

**ECONOMIC STATUS, ETHNIC BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION
BEHAVIOUR AS CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS TO ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENTS
OF NIGERIAN LAW STUDENTS IN SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: *Students admitted to study law in Nigeria are exposed to academic engagements essential for their legal practice after call to bar. Despite the critical role this exposure plays in their legal education, studies have documented that they show poor engagements. This could defeat the basis behind legal education as students graduating from law school might not understand well the rudiments of legal practice. The study investigated the influence of Economic status, Ethnic background and information behaviour on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria as a way out. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 7,303 undergraduate law students from accredited law faculties in South-West, Nigeria. Stratified sampling technique was used to categorise the Universities into federal, state and private. Random sampling technique was used to select six Universities, two from each category. Comrey and Lee's rule was used to determine the sample size of 1,200 students. The respondents were drawn from 200 and 300 levels. A face and content validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Test-retest was used to estimate reliability of the instrument and reliability coefficients ranged from 0.81 to 0.89. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential (linear and multiple regressions) statistics. The results revealed that there was a positive and significant influence of Economic status and Ethnic background on Academic engagement. There was also a positive and significant influence of Information behaviour on academic engagement. Information behaviour was shown to contribute more to academic engagement of students than economic status and ethnic background. The study concluded that economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour are critical to the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria. The study recommended that law librarians participate fully in legal information skills training of undergraduate law students.*

KEYWORDS: academic engagement, economic status, ethnic background, information behaviour, Nigerian law students, undergraduate law students

INTRODUCTION

Students' engagements are academic actions which determine the behavioural intensity, time quality, concentration and collaborative ability and the urge to relate theory to real life situation in the process of learning. Astin (1984, 1999) states that they are seen in students' behaviour, the quality of time they give to their engagement, the type of concentration they give to engagement and their ability to align theory to real life (Astin, 1984, 1999). Among

undergraduate law students, they are seen in how they participate in practical legal education like mock and moot trials, brief taking and legal advice giving, collaborative studies and ability to ask questions during studies, concentration and note taking in class, contribution during lectures and involvement in faculty activities. A plethora of literature have shown that there are factors that could contribute to academic engagement of law students. Hansen, Trujillo, Boland and Mackinnon (2014) and Willms (2003) found that factor of low economic status could make students not to engage well because of their poverty level and associated inabilities. Although Bryne (2015) and Hansen, Trujillo, Boland and Mackinnon (2014) also found that with social support and personal determination, such students adjust positively in their engagements.

Low economic status as well as ethnic background is a social contextual issue. It is the inability to acquire basic things of life or solve ones basic needs because of limited means of cash flow. As a result such students develop survival behaviours that could affect their engagement. They could decide to abstain from certain engagements in order not to be seen or heard; or the aftermath of their lack of exposure due to poverty could contribute to their inability to be socially included in the campus environment. Ethnic background is another factor found to have contributory influence on academic engagement of students (Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016; Thomas, 2012; Jekayinfa, 2002). A dominant ethnic group in a university could determine a campus culture; and this would inherently determine the exercise of freedom and collaboration by a minority group student. Where such students is not able to ingrain the campus culture in relation to greeting, use of indigenous language while interacting, then such student might not be able to relate well and engage as expected. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country with Universities across different ethnic base and students from different ethnic background school in different parts of the country (Jekayinfa, 2002). Although English language is a widely accepted official lingua franca in Nigeria (Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016), however indigenous language is widely used unofficially for interaction (Ajepe & Ademowo, 2016; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Thomas, 2012). Students who do not belong to acceptable economic status, ethnic background and who are not able to speak fluently the acceptable language might find it difficult relating; and engaging. This could be the same case with their information behaviour as they would seek ways of surviving in such academic environment.

According to Wilson (1999), information behaviour is all assertive and passive actions in relation to information. If there is accepted information behaviour in any institution, such behaviour could influence a student's relationship and his or her academic engagement. If mode of seeking information in an institution is assertive, then students who are outspoken and relate easily could be the ones who access both formal and informal information easily. They would easily get information that would assist their study while the passive ones would likely study solo or respond when approached; it then depends on the information behaviour culture in such institution. If the library service and faculty culture is not students' friendly, then such category of students would suffer in their engagement.

