YOUTH CULTURE AS A CORRELATE OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate whether Youth Culture correlates with academic engagement of undergraduate students in South-East, Nigeria. The study adopted a correlation survey research design. The population of the study comprised 18, 200 male and female undergraduates of public and private universities in South-East, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling techniques were adopted to select a sample of 755 respondents for the study. The study was guided by 2 research questions and 2 hypotheses. Two instruments: Youth Culture Scale (YCS), and Undergraduates Academic Engagement Scale (UAES), were used for Data collection. The instruments were validated by five experts. Data were analyzed using Regression Coefficient and PROCESS MACRO t-test through SPSS version 25.0.Hypothesis one was tested using Regression ANOVA while hypothesis two was tested using PROCESS MACRO t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that: there was a significant relationship between youth culture (internet addiction) and academic engagement of undergraduate students; the moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement of undergraduate students was not significant. Based on the findings, it was recommended that: undergraduate students should be sensitized on the dangers associated with negative youth cultural practices such as internet addiction; they should be encouraged to engage or participate actively in academic activities, so as to promote high academic performance/achievement; lecturers should focus more on the students' behaviours and attitudes towards teaching and learning, rather than relying only on the course contents.

Keywords: Youth Culture (internet addiction), Academic Engagement, Undergraduate Students, Gender.

INTRODUCTION

The way youths live their lives (youth culture), seems to be associated with academic engagement of undergraduate students in South-East, Nigeria. Academic engagement is seen as a form of motivation and reflects a youth's positive attitude towards school, confidence in one's own ability to do well in school, and perceptions and actual success in school (Nako, 2015). It is defined as how involved or interested students appear to be in their learning and how connected they are to their class, school or each other (Alexson, 2011). Academic engagement is defined as a complex and multidimensional construct, comprised of two to three components (skinner, kinderman, and Furrer, 2009). The first component, (a) behavioural engagement, involves active participation in curricular and extracurricular school activities, as well as behaviours that conform to social norms or school rules. The second component (b) emotional engagement denotes a student's emotion and feeling towards teachers, peers, and school in general. Some of more recent models also include a third component (c) cognitive engagement, which might be seen as the psychological investment a student makes in his or her own learning process, thus, possessing motivational properties (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). On the other hand, cognitive engagement occurs when a student engages his or her mental strength for thinking, reasoning, and comprehending; emotional engagement denotes emotional stability which involves emotional intelligence in learning (ability to understand and control one's emotions in any situation); while behaivoural engagement concerns students' overt actions towards learning endeavours, which also demands social intelligence (knowledge and application of social roles, rules, and skills), that promote academic engagement of undergraduate students. Since education is the anchor for national development and sustainability, and any nation working toward sustainable development must recognize the equality of education for all citizens (Eluemuno et al).

High level of student's academic engagement is increasingly seen as a valid indicator of academic success (Alexson, 2011). Also, high academic engagement involves operating together of the three components (cognitive, emotional, and behavioural), to reflect students positive approach to learning (upadaya&Salmela-Aro 2013). Whereas, students' disengagement may induce negative consequences as severe as school dropout (Fall &Reberts, 2012; Henry, Knight & Thornberry, 2012). Many adolescents experience challenges expressing their ideas, lacks self-confidence and self-worth. This may lead to fear of failure in tests, examinations and other academic activities and life endeavor (Ipem, Eluemuno&Alaribe 2023). Therefore, undergraduate students who engage actively in academic activities are likely to achieving maximum fulfillment in academics.

Operationally, academic engagement has to do with students' participation, interest, attitude, commitment, and actions in learning processes; it involves the level of interest, time, and energy one spends or commits during the process of knowledge acquisition. This may be congnitive, emotional, and behavioural as the case may be. Active academic engagement would help the students to remain focused and determined in the pursuit of their goals, which would in turn reduce their indulgence in social vices and also improve academic achievement.

Unfortunately, undergraduates seem not to engage actively in academics. A study of academic disengagement in U.S. public research Universities revealed that nearly half of

