to school later, gives way to thinking about the uncertainties in the new environment. Some students experience academic, social, and emotional challenges as they navigate transitions. The failure to cope effectively with such challenges can produce in the students life-shaping consequences and could affect academic performance of individuals (Center for Mental Health in School at UCLA, 2008). For students to negotiate transitions successfully, they need to be equipped with psychological skills or resources that would help them to adjust effectively to people, situations, academic and events. This is because they need such skills to relate with peers, lecturers and other personnel in the school system, and also to understand themselves and use such understanding to relate with others.

Having reviewed studies on school transition, Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis and Thomas (1999) summarized that fresh university students face four demands as they navigate the transition from high school and home environment to college life: (i) academic adjustment to college level educational requirement; (ii) institutional adjustment to college pursuit, academic goals, and eventual career direction; (iii) personal emotional adjustment to independently manage one's own emotional and physical well-being; and (iv) social adjustment to roommate, peer, faculty, and other interpersonal relationships. In a study conducted by Lisa, Lisa, and Rosina (2004), academic issues, students stress, social integrations issues, homesickness, alcohol use are parts of the transitional challenges encountered by first year university students.

The view that fresh university students encounter great odds is an established fact. Various strategies for dealing with the problems have been suggested. Schwitzer et al. (1999), for instance, advocate a three-branched approach to helping students in transition namely: prevention, developmental intervention, and consultation. In the university setting, preventive intervention strategies are usually used when there is probable susceptibility to a particular problem in order to prevent the onset of adjustment difficulties (Drum & Lawler, 1988).

An important variable of interest in this study is academic self-efficacy Bandura (1984, 1986, 1991) explains that self-efficacy is the confidence one brings to a specific task mediates the effect of other variables on performance and is a potent predictor of behavior related to that task. Based on this premise, it is expected that students transiting from high school to university would be influenced by their beliefs in their capability to execute relevant academic tasks in the university. It was



anticipated that academic self-efficacy would significantly predict academic performance of university freshmen.

The aforementioned expectations are not borne out of the depressed. For example Lent, Brown and Larkin (1984) found that efficacy beliefs of students participating in a science and engineering career-planning course were related to their grade in the subsequent year. Students with higher efficacy beliefs received higher grades and persisted longer in related majors. Other studies (Bonffard- Bonchard, 1989; Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1991) have further affirmed the relevance of academic self-efficacy. Students with high sense of academic self-efficacy are characterized by the ability to: undertake more challenging tasks; put in greater effort; show increased persistence in the face of obstacles; demonstrate lower anxiety levels; display flexibility in the use of learning strategies; self regulate better than other students; demonstrate accurate self-evaluation of their academic performance; display greater intrinsic interest in scholastic matters; and attain higher intellectual achievement.

Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be more academically successful than those with low self-efficacy (Fontana, 1986). This is just like children whose parents are more involved in their education, achieve more than others whose parents are not (Abel and Gecas, 1996). Similarly, children from academically stimulating home environment were found to do better in school than their peers who were not so fortunate (Walberg, 1998). This is chiefly because, every decision and step taken by an individual is determined by the confidence he/she has in himself/herself to successfully perform such a task (Akanbi, 2005). It therefore follows that, despite all the potentials an individual might claim to possess, such as: skills, aptitudes, sound cognitive ability, support and financial capacity, such individual may not successfully perform the task before him or her, if lacking self-efficacy. This view is supported by Pajares (2002), who expressed the view that, unless people believe that their action can produce the outcomes they desire, they would have little incentive to act or perceive in face of difficulties. This bears noting with the fact that, self-efficacy itself is determined by how well, knowledge and skill are acquired in the first instance. The contention that, self-efficacy is a critical ingredient in human functioning, is consistent with the view of many theorists and philosophers who have argued that the potent, affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs make them a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted (Salami, 2004; Brackeny & Karabenick, 1995).

According to Johnes (1990), the age of a student on entry to the university can have two different and opposite effect: If a student leaves his/her job to continue his/her studies, such maturity and dedication may positively influence the academic performance of the individual. On the contrary, it could be argued that, older students might have forgotten the academic life and they may be in a difficult position to adjust. Studies conducted by Jansen (1996), and Vander Hulst and Jansen (2002) showed that, younger students have better study or cognitive progress than older students, thus indicating that, higher age is an indicator of lower cognitive ability. Other studies have shown that, younger students drop out less often than older students (McInnes 2000; Murthaugh, Burns & Schuster, 1999). However, Trueman and Hartley (1996) found older students to perform equally well or sometimes better



than younger students due to maturity. According to Trueman and Hartley, this fact could be mediated by time-management skills that, older mature students, were better in time management. Furthermore, according to McInnes, James and MacNaught (1995), mature students have clearer career orientation and lower integration needs. Therefore, they would likely achieve better results.