Students' information skills could also determine their level of engagement. Students who know how to apply subject terms and authenticate search results would engage well as they

would be able to get the right information they need from the internet. These skills are such that are normally acquired before admission to universities and also harps on the economic status of a student. Students from poor background might not know how to relate with bourgeois or upper class and so could be withdrawn; thus affecting their academic relationship. In a bid to save money, they become economical with information and thus ignore needed materials essential for their training (Ogba, 2013). Astin's (1984, 1999) theory of Engagement proposes that students' input in an academic environment influences unequal level of output since their inputs is as a result of different background and experiences they come in with. This theory is yet to be confirmed among Nigerian law students and thus forms the rationale for this study which seeks to investigate the influence of economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.

Statement of problem

Law students in Nigerian Universities come from different backgrounds and are required to participate in academic engagements provided for their training. These engagements determine their skill in law practice even after call to bar. However, it has been documented that law students do not interactively engage and therefore show poor engagements, while there are few studies carried out in Nigeria that portray the academic engagements of law students. However from observation, it is shown that they do not interactively engage. This could defeat the basis behind legal education as students graduating from law school might not understand well the rudiments of legal practice. A look at Nigerian social and academic environment show that factors of ethnicity, economic status and information behaviour of students could be contributory to the interest they give to their academic engagements. It is in the light of these that this study investigates the influence of economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour as contributory factors to undergraduate law students' academic engagements in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to find out the influence of ethnic background, economic status and information behaviour as contributory factors to academic engagements of undergraduate law students in South West Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. find the influence of economic status on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South –West Nigeria.
2. investigate the influence of ethnic background on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South –West Nigeria.
3. find the influence of information behaviour on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South –West Nigeria.

Research Questions

The questions which this study sought to answer were:

1. What is the influence of economic status on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South –West Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of ethnic background on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South –West Nigeria?

3. What is the information behaviour that influences the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested at a level of 0.05 significance:

1. Economic status will not significantly influence the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.
2. Ethnic background will not significantly influence the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.
3. Information behaviour will not significantly influence the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigerian law schools provide both substantive and procedural law as part of students' legal training in preparation for legal practice after call to bar (Uhagwa, 2017). Thus the engagements of students in Nigerian Universities become analogous to their engagements in law practice. However studies have shown that engagements among law students have been problematic due to issues like segregation by class (Carrington & Conley, 1977; Krieger, 1998, 2011; Massimiliano & Prue, 2009). Though these studies were carried outside Nigeria; however they show situation of law students in respect to their academic engagements. According to Ogba (2013), some law students struggle in their studies due to lack of money while others do not like relating with their lecturers and library staff; these have implications on their academic engagements.

Academic engagement has been defined as the behavioural intensity and emotional quality of students' engagement in their academics (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon & Barch, 2004). Phan and Ngu (2014) defined it as how far a student can go in identifying with and valuing his or her school's academic engagements. While Astin (1984a; 1984b & 1991) defines academic engagement as observable efforts, interest, behaviour and time given by students towards their own learning. Academic engagement is defined in this study as participatory actions which determine the behavioural intensity, time quality, concentration, collaborative ability and the urge to relate theory to real life situation in the process of learning.

According to Jensen (2003), Thurmond and Popkess (2003); and Sam, Souriyavongsa, Zain, Jamil, Wu, and Sovath (2013), participation in academic engagement is a contribution of some factors. Astin confirms this in Thurmond and Popkeis-Vawter (2003) in the "input", "Environment" and "Output" model where it was stated that students bring in inputs into academic environment that leads to outcome in their engagements. These inputs were asserted to include each person's gender, age, ethnic background, ability and socio-economic level among others. According to Jensen (2003), the input a poor student brings into academic environment is his or her poverty mentality and lack. While Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Thomas (2012) asserted that ethnic, racial or class belonging is an input that determines students' participation in academic environment due to identifiable habitus found in academic environments.