college students failed to achieve statistically significant gains in analytical and critical thinking skills between their freshman year and the middle of their sophomore year (Brint& Cantwell 2011). A recent survey in North America by the academic publishing company Willey, noted that 55 percent of undergraduates said they struggle to remain interested in their classes and to retain the material they learn (Alonso, 2022). Academic disengagement is a multi-faceted phenomenon consisting of intrinsic & extrinsic factors; academic disengaged college students are often judged as detached, alienated, and uncommitted to the rigors of learning (Cottrell, Williams, &Shinault, 2023). Students' disengagement from academic institutions is becoming a widespread problem (Kadian&Prakash, 2023). A study conducted by kadian and prakash in Haryana, India revealed that there is an increasing level of academic disengagement among students from public universities. The Nigerian higher education has been accused of performing below expectation when judged from both internal and global benchmarks of quality of output, peaceful co-existence on campus, fair conduct of examination, amongst others (Agu, Omenyi, &Odinegwu, 2012). No wonder Ejimonye and Eneogu (2019), stated that "Some students used their smartphones for examination malpractice to the extent that, they lose confidence in learning". Undergraduate students in South-East Nigeria, seem not to engage actively in academics.Evidence of this is seen in their irregular attendance to lectures, lateness to lectures/other activities, attending to their phones while lectures are going on, having discussions with friends while lectures are going on, failure to do assignments, laxity in test and examination, poor relationships with friends and lecturers, poor participation in practical, presentation, and extracurricular activities such as excursion, school sports, politics and others. All these and more are indices of poor academic engagement that are capable of jeopardizing and frustrating students' academic performance/achievement; which in turn, could lead to school dropout and indulgence in social vices. One may begin to wonder why these undergraduates show passive academic engagement. This inactive participation in academic works by undergraduate students could be attributed to poor parental upbringing, peer pressures, moral decadence/misconduct, academic stress and suicidal ideation, to mention but a few. Researchers (Oyeoku&Azikiwe, 2013; Aminu, 2017; Ojiaku and Nwokoro, 2021; Nnadi, Uzokwe, Ofojebe, &Chigbu, 2022), have carried out researches on some of these attributed factors mentioned above. In spite of all those researches, undergraduate students in South-East Nigeria, still engage passively in academic works/activities, by attending to their phones while lectures are going on, irregular attendance to lectures, failing to write assignments and class works, not participating in extracurricular activities and others. These create tensions and worrisome situations in higher institutions of learning and the society at large. Therefore, this study sought to investigate if this passive participation in academic activities is associated or related with youth culture.

Youth culture is the way youths live, and the norms, values and practices they share. Youth culture encompasses and connotes everything youths do in the pursuit of their goals. According to spacey (2019), youth culture is the culture that emerges amongst teenagers and young adults. Spacey noted that, youths participate in the traditional culture that is handed down from the past; but in some cases, this leads to changes in the traditional culture as youths reinterpret things; thereby, forming a subculture of their own known as 'youth culture'. Whitely (2015), refers to youth culture as a counter culture characterized by a trend towards personal consumption – fashion, record players, cinema and other entertainment, including coffee bar culture. Youth culture manifest in different areas such as Education, sports, politics,

business, religion, fashion, music, entertainment / media, dating/marriage, networking, drug use and others. This is in line with Preyed & Long (2020) who assert that youth culture and indeed the overall culture are constantly changing; nowhere is this change more evident than in the case of drugs and addictive behaviours. Many youth practices also involve remarkable creativity and skills; and youths are often more motivated to engage in these practices than in traditional activities. For these skills can be demonstrated in the listed endeavours. Culture is the shared symbolic systems, and the processes of maintaining culture differs from the culture of older generations (Rice, in Zhang, 2000); an emphasis on clothes, popular music, sports, vocabulary, and dating, set youths apart from other age groups, giving them what many believe is a distinct culture of their own. Feldman & Christine (2009), asserted that, for decades, adults have worried that youth subcultures were the root of moral degradation and changing values in younger generations; common concerns about youth culture include a perceived lack of interest in education, involvement in risky behaviours like substance use and sexual activities, and engaging extensively in leisure activities; there is also a simultaneous rise in age segregation and youths adjustment problems such as suicide, delinquency, and premarital pregnancy. Each different generation will have their own youth culture that is reflective of their lives and times. The older generation appears to perceive the young people nowadays as behaving in a variety of generally contradictory ways, including deviant, indifferent, illogical, creative, altruistic, involved, tolerant, and selfish (Stanton, 2010). This culture is unique and most times totally different from the general adult culture or societal culture. Educators, policy makers, and the public are often deeply interested in youth cultures and practices. Each different generation will have their own youth culture that is reflective of their lives and times. Many youth practices also involve remarkable creativity and skills, and youths are often more motivated to engage in these practices than in traditional educational activities. This study focuses on one aspect of youth culture (networking/internet addiction).

Youths get involved in networking in a bid to link up with the wider society and as such meet up with the trends and demands of the global society. However, they get addicted to it following their urges to chart, watch videos, play games, and do online businesses on WhatsApp Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, YouTube, and other platforms. Some of them also participate in late night browsing, surfing the net maybe for research purposes and at the same time, polluting their minds with all sorts of nude pictures, porn videos, and engaging in fraudulent business / online scam (Yahoo Yahoo).Internet addiction refers to the excessive use of the internet. Internet may be seen as a global connection of computers that allows sending and receiving of all kinds of information such as text, graphics, videos, voice and computer programmes; the internet has the propensity to divert its users' attention; most times users spend more time on the internet than they originally planned; and this may affect their overall productivity in other areas of life (Ogbomo&Oghenetega, 2016). The internet is known to be addictive, since there are many activities on it that can hold its users spell bound for a long period of time; so internet addiction is the excessive use of the internet at the expense of undergraduates other academic engagements (International Telecommunication Union, 2012). Since undergraduates are more interested in technology, they use the internet more often than other groups (Gunue&Dogan, 2013). The excessive use of the internet may have contributed to the destruction of many undergraduates that were not aware of the disadvantages of the internet. For example, accessing porn websites, gambling, academic

