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Perception of Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examinations by Secondary School Students in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract
This study investigated the perception of factors responsible for failure in West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) by secondary school students in Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey research design was used by the researchers for the study. The researchers randomly selected two hundred and ten (210) senior secondary school students from the three senatorial districts of Kwara State. The questionnaire titled "Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examinations Questionnaire" (FRFWEQ) was administered by the researchers with the help of trained assistance to the respondents in order to elicit information from the sampled respondents. The items of the questionnaire were content-validated and test re-test method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.73. The perceived major factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by the respondents include: non-availability of updated textbooks, unconducive environment for learning, and reliance on examination malpractice among others. Simple percentages employing pictorial charts were used to analyze the demographic data, while t-test and Analysis of Variance were used to analyze the four generated hypotheses. There were no significant differences found in the perception of factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of age, gender and religious affiliation. However a significant difference was found in the perception of factors responsible for failure in

WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of school type. As such, the government should ensure that secondary schools are well equipped to prepare students ahead of public examinations especially WAEC, while qualified and experienced teachers should be recruited to teach students preparing for the examinations.

Key words: Student, Examination, Failure, Gender, School type

Introduction

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) is an examination board formed out of concern for educational development in Nigeria and West Africa at large. Ambali (2003) noted that the council has developed a team of well trained and highly-motivated staff that conduct examinations at local and international levels. In 1948, a meeting was held to discuss the future policy of education in West Africa; at the meeting Dr George Barker Jeffery was appointed to visit some West Africa countries such as Sierra Leone, Gambia and Nigeria; at the end of the visit, Jeffery's recommendation for the establishment of WAEC in 1952 was adopted (WAEC, 2004). The ordinance Number 40 of 1951 charged the Council with the power to determine the type of examinations needed in West Africa and empower WAEC to conduct such examinations. For some years, varieties of factors have been advanced as being responsible for students' poor performance in WAEC.

Oladiran (2000) revealed that ambiguous curriculum and syllabi which in most cases fail to realistically address the needs of our society are some of the hidden factors responsible for many students' poor performance in WAEC. Adejimola (2007) and Bamisaye (1993) observed that many of our schools are poorly equipped; some do not have libraries, laboratories and conducive classrooms. Teaching equipment such as blackboards, chalks and textbooks are lacking in some public schools. These inadequacies have a way of influencing the student's performance. Camp (1990) also pointed out that the non-challant attitude of students toward examination often affects the performance of students in public examinations. In the same vein, Shittu (2004) added that student's performance depends on socio-economic background of the child. Taiwo (1985) noted that the school authority should also be held responsible for the performance of students in public examinations. The Ministry of Education and Teaching Service Commission sometimes do not employ and post qualified teachers to schools and as such the few ones are made to teach all the subjects in these schools. The economic wellbeing of a nation is largely determined by the caliber of its human resources and where these cannot be achieved through the process of education, the development of such a country is hampered.

Tables 1 shows a data representing students' performance in the core subjects i.e. English and Mathematics which was then used to determine students' performance in the examination between 2006 to 2009.

Table 1: Performance of Students in Mathematics and English Language in WAEC, between 2006 – 2009

Subject	Year	Total Entry	Total Sat	Total Credit and Above (1-6)	Total Pass 7 - 8	Fail 9	Number Absent & As % of Entry
General Mathematics	2006	1131071	1109825 (98.12%)	472674 (42.59%)	350325 (31.57%)	286826 (25.84%)	21246 (1.88%)
	2007	1241750	1220642 (98.30%)	584024 (47.85%)	333844 (27.35%)	302774 (24.80%)	21108 (1.70%)
	2008	1268959	1244282 (98.06%)	726398 (58.38%)	302266 (24.29%)	215618 (17.33%)	24677 (1.94%)
	2009	1319236	1294755 (98.14%)	634382 (49.00%)	344635 (26.62%)	315738 (24.39%)	24481 (1.86%)
English language	2006	1112224	1111312 (99.92%)	375007 (33.74%)	393994 (35.45%)	393201 (37.91%)	875 (0.08%)
	2007	1226556	1252570 (99.89%)	379831 (31.00%)	466378 (38.06%)	342311 (30.80%)	1341 (0.11%)
	2008	1271640	1274166 (98.51%)	446285 (35.65%)	405942 (32.41%)	379006 (30.93%)	18944 (1.49%)
	2009	1295967	1278683 (98.67%)	563294 (44.05%)	400424 (31.32%)	314965 (24.63%)	17284 (1.33%)

Source: West African Examination Council, Yaba, Lagos (2010)

Tables 1 shows the nationwide results released by WAEC for senior secondary school examinations between 2006 to 2009 in Mathematics and English language, this result indicated that students' performance in English Language and Mathematics on the average were below 50%.