Nigerian Universities are located among ethnic communities; going by the historical dichotomy in Nigerian ethnic groups (Ogunnika, 2013), an ethnic group in which a university is located could show its supremacy by ensuring that only indigenes of its ethnic group hold certain leadership positions; this might just be the social norm and not a written policy. Though Buhs, Ladd and Herald (2006), found that students who are rejected in a group would have the tendency to adjust. Their mode of adjustment would likely determine whether they engage or not (Bryne, 2015). Findings however majorly show that students belonging to strong financial status perform better than those who consistently face financial problems (Azhar, Nadeem, Naz, Perveen & Sameen, 2013; Blanden & Gregg, 2004).

Economic status is an aspect of socio-economic status, a dissimilarity in economic class. Socio-economic status as defined by Tomul and Polat (2013) includes the high school students attend, their parents educational status, family income, the settlement where the family lives, the status of the father's work place, number of siblings and educational background of the student before the student's entrance to high institution. Findings from Tomul and Polat (2013) were in line with findings in Chevalier and Lanot (2002), Harmon, Oosterbeek and Walker (2002), and Jensen (2013). In these studies, students from low socio-economic status were found to have difficulty engaging due to financial and moral support to their education. Although Blanden and Gregg (2004) found that family income was the most rated influential variable in school achievement and not parents' educational status. While Bryne (2015) affirmed that children from low income families could eventually overcome limitations around them through hard work and positive relationship. Their academic hard work would lead them to show certain information behaviour as a way of navigating their limitations. Behaviours like "mask wearing", where they seek no academic help from staff; money management where they ignore important online materials in order to save cost of printing and shrink downloaded materials in order to save cost (Ogba, 2013) and consistent use of search engine as first point of contact even when they are aware it would not provide them their needed materials (Ogba, 2013b). These behaviours including ethnic background however were not studied as contributors to academic engagements. While studies on economic status were majorly focussed on law students outside Nigeria; thus the need to carry out this research and ascertain their contributions to the academic engagement of law students in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Survey research design was used for this study. The population was made up of 7,303 undergraduate law students of federal, state and private Universities in South-West Nigeria that have full or provisional law accreditation status and have 200 and 300 levels undergraduate law students. Stratified sampling was used in selecting six law faculties from federal, state and private universities. The population of 200 and 300 levels in the faculties selected was calculated to get a total population of 2,584. Following Comrey and Lee's rule of 500 where 1000 or more was asserted to be excellent sample size (Comrey & Lee, 1992), the sample size of 1,200 was deemed appropriate for this study. Using proportionate assignment, each law faculty was assigned size numbers which all together equated to the sample size for the study. A self designed questionnaire was used for data gathering and the

questionnaire passed through face and content validity; and reliability procedure. The validity procedure involved the supervisor for this study, two lecturers in Guidance and Counselling, one in Tests and Measurement and two lecturers in the Faculty of Law. Test-retest method technique was used to estimate the reliability coefficient of the instrument. The result was a reliability coefficient range of 0.81 to 0.89; showing that the instrument was reliable to be used for the study. Instrument administration and retrieval was by hand delivery and data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the general questions. Regression analysis was used to find the relative contributions of the independent variables on the dependent variable; and all the hypotheses were tested at a level of 0.05 significance.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

One thousand two hundred copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 987 (82%) were returned.

Research Question 1: What are the Economic status and Ethnic background that influence the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria?

Table 1: Economic status and Ethnic background of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
1	Economic status	109	184	307	387	2.020	1.010
	I am still trying to have a good command of English so I don't engage in activities that would expose me	(11.0)	(18.6)	(31.1)	(39.2)		
	I don't even have money to change my wardrobe, why get involved in activities that would expose me	68	212	232	475	1.900	0.978
2	I don't have much confidence relating with my peers, so I prefer studying alone	76	155	280	476	1.829	0.959
		(7.7)	(15.7)	(28.4)	(48.2)		
Average score:2.0							
4	Ethnic background	204	372	194	217	2.570	1.050
	Since I am from a different ethnic group, I try to engage well to portray positively where I come from	(20.7)	(37.7)	(19.7)	(22.0)		
	Since I am from different ethnic group, I find more peace studying, it's difficult to understand the people here	91	136	293	467	1.850	0.979
5	Since I am from a different ethnic group, I try not to get too noticed in my faculty	65	119	277	526	1.720	0.916
		(6.6)	(12.1)	(28.1)	(53.3)		
7	Since I am from a different ethnic group, I might not be accepted for some leadership positions in the law faculty	61	126	252	548	1.696	0.916
		(6.2)	(12.8)	(25.5)	(55.5)		
Average score: 2.1							