Even though other studies found that female students showed better progress than male students did, (Jansen 1996, Shah & Burke, 1999, Vander Hulst & Jansen, 2002). Johnes (1990) observed that, an examination of attrition amongst males and females separately identified striking differences between the two groups in the characteristics associated with non-completion of their education. However, Johnes (1990), noted that, the effect of gender on the probability of non-graduation is uncertain. In a study on 'Inventory and Analytic overview of Africa Education sector Studies: Analyses, Agendas, and priorities for Education in Africa' by UNESCO: reviewing the education in Africa for the years 1990-1994, it was reported that higher rates of attrition were found among females than male students.

Emeneri correlated performance at WASC with global measures of achievement at the University level. The basic method of analysis was correlation technique and the attention was paid to the findings of Kapur (1972). Richards and Wilson (1961), in Kapur's study mean 'O'-level grades were able to discriminate between an outstanding student and average student but hardly did between an average student and a 'poor' student. In the study by Richards and Wilson, they found that with mean 'O'-level grades below 55%, the probability of passing was constant at about 40%. The implication of these for correlational technique is that, low correlations might be obtained while in actual fact performance in school leaving examination is significantly related to performance at the University.

As earlier stated and as widely researched as the area of academic performance and associated factors confirmed that, it never ceases to call for further investigations. To buttress this claim, Aremu, Salami and Salam, (2005) urged researchers to embrace this challenge by studying more variables that have the tendency of determining a higher level of teaching-learning outcomes into this challenge. Therefore, the present study takes a look at the predictive value of senior school certificate examinations result, university matriculation examination result and socio-personal factors (age, sex and academic self-efficacy) on academic performance among university freshmen in southwest Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The numbers of candidates seeking for admission are enormous. In the 2009/2010 session, the total number of students who pick University of Ibadan, as their first and second choice with UME scores of 200 and above equals 38,669. Only 3810 candidates (47% female and 53% male) were given admission and were allowed to matriculate, Bamiro (2010). He stated further that, there is danger posed by non-seriousness with their studies. This is because; the University has a prescribed minimum level of performance for any student to be allowed to continue his or her programme. At the end of every session, the Cumulative Grade Point Average



(CGPA) is used to assess the overall performance. Failure to pass the minimum number of units at any level will lead to, either withdrawal from the programme of study or withdrawal from the University depending on the Faculty decision.

If a student managed to pass through these hurdles and eventually asked to withdraw for poor academic performance after the first year, such student may commit suicide, or become a vagabond or psychologically imbalance for the rest of his or her life. This may lead to dodging his/her colleague, whenever coming across them because of shame. Also, it will be a shame on the part of the parents that their child or ward was withdrawn from University for poor academic performance and all the money they had spent in paying tuition fees, accommodation, feeding and buying textbooks might have been wasted. Also, the facilities that are put in place by the university administration to create an environment conducive to learning could have been wasted. The money earmarked by the Government for education on annual budget may also be a waste.

Also, if the poor academic performance among the university freshmen is not checked, and the withdrawal rate is on the high side, it means the country may not have adequate manpower to service the economy. And this means that, the country will be in the danger of mass-producing miscreants.

The university freshmen are being confronted with fear of not knowing whether they would be able to cope with university education or not as a result of this academic self-efficacy of university freshmen need to be considered so that the effect of academic self-efficacy on academic performance of university freshmen can be ascertained.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the course of this study.

1. Are there any relationship among the independent variables ( sex, age, SSCE results, UME score and academic self-efficacy) and dependent variable (academic performance of university freshmen)?
2. What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?
3. What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Design**

Descriptive survey design of *ex-post facto* type was employed to investigate the relationship among the WASSC, SSC, UME scores, age, gender and academic self-efficacy (predictor variables) and academic performance of university freshmen (criterion variable).