Statement of Problem

The goal of WAEC is to be a world–class examination body. It is also aimed at maintaining internationally-accepted procedures for examination by providing qualitative and reliable educational assessment. Despite the efforts of WAEC officials, there has been a noticeable decline in the performance of students in WAEC examination. Okoye (1986) observed that the high rates of failure noticed yearly in public examinations are only a symptom of a pervasive national failure syndrome. Adeyemi (1985) pointed out that despite

the investment on secondary school education in Nigeria, students are not still performing well.

Kpolovie, Ololube and Ekwebelem (2011) carried out a research on the performance of secondary school students in WAEC and NECO from 2004 to 2006 and discovered that the students were not performing as expected. Adeyemi (1985) wrote on foundational problems as the basic causes of WAEC failure among secondary school students. Hansel (2012) found out that the causes of massive examination failure in WAEC included non-availability of textbooks, environments being too noisy and not convenient for learning and inadequate preparation among others. Hence, this study aims at looking at the perception of secondary school students on the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examination.

Research Question

1 What is the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of age.
3. There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of religion.
4. There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of school type.

Methodology

The population for the study is all secondary school students in Kwara State. The target population for the study is all S.S.S 3 students. These respondents were chosen because they are the ones that are required to write the examination before proceeding to the next level in their educational pursuit.

There are three senatorial districts in Kwara State. The dip-hat sampling technique was used to select a Local Government from each of the

Senatorial Districts. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two schools from each of the selected Local Government (i.e. one private and one public school) which makes a total of six schools in all. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting thirty-five (35) senior secondary students from each of the schools because these are the classes that sit for the examination. Thus, seventy respondents were selected from each of the Local Governments and thus, a total of two hundred and ten (210) senior secondary school students were selected from the three senatorial districts in Kwara State for the study.

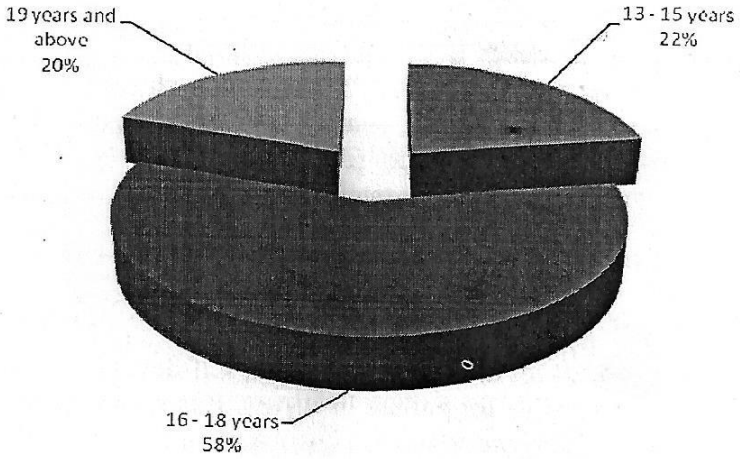
Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire, titled "Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examination Questionnaire" (FRFWEQ). The instrument consists of two sections. Section A dealt with demographic data of the respondents while section B focused specifically on factors responsible for failure in WAEC examination. The Questionnaire was patterned after the Four Point Likert Type scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). For Section B, the lowest possible score was 20 (1x20), while the highest score possible was 80 (4x20). The range was 60 (80-20) while the mid- point for deciding whether a perception score was either high or low was 50 (i.e. 20+30 or 80-30 which in either case is 50). Any mean value on perception that was either 50 or more was regarded as high, while any mean value less than 50 was regarded as low. The face and content validity of the instrument was determined by three lecturers in the faculty of education, University of Ilorin. In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, 20 students were drawn from some secondary schools in Ilorin, who were not part of the sampled respondents for this study. They were served twice with the same instrument within an interval of four weeks. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, a test -retest reliability coefficient of 0.73 was obtained which was significant at the 0.05 (α) level.