cheating, facebooking, chatting during lectures, playing games, listening to music, overnight browsing, are detrimental to their studies and academic work; therefore, when internet use becomes obsessive and at the expense of other aspects of life of the undergraduate, this use could be problematic and could be classified as internet addiction (Shu&Chiehju, 2007). Although the positive aspects of the internet have been readily praised, there is a growing amount of literature on the negative side of its excessive and pathological use (Frangos&Frangos, 2009). The implication behind youth culture is that, an undergraduate may victimize oneself, lose sense of reasoning, or become maladapted while trying to follow the crowd or play along with the trending practices; thereby, affecting their social life and academic engagement.

According to Omenuko (2000), an undergraduate is a college student who has not yet earned his bachelor's degree or similar degree; these students encounter and experience pleasant and unpleasant situations both within and outside the university environment. Some of those experiences ranges from; sexual harassment, stealing, addiction, poor environmental conditions and overcrowded classrooms, indefinite strike, inhumane lecturers, lack of basic amenities/learning materials, poor feeding, to exam malpractice (Saminu, 2016).

In universities, one would observe or come across undergraduates with different beliefs, attitudes, values, interests, manners, and overall lifestyles. Tobi (2016), & NL official (2016), pointed out some types of students one would meet in Nigerian Universities such as: the party goers, the fashionistas, the bookworms, the library goers, the student's right activists, the mobile kiosks, the talkative, the fellowship brothers/sisters, the dubbers, the borrowers, the drug addicts, the big planners, the kleptomaniacs, the phone lovers, the anxiety dwellers. In this study, undergraduate students could be seen as those students that are still in the university or higher institutions of learning, struggling to obtain a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. These students may be between the ages of 17 to 30, as the case may be.
The correlation between youth culture and academic engagement could be influenced by gender.

Gender (males and females) is a description of the sex of an individual; that is, the masculine and feminine nature of humans. It refers to the behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one's sex. Gender according to Santrock (2005), prescribes sets of role behaviours expected of male and females in their thinking, actions and feelings. Yang (2010), defines gender as social attributes and opportunities related with being male or female and the relationship between men and women, boys and girls, as well as those between men and women that are socially constructed and are learned through the process of socialization. Olubunmi (2001), concluded that, gender differences are intolerable hence, would be right to treat boys and girls in schools differently due to their natural disposition. From the context of this study, gender could be seen as a moderating variable that is likely to influence the relationships between the independent and the dependent variables. This influence could be attributed to the physiological, psychological, cultural and social state/condition, and experiences of the male and female undergraduates.

In view of the above, it is credible to assume that the way youths live their lives (youth culture), is associated with academic engagement of undergraduate students in South-East,

Nigeria. Also, gender influences the correlations between the variables of this study. Could these assumptions be true? It is against this background that the researcher sought to carry out this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate youth cultureas a correlate of academic engagement of undergraduate students in South-East, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the relationship between:

1. Youth culture and academic engagement.
2. Youth culture and academic engagement as influenced by gender.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement?
2. What is the moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the investigation:

H_{O1}: There will be no significant relationship between youth culture and academic engagement.

H_{O2}: The moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement will not be significant.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a correlation survey research design. This type of research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of the variables; a correlation reflects the strength and /or direction of the relationship between two or more variables (Bhandari, 2022). The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative. It is positive when both variables change in the same direction; but negative when the variables change in opposite direction. While zero correlation implies that there is no relationship between the variables. This research design is considered appropriate since this study sought to ascertain if there are relationships amongst the variables under investigation. The study was carried out in South-East, Nigeria. This geo-political zone is made up of 5 states (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo). There are 11 public and 15 private universities in South-East Nigeria. South-East Nigeria is considered appropriate for the study because there are many undergraduates of both public and private universities that would make up the population of the study, from which the sample was drawn. The population of this study comprised 18,200 male and female 300 level undergraduate students admitted in 2020/2021 academic session into the public and private universities in South-East, Nigeria (Ebura, Edet&Okpa, 2020; www.nuc.edu.ng). The sample size of the study is 755 undergraduates (412 males & 337 females) from 4 public and 2 private universities randomly drawn from Abia, Anambra and Imo state Universities. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample. Two instruments were used by the researcher for data collection. The first instrument titled Youth Culture Scale (YCS) was used to collect data from undergraduates based on their life-styles. The second instrument titled Undergraduates' Academic Engagement Scale (UAES) was used to collect data based on

undergraduates' commitment to academic activities. The researcher developed the items of the instruments through the information derived from the review of literature. The instruments were subjected to face validation by five experts. The instruments were structured on a four-point rating scale of Always (4), Sometimes (3), Rarely (2) and Never (1). In order to determine the internal consistency of the items, the instruments were trial tested and the data obtained were analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients. The reliability indices for the two instruments are; .71 for YCS, and .82 for UAES respectively. Direct delivery method was used to administer the instruments to the students with the help of three research assistants.

