

Impact of Long Distance Trekking on Students' Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions, Nigeria

Ewhe Peter Okpunukpang Ph.D.

ewhepeter@gmail.com

Department of Guidance and Counselling, University Abuja, Nigeria

Niyi Jacob Ogunode

niyijacobogunode@gmail.com

Department of Education, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Karimat Suleiman

Kayhussy0901@gmail.com

Department of Educational Management, University of Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract:

This paper examined the impact of long distance on students' academic performance of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper used secondary data. The secondary data were collected from print and online publications. The paper concludes that long distance negatively affected students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper specifically observed that long distance trekking impacted negatively on students' health and leads to late coming to lectures, physical exhaustion, reduction in studies hour, health problem and mental health and lower students' motivation. Based on this findings, the paper put forward the following suggestions; Government should release all the buses they promised to give to all the tertiary institutions immediately. Introducing school transportation for students is one of the most effective ways to address the issue of trekking. Providing school buses for students who live far from school would greatly reduce the physical exhaustion caused by walking long distances. With transportation available, students can arrive at school rested and better prepared to engage in their studies. The federal, state, or local governments, in collaborative partnership with non-governmental organizations, could fund and implement transportation systems for tertiary institutions at a cheaper fares. Government should provide palliative to all Nigerian students.

Keywords: *Long distance trekking, Students academic performance, Tertiary institutions*

Introduction

The recent sharp increase in petrol prices in the country is straining tertiary institution students' budgets and adding to the financial pressure on students across the country. President Bola Tinubu announced an end to the petrol subsidy regime during his inaugural speech on May 29, 2023, which shot the pump price from N165 to N617 per litre in June last year. The government reviewed petrol pump prices upward to between N865 and N1,200 per litre in early September. The subsidy removal in Nigeria has led to inflation.

Subsidy removal, inflation, increased in electricity tariff and devaluation of naira has led to economic hardship in Nigeria that has made students, lecturers and civil servant to struggle to make a living. Inflation, an increase in fuel, an increase in transport cost and high electricity tariffs, among others is affecting students' income.....noted that tertiary institutions students in Nigeria have decried the rise in transportation cost within the cities where their campuses are located, which has resulted in unprecedented hardship among the students and lecturers. Most struggling students and lecturers have resulted to trekking many kilometres daily, with its attendant risks to campuses to attend lectures and to carry out academic activities.

Some of the lecturers and students because of an increased in transportation, occasioned by the removal of fuel subsidy and non-availability palliative measures have foisted untold hardship on them. The implication of this is that many Nigerian tertiary institutions have resulted to trekking and this has resulted sweating profusely in the hot sun just because they cannot afford to pay for transport from their campuses to their hotels or residents. It is import to examine the impact of trekking long distance to campuses in Nigeria by students of tertiary institutions. It is based on this, this paper seeks to assess the impact of long distance trekking on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions, Nigeria.

Concept of Tertiary Education

Tertiary institutions represent a microcosm of society, reflecting a diverse range of people, cultures, lifestyles, and values (Ogunode & Odo, 2023). Tertiary education encompasses specialized learning pursued beyond high school, including undergraduate and graduate credentials such as certificates, diplomas, and academic degrees. This form of education, which is non-compulsory, is provided by institutions like colleges, polytechnics, and universities. Tertiary education can be delivered through various modalities, including in-person, virtual, or distance learning (Top-hat, 2023). Tertiary education is a structured and organized system designed to foster the holistic development of individuals and drive societal transformation through comprehensive teaching, research, and community service (Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie, 2023).

The goals of tertiary education in Nigeria include to providing accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in both formal and informal settings to address the diverse needs and interests of all Nigerians. Tertiary education aims to offer high-quality career counseling and lifelong learning programs that equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for self-reliance and success in the workforce. Additionally, it seeks to reduce skill shortages by producing skilled manpower that meets labor market demands, promote scholarship, entrepreneurship, and community service, foster national unity, and enhance both national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2013).