In response to research question one; it was revealed that economic status has a positive influence on the academic engagement of students investigated with a mean score of 2.0. It is positive influence because all the items were couched negatively to portray negative attributes of economic status; and they all received low response, thereby indicating that

economic status has positive influence on students' academic engagement. This means that the economic status of students, whether high or low, still contributes to the academic engagement of students.

It was also shown that ethnic background has positive influence on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria. The items under ethnic background were couched negatively and they received negative response rate except the one couched positively which is "Since I am from a different ethnic group, I try to engage well to portray positively where I come from" with a mean score of 3.0. This shows that the diversity in Nigerian institutions of learning does not impinge on learning and interaction among law students.

Research Question 2: What is the information behaviour that influences the academic engagements of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria?

Table 4.3a: Information behaviour of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
	Reactions to information need						
1	In order to develop myself personally, I get involved in clinical legal education	531 (53.8)	293(2 9.7)	74 (7.5)	89 (9.0)	3.300	0.946
2	The need to understand better what I have been taught makes me to study together with my peers	456 (46.2)	335 (33.9)	120 (12.2)	76 (7.7)	3.190	0.926
3	The need to complete my class assignments makes me to study.	356 (36.1)	380 (38.5)	149 (15.1)	102 (10.3)	3.003	0.962
4	The need to understand better what I have been taught makes me to interact with my lecturers	328 (33.2)	418 (42.4)	140 (14.2)	101 (10.2)	2.986	0.940
5	The need to contribute meaningfully during lectures makes me to study ahead of my lecture period	304 (30.8)	457 (46.3)	122 (12.4)	104 (10.5)	2.974	0.924
6	The need to pass my examination makes me to study very hard	312 (31.6)	401 (40.6)	160 (16.2)	114 (11.6)	2.923	0.970
7	The need to be better than before, makes me to study regularly	298 (30.2)	389 (39.4)	181 (18.3)	119 (12.1)	2.880	0.980
8	The need to do well in moot and mock trial makes me to study deeply	246 (24.9)	432 (43.8)	205 (20.8)	104 (10.5)	2.831	0.922
9	The need to do well in moot and mock trial makes me to ask questions during classroom lectures	218 (22.1)	388 (39.3)	244 (24.7)	137 (13.9)	2.696	0.965
10	The need to reduce bulk work before examination makes me to study regularly.	230 (23.3)	354 (35.9)	253 (25.6)	150 (15.2)	2.673	0.996
11	The need to compete favourably with my mates make me engage in studies	122 (12.4)	163 (16.5)	244 (24.7)	458 (46.4)	1.950	1.060
	Total Average score: 3.1						
	Information Seeking						
12	Using textbooks for case citation instead of law reports does not provide me with complete information regarding a case	495 (50.2)	340 (34.4)	64 (6.5)	88 (8.9)	3.260	0.926
13	I have a habit of downloading so many materials, and later end up not using them	312 (31.6)	420 (42.6)	128 (13.0)	127 (12.9)	2.930	0.978
14	I easily get tired when I have to study details of a case in any law report	230 (23.3)	252 (53.2)	112 (11.3)	120 (12.2)	2.876	0.905
15	I seek academic help from my lecturers, so it makes me do better in	269	391	201	126		