Results

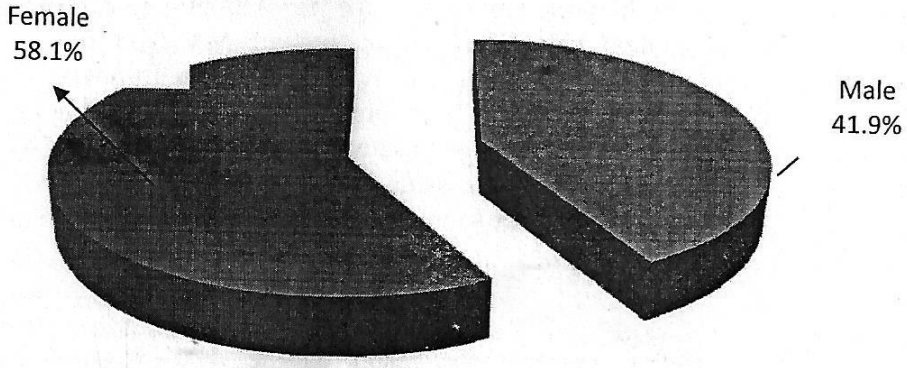
This section presents the result of the data obtained from the respondents.

Distribution of Respondents by their Age



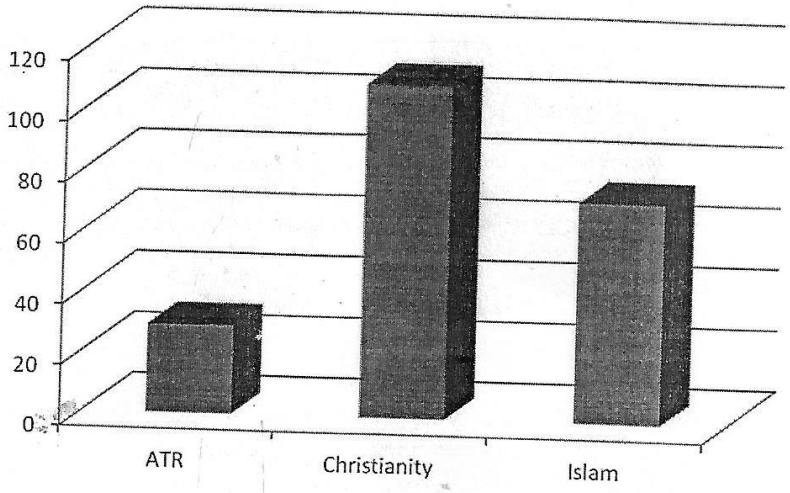
Two hundred and ten (210) respondents participated in this study out of which 46 (21.9%) were between 13- 15 years, 122 (58.1%) were between 16 - 18 years, while 42 (20%) were 19 years and above. This implies that there were more respondents between the ages of 16 – 18 years that participated in the study.

Distribution of Respondents by their Gender



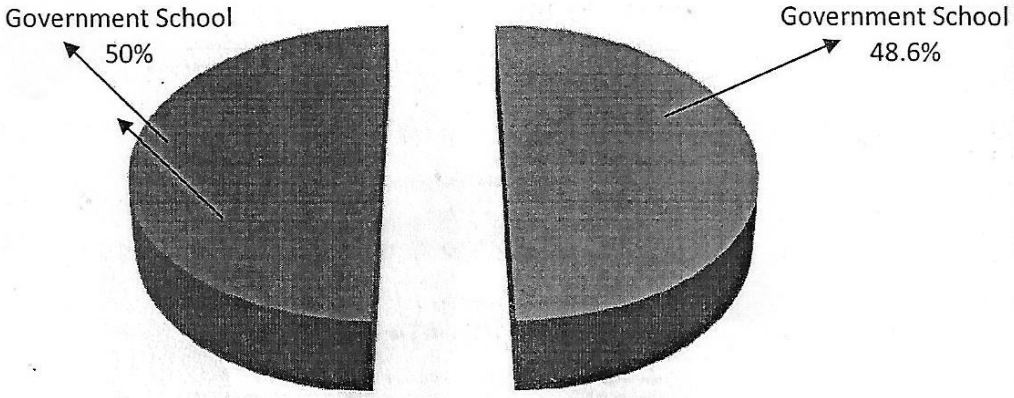
Based on gender, 88 (41.9%) of the respondents were males, while 122 (58.1%) were females. This implies that there were more female respondents that participated in the study.