The Nigerian tertiary education is home to millions of students and these students due to economic hardship now trek to their various campuses. The long distance trekking by the students may not support their academic work due to the stress that comes with trekking.

Concept of Long Distance Trekking to Campus

Long distance trekking means that long movement from one point to another place. Long distance trekking involve movement of people and loads from one place to another place that takes a long period of time.

Students' Academic Performance

Foster and Young (2004) conceptualized student academic performance as the parameter for determining the worth and carrying capacities of the students. Additionally, as pointed out by Oloyede (2008), the level of academic skill necessary for successful entry into the present day job market, with or without a university education, has risen to the point that a focus on achieving academic success is necessary for all students throughout every year of schooling from nursery/primary to the university level.

Ogunode and Josiah, (2023) defined “academic performance of students as the total learning outcome of the students in the educational institutions which includes the knowledge, social and communication skills and ideas acquired and retained through their course of study. Academic performance refers to all organized educational program and knowledge a learner or student achieves or acquires in the school environment as a result of academic activities”. ”Students’ academic performance can be defined as the totality of student’s achievement in the academic work in the school. Students’ academic performance is the academic achievement of a students in a given school. Students’ academic performance is the total sum of student’s cognitive, affective and psychomotor achievement in the school (Ogunode & Edet, 2023)”.

Impact of Long Distance Trekking on Students' Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions

Long distance trekking to campuses by undergraduate Nigerian tertiary institutions, the impact includes; affection of academic performance of students, leads to late coming to lectures, physical exhaustion, reduction in studies hour, health problem and affects mental health and motivation.

Affects Academic Performance

Trekking long distances to campuses by undergraduate students in Nigeria can affect their academic performance. Distance in association with location of the school seems to be one of the strong influencing origins for the academic performance among students. This was evidenced as well by Obemeata (1995) and Obayan (2003) who confirmed that school physical environment exerts dominant influence on students’ academic performance. Mhiliwa (2015) discovered that longer distance travelled by students to school made them reach schools late and with empty stomachs. Location of school has led to mass failure to most of students, due to long walk among students have cause dropout from school. Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996) in a study which investigated the location of schools, revealed that distance traveled by learners from home to school correlated positively with the academic performance of the students. The researcher elaborates further that most of the learners were affected by the distance which made them use most of their time on traveling than learning. Adeboyeje, Olaniyi and Adepoju (2003); Jianzhong (2009) and Ebinum, Akamagune, and Ugbong (2017) revealed that there is a relationship between school location and students’ academic performance.

Late to lectures

Trekking a long distance to campuses by undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions can led to late coming for lectures in the various institutions. Most undergraduate students in Nigeria goes top lectures late because of distance and trekking. Moyo discovered that walking a long distance to schools by students will led to late coming at school and at home after school in evening. Moyo also explained that because of longer walking distance, fatigue and hunger lead students to drowsiness during learning as a result of walking over long distances. Onderi, Kiplangat, and Awino (2014); Oriko (2002) and Reche *et al.* (2012) found out that walking long distances to school greatly make students reach it with empty stomachs and lateness influencing negatively, their academic performance. Galabawa and Lwaitama (2008) revealed that most of the students arrived at school late, tired and lost interest in leaning and hence, poor academic performance.

Physical exhaustion

Trekking a long distance to campuses by tertiary institutions students can lead to fatigue. Ugbede-Ojo (2024) noted that one of the most immediate effects of trekking long distances is physical exhaustion. Many students in government schools walk several kilometers each day to reach school, often starting their journey early in the morning. By the time they arrive, they are already fatigued, which affects their ability to concentrate, participate in class, and retain information. Physical exhaustion also diminishes cognitive abilities such as focus, memory retention, and problem-solving skills. For students who have additional household responsibilities, such as chores or caring for younger siblings, the daily routine becomes even more difficult. The fatigue caused by trekking, combined with limited rest, leads to a decline in academic performance since these students cannot fully engage with their lessons (Ugbede-Ojo 2024).