Data were analyzed using Regression Coefficient and PROCESS MACRO t-test through SPSS version 25.0. Hypothesis one was tested using Regression ANOVA while hypothesis two was tested using PROCESS MACRO t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question one: What is the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement?

Table 1: Regression analysis of the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.467a	.218	.217	4.32031

a. Predictors: (Constant), YouthCulture

Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient between youth culture and academic engagement is (R = .467) with an associated coefficient of determination of (R^2 = .218). This means that there is a low positive relationship between youth culture and academic engagement; implying that students' academic engagement/disengagement increases with an increase in their youth culture. Besides, the coefficient of determination of .218 indicates that a 21.8% variation in the academic engagement of the students is explained by youth culture. This means that, 78.2% variation in the academic engagement of the students is explained by other factors, not youth culture.

Ho_1: There will be no significant relationship between youth culture and academic engagement.

Table 2: Analysis of variance of the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3928.094	1	3928.094	210.452	.000b
	Residual	14054.775	753	18.665		
	Total	17982.869	754			

a. Dependent Variable: AcademicEngagement
b. Predictors: (Constant), YouthCulture

Table 2 revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between youth culture and academic engagement, F (1, 753) = 210.452, p = .000. Since the associated probability of .000 is less than the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between youth culture and academic engagement is rejected.

Research Question Two: What is the moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement?

Table 3: Process Macro analysis for the moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement

Model	Gender	R	R Square	R	t	p
1	Male	.502[a]	.252	-.054	-1.228	.220
	Female	.374[a]	.140			

a. Predictors: (Constant), YouthCulture

Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient between male students' youth culture and their academic engagement is (R = .502) with a coefficient of determination of (R^2 = .252); while the correlation coefficient between female students' youth culture and their academic engagement is (R = .374) with a coefficient of determination of (R^2 = .140). Thus, the correlation coefficient for moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and their academic engagement is (R = -.054).

Ho2: The moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement will not be significant.
Table 3 reveals that there is no significant moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement, t = -1.228, p = .062. This implies that gender does not influence the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected (p> .05).

Discussion
The findings of the study showed a positive relationship between youth culture and academic engagement of undergraduate students. This implies that, the more undergraduates indulge in negative practices like internet addiction, the more their passive engagement in academics; and vice versa. This is in line with Ezemenaka (2013), whose study revealed that the analysis of the students' perception showed that the internet enabled phone usage does not affect the academic performance of the users, but distractions by the usage of phones were notably admitted.Also, a study by Iluku-Ayoola, Olalekan, Agunbiade-Olu&Asoh-Chika (2020) showed that internet addiction significantly influenced academic performance among the students in semi-urban areas. The moderating influence of gender on the correlation between youth culture and academic engagement was not significant. This implies that the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement of undergraduates does not depend on the gender (male or female).The rate at which male and female undergraduates engage passively or actively in academics does not differ significantly. This is contrary to the study by Azizi, Ali, &Khatony (2019), which revealed that the mean social networking addiction was higher

in male students (52.65 + or - 11.50) than in female students (49.35 + or – 13.96); and this difference was statistically significant (p<0.01).

Conclusion

Youth culture (internet addiction) significantly correlates academic engagement of undergraduate students in South-East, Nigeria**.** Therefore, the way youths live their lives or the kind of practice(s) they indulge in, determines the level of undergraduate students' engagement in academics. Also, the level of undergraduate students' commitment to academic activities, determines the way they live or the kind of practice(s) they indulge in. Gender does not influence the relationship between youth culture and academic engagement. The findings of this study will help to strengthen or weaken the assertions and claims of Expectancy-Value theory and that of student involvement; and so, question their sustainability. It will help to enlighten the researchers and clear their doubts concerning the previous studies carried out on the related studies, by making comparisons between the present study and the previous ones.

Recommendations

It is recommended that, undergraduate students should be sensitized on the dangers associated with negative youth cultural practices such as internet addiction; they should be encouraged to engage or participate actively in academic activities, so as to promote high academic performance/achievement; lecturers should focus more on the students' behaviours and attitudes towards teaching and learning, rather than relying only on the course contents. This will help to ensure all-round positive attitude change among the undergraduate students.

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