Distribution of Respondents by their Religion



29 (13.8%) of the respondents are of the African Traditional Religion, 109 (51.9%) were Christians, while 72 (34.3%) were Muslims. This implies that most of the respondents were Christians.

Distribution of Respondents by their School Type



Based on school type, 105 (50%) of the respondents were in a government owned type of school, while 105 (50%) attend privately owned type of school. This implies that there was an equal representation of the respondents from private and Government schools for the study.

Research Question One: What is the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examination by secondary school students in Kwara State?

Table 2: Rank Order on Perception of Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examination by Secondary School Students in Kwara State

Item No.	As far as I am concerned, the following factors are responsible for failure among secondary school students in WAEC examinations	Mean	Rank
18	non-availability of updated textbooks	3.40	1st
19	un conducive environment for learning	3.37	2nd
11	reliance on examination malpractice	3.36	3rd
20	socio-economic status of students	2.95	4th
12	anxiety and fear of failure	2.95	4th
7	too much of extra-curricular activities	2.82	6th
4	Un-seriousness of the student towards the examination	2.80	7th
5	teacher inability to cover the syllabus	2.72	8th
6	lack of practical or laboratory experience	2.72	8th
10	inadequate infrastructural facilities	2.67	10th
15	lack of teaching aids	2.56	11th
17	the government lukewarm attitude towards education	2.56	11th
9	inefficient qualified teachers	2.41	13th
8	failure of parents to monitor the academic performance of their children	2.40	14th
14	over population of student in the classroom	2.39	14th
16	destiny (i.e. god's will)	2.34	16th
13	lack of revision before examination	2.34	16th
2	negative attitude of students towards examinations	2.32	18th
3	absenteeism of the student from school	2.32	18th
1	irrelevant school curriculum	1.26	20th

Table 2 shows that non-availability of updated textbooks (mean score of 3.40) is the most ranked factors responsible for high rate of failure among

secondary school students in WAEC examinations. This was followed by unconducive environment for learning (mean score 3.37) and reliance on examination malpractice (mean score 3.36) in order of magnitude. Inversely, the least ranked factors are those of irrelevant school curriculum (mean score 1.26), absenteeism and negative attitude towards examination (mean score 2.32). Considering the mid-mean score of 2.50 for determining the perception of the respondents, it can, thus, be said that the respondents have a high perception of the factors responsible for failure in WASSCE. Part of what they adjudged responsible are: non-availability of updated textbooks, unconducive environment for learning, reliance on examination malpractice, anxiety and fear of failure, un-seriousness of the student towards the examination, etc.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of gender*

Table 3: Mean and t-value on the Perception of the Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examinations by Secondary School Students in Kwara State Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Female	93	42.86	6.911	198	0.85	1.96
Male	117	43.74	7.325			

Table 3 shows a calculated t-value of 0.85 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96, as such the hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of gender.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the perception of factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of age*

Table 4: ANOVA showing the Difference in the Perception of the Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examinations by Secondary School Students in Kwara State on the basis of Age

Source	df	SS	Mean Square	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between Groups	2	199.050	99.52	2.06	3.00
Within Groups	207	9980.070	48.21		
Total	209	10179.120			

Table 4 shows an F-value calculated of 2.06 and a critical value of 3.00. Since the calculated F-value is less than the critical F-value, therefore, the hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of age.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of religion*

Table 5: ANOVA showing the Difference in the Perception of the Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examinations by Secondary School Students in Kwara State on the basis of Religion

Source	df	SS	Mean Square	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between Groups	2	25.241	12.62	0.26	3.00
Within Groups	207	10153.879	49.05		
Total	209	10179.120			

Table 5 shows the F-value calculated of 0.26 is less than the critical value of 3.00. As such the hypothesis was not rejected. Hence, there is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of religion.