Reduction in studies hour

Inflation in the country has been on an upward trend for 15 straight months, eating into student's incomes and draining savings. It was at 31.70% in February. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said inflation stood at 40.01% in March 2024, up from 37.92% in February. The implications of this on students is that many of them will be unable to meet up with their academic finance such as transportation to campuses in dailies bases. Many students due to high cost of transportation have resulted to trekking to the campus. Trekking long distance to campus by students has impact on their studies' time. Trekking can affect the ways the students read and attend to lectures. Ugbede-Ojo (2024) concluded that trekking long distances not only causes physical exhaustion but also reduces the time available for students to focus on their studies. Many students return home late in the evening, leaving little or no time to review the day's lessons or complete assignments. This time limitation affects their ability to keep up with their classmates, as personal study and revision are key to reinforcing what is taught in class. Students who live closer to school or have access to transportation are at an advantage, as they can use the time saved from commuting to focus on their studies. Time spent trekking each day could instead be used for homework or rest, both of which contribute significantly to academic success.

Health problem

Continuous trekking to campuses by tertiary institutions students can lead to health challenges. Many students in the Nigerian tertiary institutions are down with different health problems because of the trekking they are doing every day. Ugbede-Ojo (2024) observed that the physical exertion from trekking long distances also affects students' health. Exposure to adverse weather conditions such as heat, rain, or dust often leads to illnesses such as malaria, respiratory infections, or heat exhaustion. When students frequently fall ill, they tend to miss school, leading to poor attendance, which directly impacts their academic performance. In high institutions, absenteeism due to illness is a widespread issue, more so in areas with limited access to healthcare. When students fall ill, they often lack timely medical attention, which extends their absence from school. This recurring absenteeism leads to missed lessons, making it difficult for students to keep up with their academic responsibilities.

Mental health and motivation

Ugbede-Ojo (2024) concluded that trekking long distances also takes a toll on students' mental well-being. The daily routine of waking up early and embarking on a tiring journey to school creates stress, frustration,

and a lack of motivation. Over time, students may start viewing school as a burden rather than an opportunity, which leads to disengagement from their studies. In schools, where resources may already be stretched thin, the mental strain caused by trekking can have a lasting impact. Students who are demotivated and mentally exhausted are less likely to participate in class, complete assignments, or take exams seriously. This cycle of disengagement results in further academic underperformance. Public tertiary institutions located far from students' hotels or residences are among the most affected by the issue of trekking. In many cases, students walk long distances through unsafe or poorly maintained roads to reach school. This situation not only places a physical burden on the students but also raises concerns about their safety, with girls facing a higher risk of harassment or other dangers during their journey.

Findings

The paper revealed that trekking to campuses by undergraduate students in Nigeria has negative impact on their academic performance. The paper also discovered that trekking to campuses by undergraduate affects academic performance, leads to late coming to lectures, physical exhaustion, reduction in studies hour, health problem and affects mental health and motivation

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper assessed the impact of trekking long distance to campuses by Nigerian tertiary institutions undergraduate. The paper revealed that long distance trekking to campuses by undergraduate Nigerian tertiary institutions has negative impact on academic performance of the students in the various tertiary institutions. The paper also found out that trekking to campuses by undergraduate affects academic performance, leads to late coming to lectures, physical exhaustion, reduction in studies hour, health problem and affects mental health and motivation.

Based on this findings, the paper put forward the following suggestions;

1. Government should release all the buses they promised to give to all the tertiary institutions immediately. Ugbede-Ojo (2024) noted that introducing school transportation for students is one of the most effective ways to address the issue of trekking. Providing school buses for students who live far from school would greatly reduce the physical exhaustion caused by walking long distances. With transportation available, students can arrive at school rested and better prepared to engage in their studies.
2. The federal, state, or local governments, in collaborative partnership with non-governmental organizations, could fund and implement transportation systems for tertiary institutions at a cheaper fares.
3. Government should provide palliative to all Nigerian students.

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