## **Population**

The population for this study consists of the students who enrolled at the five Federal Universities in the south-west, Nigeria in 2009/2010 session. From this population, records on performance in public examinations from random sample of 2,518 candidates were obtained from these Universities admission officers using predetermined criteria such as age categories, gender, UME scores and SSCE result by WAEC / NECO etc. The reason for considering these five Universities is that, they share similar admission requirements; similar curricula and they are located in the same geo-political zone.

## **Sample**

A sample of 2518 simple random sampling of university freshmen from the five federal universities in the southwest, Nigeria was chosen. The sample consisted of 1425 males and 1095 females with 666 holding NECO/SSCE results while 1205 holding WAEC/SSCE results and rest 756 combine both SSCE result of NECO and WAEC. Also, 1414 of these participants are of low academic self-efficacy and the rest 1104 are of high academic self-efficacy. The average age of the participants is 20.63 years and with standard deviation of 2.96 years.

## **Instrumentation**

The following instrument was utilized in the course of this research work viz- Academic self-efficacy scale.

Academic self-efficacy scale was adopted from Sander and Sander (2004). The instrument was divided into two sections; the first section consisted of several items on respondent's socio-demographic variables such as age, sex, family type, tribe, socio-economic status etc. The second section was made up of 24-items Likert Scale in which respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they perceived these items as being confident on a 5-point rating scale from very confident (5 points) to Not at all confident (1point). The original reliability coefficient of this instrument was 0.98.

## **Validation of the instrument**

The instrument was validated for use by trial testing the instrument on 45 university freshmen from university of Ilorin. After two weeks, the instrument was re-administered on the same set of participants. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to establish the reliability value of the instrument using test-re-test method, it was found to have a 0.86 reliability coefficient.

## **Data Collection**

Data on SSCE results, UME scores; age and gender were obtained from admission offices of each university concerned as secondary source of data while GPA was collected from the academic record office of the selected universities. The data were collected on the basis of the subgroups involved in the study. The subgroups were male and female and the age of candidates that gained admission on the basis of possession of minimum of five or six credit passes at one or two sittings



in the WASSCE and SSCE and that had enrolled as a student in any of the five Federal Universities in the South West of Nigeria in 2009/2010 session.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using simple correlation and multiple linear regression analysis.

### Result

The data collected for the study were analyzed using correlation and multiple regression analysis.

**Research Question 1:** Are there any relationship among the independent variables (sex, age, WASSC, SSC, UME scores and academic self-efficacy) and dependent variable (grade point ) for academic performance among university freshmen?

The result from Table 1 depicts the test of significant correlations among independent variables (age, sex, WASSC, SSC, UME scores and academic self efficacy) and dependent variable (Grade Point (GP)) of the university freshmen.

**Table 1: Summary of Test of significant Correlations among Age, Sex, SSC, WASSC, UME Scores, Academic Self- Efficacy and Grade Point Average of the Respondents**

	X	SD	GPA(r)	Sig. P	Remark
Sex	-	-	0.146	0.025	S
Age	20.63	2.91	0.165	0.005	S
UME score	22.41	2.35	0.153	0.045	S
ASE	98.12	11.02	0.172	0.002	S
WASSC	2.598	0.982	0.175	0.000	S
SSC	2.276	0.952	0.161	0.001	S
GPA	3.75	0.92	1.000	-	-

P < 0.05, Significant Result

The result from table 1 shows that Grade Point Average had significant correlations with all the six independent variables viz: sex ( $r = 0.146$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ), UME Score ( $r = 0.153$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), age ( $r = 0.165$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), academic self-efficacy ( $r = 0.172$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), SSC ( $r = 0.161$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and WASSC ( $r = 0.175$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) of the respondents.

It is the interest of the researchers to investigate whether sex, age, UME Score, SSC, WASSC and Academic self –efficacy would significantly predict grade point average of the University freshmen. To accomplish this laudable objective of the study, multiple regression analysis was resorted to, Grade point average (GPA) as a dependent variable was regressed on age, sex, SSC, WASSC, UME scores and Academic self-efficacy as independent variables.