Hypothesis Four: *There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of school type.*

Table 6: Mean and t-value on the Perception of the Factors Responsible for Failure in WAEC Examinations by Secondary School Students in Kwara State on the Based on School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Government Owned	99	42.20	5.894	198	2.48*	1.96
Private Owned	111	44.68	7.969			

*Significant, $p<0.05$

Table 6 shows a calculated t-value of 2.48 and a critical t-value of 1.96. Because the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value the hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of school type.

Summary of the Findings

Based on the findings of the study, the summary includes:

- Respondents have a high perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State.
- Most of the respondents adjudged that there are some major factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations and they are: non-availability of updated textbooks, unconducive environment for learning, reliance on examination malpractice, anxiety and fear of failure, un-seriousness of the student towards the examination etc.
- Three hypotheses based on gender, age and religion were not rejected, while one hypothesis based on school type was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Non-availability of up-dated text books and unconducive learning environment were ranked as key factors responsible for failure in WASSCE. Adeyemi (1985) affirmed that failure in WAEC examinations is basically caused by faulty foundation and unconducive learning environment.

The findings of the study revealed a fundamental issue on the need for a functional counselling programme in the secondary school system. Students within the secondary school age group were observed to have the same perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations. Egbule and Abosi (2002) revealed that students below the age of 15 years, experience anxiety, tension, stress and nervousness which can affect the students' perception of issues. On the other hand, Olotu (1994) revealed that students' academic performance depends on a number of factors which are beyond their immediate environment such as constant change in educational policies. It is believed that people within the same age group respond, in the same way to external pressures such as examinations.

Despite gender differences, secondary school students have similar perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations. Kpolovie, Ololube and Ekwebelem (2011) reported that gender did not influence the views of University students on the causes of mass failure in NECO/ WAEC examinations.

The perception of respondents on the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations were similar irrespective of their religious affiliation. Due to differences in religious tenets, adherents of different religious affiliations are expected to perceive events differently. In the same vein, Olatoye (2007) reported that some religions teach that all occurrences in an individual's life are tied to one's destiny. However, the issue of failure in examinations is perceived similarly across the various religions.

The type of school a student attends influences his/her perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations. Adeyinka (2002) conducted a study on teacher quality and quantity as correlates of secondary school student's academic performance in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study revealed that teachers who were rated ineffective produced students of lower academic ability. These are also more rampant among public secondary schools teachers who are not qualified but employed by the Ministry of Education Teaching Service Commission and sent to teach students in schools. Bamisaye (1993) observed that ineffective educational equipment, lack of libraries and good classrooms accommodation, unequipped laboratories and constant change in educational policies are the major causes of failure in public school examinations (e.g. WAEC) in Nigeria. Adejimola (2007) revealed that problems of public and private schools are multifaceted. Experiences of students in these two institutions are expected to shape their perception of examinations.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:

- Respondents have a high perception on the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State.
- Most of the respondents adjudged that there are some major factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations and they are: non-availability of updated textbooks, unconducive environment for learning, reliance on examination malpractice, anxiety and fear of failure, un-seriousness of the student towards the examination etc.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of gender, age, and religion.
- There is a significant difference in the perception of the factors responsible for failure in WAEC examinations by secondary school students in Kwara State on the basis of school type.

Counselling Implication

There is the need for secondary schools to employ professional counsellors. It is pertinent that the counsellor be equipped with skills of behavioural modification techniques for effective discharge of their duties as counsellor capable of providing educational, socio-personal and vocational counselling. The counsellor can help in assisting the student in developing a good study habit in preparation for WAEC examinations.

Recommendations

The government should ensure that secondary schools are well equipped to prepare students for public examinations such as WAEC examinations.

Qualified and experienced teachers should be recruited to teach students preparing for WAEC examinations. Seminars, workshops and career talks can be organized by School Counsellors in collaboration with the government, philanthropists, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to provide awareness to students, as well as parents, on the causes and prevention of failure in WAEC examinations.

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