**Research Question 2:** What is the composite contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

**TABLE2: Summary of Regression Analysis of the Combined Prediction of Academics Performance by the Five Independent Variables**

R	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.742	0.546	0.521	0.95701

**Analysis of Variance**

Source of Variation	Sum of Square	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	142.284	6	23.714	26.125	0.000*
Residual	2280.154	2512	0.908		
Total	2422.438	2518			

\*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

Table2 shows the prediction of all the six independent variables to the dependent variable. That is, academic performance of university freshmen correlated positively with the six-predictor variables. The table also shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.742, and a multiple R square of 0.546. This means that 54.6% of the variance in the academic performance of University freshmen is accounted for by all six predictor variables, when taken together. The significance of the composite contribution or the prediction was tested at  $p < 0.05$  using the F- ratio at the degrees of freedom (df= 6, 2518). The table also shows that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 26.125 (significant at 0.05 level). This implies that the joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable was significant and that other variables not included in this model may have accounted for the remaining variance.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable?

**TABLE3: Relative Contribution of the Independent Variables to the Dependent Variable (Test of Significance of the Regression Coefficients)**

Variables	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
constant	3.206	0.227	-	14.099	0.000**
Sex ( $x_1$ )	0.094	0.045	0.047	1.294	0.296
Age ( $x_2$ )	0.144	0.008	0.128	2.760	0.034*
WASSC ( $x_3$ )	0.349	0.003	0.099	8.134	0.000**



<b>SSC (x<sub>4</sub>)</b>	<b>0.300</b>	<b>0.015</b>	<b>0.030</b>	<b>6.125</b>	<b>0.000**</b>
<b>UME-scores (x<sub>5</sub>)</b>	<b>0.012</b>	<b>0.010</b>	<b>0.030</b>	<b>1.369</b>	<b>0.324</b>
<b>ASE (x<sub>6</sub>)</b>	<b>0.153</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>0.150</b>	<b>3.812</b>	<b>0.012*</b>

\*\* Significant at P< 0.00 / \* Significant at P< 0.05

Table3 reveals the relative contribution of the six independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The positive value of the effects of SSC, WASSC, age, sex, UME scores and academic self-efficacy implies that the academic performance of University freshmen is actually determined by positive reinforcement of these six variables. Using the un-standardized regression coefficients to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables to the explanation of the dependent variable WASSC ( $B = 0.349$ ,  $t=8.134$ ,  $P< 0.05$ ) is the most potent contributor to the prediction followed by SSC ( $B = 0.300$ ,  $t=6.125$ ,  $P< 0.05$ ) followed by academic self-efficacy ( $B = 0.153$ ,  $t=3.812$ ,  $P< 0.05$ ); followed by age ( $B=-0.144$ ,  $t=2.760$ ,  $P< 0.05$ ); followed by UME- Scores ( $B =0.012$ ,  $t=1.369$ ,  $P>0.05$ ) and sex ( $B =0.094$ ,  $t=1.294$ ,  $P>0.05$ ) in that order. In a nutshell, the academic performance of university freshmen are determined by these six variables as arranged above in the order in which they contributed to the academic performance of the university freshmen.  $Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6$  ie  $Y_{AcadPerf} = 3.206 + 0.094Sex + 0.144Age + 0.349 WASSC + 0.300SSC + 0.012 UME-scores + 0.153ASE$

### Discussion of Findings

The result of the research question 1 showed that the six independent variables correlated significantly with academic performance (GPA) of the University freshmen. Some past studies equally established that there was significant correlation between sex, and academic performance of university freshmen (Jaffreys et al 1965, Susec-Michieli & Kalsnik, 1983). Nevertheless, it has been well documented in the literature that there was no significant relationship between gender and GPA of the University freshmen (Shazali et al 1997, Huff et al 1999 & Salahudeen & Murtala 2005). The result of this study also showed that UME score do not correlated significantly with academic performance of University freshmen. This finding is in line with the finding of Obioma and Salau (2007). The result of this study showed that the majority of the students were below 20 years of age and the younger students performed better than older students. Previous studies shows that the older students poor performance were attributed to financial problems and family responsibilities which cause major stresses that impact on course performances and can lead to withdrawal (Johnes, 1990 & Vander Hulst & Jansen, 2002).

The results of this study therefore suggest that the SSCE result is better correlated with university freshmen academic performances than UME scores run against the study that was conducted in UNN in which the SSCE result was a better predictor of the student performance (Obioma & Salau, 2007). Several factors could



be responsible for the difference including organization of the examination and societal morality. Moreso, the finding showed that academic self-efficacy significantly correlated with academic performance of university freshmen. This finding is in line with (Abe 1995; Fretz, 1998 & Brown and Morrison 2004)

The result of research question 2 shows that 54.6% of the variance in academic performance of University freshmen is accounted for by the SSCE- results, UME-scores and socio personal factors. The value though was small but the F-value 26.125, which is significant at  $P = 0.05$  shows that the effect is still significant. Luster and McAdoo (1994) found that differences in students' cognitive and behavioural adjustment are as a result of learners' variables like family size, material, education, poverty and home environment. Aber (1994) Adetona (2005) and Ukwueze (2007) also corroborate the result by noting that socio personal variables affect learning outcome. The result explains the need to look beyond one variable as accounting for either low performance or high achievement. If age or UME-score is identified as responsible for academic performance other variables like sex, academic self-efficacy or SSCE- result may influence academic performance indirectly.

The result in relation to research question 3 shows that, the relative contribution of each of these independent variables on academic performance among the University freshmen in the study, WASSC appears as the most potent contributor to academic performance among university freshmen. This means that WASSC is most important than any other factors in predicting the academic performance of university freshmen followed by SSC and next to this is Academic self-efficacy. Age was the next potent factor that predicts academic performance of University freshmen in south West Nigeria. This shows that age is significant to academic performance. This finding corroborate Jansen (1996) and Hulst and Janean (2002) who discovered that, younger students have better study progress than older students indicating that, higher age is an indicator of lower ability. Also, this finding is against the finding of Trueman and Hartley (1996) who found older students to perform equally well or sometimes better than younger students.

UME-score was next to age, UME- score is a less predictive factor of academic performance of University freshmen. This finding is in line with Umo and Ejedu (2008) who discovered in their study that UME- score had low correlation with grade point average. He concluded that UME-score correlated poorly to academic performance of University freshmen due to malpractices, which have eaten deep into the examination processes.

The result revealed that gender is not significant in predicting academic performance of University freshmen. This implies that gender has no significance determining effect on how a person will perform. This finding is against the work of researchers who find gender as a determining factor in doing well on a particular task. However, this may be due to the environment, teaching styles, instructional aids available, school environment, home background as found by researchers like Gamoran (1992), Olson (1994) and Jordan and Nestle (1999) who cited these as other factors that may enhance the achievement of students in a learning environment.



## **Implications for the Counselling and Educational Practice**

The findings from this study have revealed the need for counselors, teachers, psychologists and other stakeholders of education to take into account the SSECE-result, UME-score and socio- personal factors used in this study while addressing University freshmen and secondary school students' academic achievement problems. Making students to know the importance of their achievement in their future endeavors will make them to work harder and show seriousness in their studies.

School should place emphasis on training and development in the area of academic self-efficacy and general self-efficacy. It is possible to address this issue through the staff development plan who will later on train their students.

Counseling psychologist working in the school system have a significant role to play. The professional where-with-all lies with them and the onus is on them to identify this factors as it affects students. They are to work with other personnel in the school system especially the teachers who handle different courses to develop intervention programmes that would enhance academic self-efficacy and reduction in examination malpractices hoping that, the resultant effect of the intervention will be a better academic performance.

To ensure high academic performance, competence, adequate and qualified teachers with teaching experience should handle the students' right from the secondary school level. If this is done, it would go along way to enhance high academic self-efficacy and reduce examination malpractices in the Nation's Public examinations.

The study demonstrated the usefulness and effectiveness of multiple regression analysis technique in analyzing variables relevant to academic performance. Therefore, it is used in determining the factors essential to account for the much variation being experienced in some of the variables used in predicting University freshmen academic performance.

## **Conclusion**

The six independent variables considered in this study could be used to predict and facilitate academic performance among university freshmen. The high achievement or failure rate stems from a post pourri of factors some of which have been studied in this work. The study have revealed that, a student may have more than one reason for the poor academic performance and that a quick intervention will lead to the identification of the factors responsible and find solution to them.

The model from this study is tenable in explaining the significant predictors between independent variables and dependent variable with SSCE result having the most potent factor followed by academic self-efficacy, age, UME scores and sex.

This indicates that, parents should not toy with the future of their children, adequate concern must be shown and students must be encouraged to be committed to their study so that after basic education, many of the transiting students will be able to perform well and the problem of standard will completely be eliminated and academic standard be uplifted. Only this can guarantee the nation, the expected development and growth. In place of lamentation and all education stakeholders should move to action.



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