	practical law education	(27.3)	(39.6)	(20.4)	(12.8)	2.814	0.976
16	Browsing Library's shelves during information seeking makes me spend most of my time searching materials for my studies	254 (25.7)	395 (40.0)	206 (20.9)	132 (13.4)	2.781	0.977
17	I still use textbooks for case citations instead of law report	231 (23.4)	425 (43.1)	188 (19.0)	143 (14.5)	2.754	0.972
18	I enjoy searching information electronically, it provides me with quality materials	207 (21.0)	430 (43.6)	199 (20.2)	151 (15.3)	2.702	0.967
19	I am always conscious of the cost implications for getting any material that I end up leaving behind vital materials that I need	230 (23.3)	293 (29.7)	307 (31.1)	157 (15.9)	2.604	1.012
20	I still browse library shelves during information seeking	231 (23.4)	406 (41.1)	218 (22.1)	132 (13.4)	2.746	0.962
21	I ask questions from library staff and it helps me to get quality materials	192 (19.5)	486 (49.2)	171 (17.3)	138 (14.0)	2.742	0.928

Table 4.3b: Information behaviour of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD
22	I use mainly print materials for information search as they provide me with quality information	227 (23.0)	371 (37.6)	248 (25.1)	141 (14.3)	2.693	0.980
23	I have a habit of using the Law Library to search for academic information	215 (21.8)	390 (39.5)	218 (22.1)	164 (16.6)	2.665	0.996
24	I have a habit of seeking clarifications from my peers only	209 (21.2)	381 (38.6)	237 (24.0)	160 (16.2)	2.650	0.990
25	I have a habit of always soliciting for help regarding my academic issues and it provides me with clarifications	148 (15.0)	338 (34.2)	319 (32.3)	182 (18.4)	2.460	0.960
	Average score: 3.0						
	Information Use						
26	I use the information I source as a means to exchange ideas with my peers	303 (30.7)	540 (54.7)	46 (4.7)	98 (9.9)	3.062	0.865
27	I use the information I source to interact with my peers academically	317 (32.1)	498 (50.5)	68 (6.9)	104 (10.5)	3.042	0.900
28	The information I source helps me to take care of my academic concerns	347 (35.2)	460 (46.6)	47 (4.8)	133 (13.5)	3.034	0.968
29	I use the information I source to ask questions of clarifications from my lecturers outside the classroom	311 (31.5)	487 (49.3)	84 (8.5)	105 (10.6)	3.017	0.910
30	I use the information I source to prepare for Moot and Mock trial competition	234 (23.7)	504 (51.1)	118 (12.0)	131 (13.3)	2.852	0.931
31	The information I source makes me develop better in the areas I have been taught	277 (28.1)	417 (42.2)	151 (15.3)	142 (14.4)	2.840	0.992
32	I use the information I source to teach my peers in their areas of confusion	222 (22.5)	424 (43.0)	215 (21.8)	126 (12.8)	2.752	0.945
33	I use the information I source for contribution during classroom lectures	192 (19.5)	428 (43.4)	217 (22.0)	150 (15.2)	2.671	0.956
34	The information I source assists me in asking questions inside the classroom	200 (20.3)	438 (44.4)	188 (19.0)	161 (16.3)	2.686	0.974
35	I use the information I source to build myself up for clinical legal education	187 (18.9)	384 (38.9)	244 (24.7)	172 (17.4)	2.594	0.985
36	I use the information I source to interact confidently with my peers	182 (18.4)	365 (37.0)	230 (23.3)	210 (21.3)	2.526	1.022
	Average score: 3.0						

In order to answer research question two, information behaviour was compartmentalised as: reactions of information need, information seeking and information use. It was revealed that reactions of information need have an average mean score of 3.1 showing a positive influence

on academic engagement. The items were couched positively to reflect reactions of information need and they received high response except “The need to compete favourably with my mates make me engage in studies” which had a mean score of 2.0 from 71%, indicating that competition is not a positive factor to academic engagement among law students. Reaction of need of personal development had the highest mean score of 3.30 from 84%; followed by the need to understand better what one has been taught with mean score of 3.1. Reaction of the need to complete class assignments, to understand better what one has been taught, to interact with ones lecturers, to contribute meaningfully during lectures, to pass examination, to be better than before, to do well in Moot and Mock trials all received high responses with mean scores of 3.0 each. This indicates that when students react to needs to develop, to do well in their academics and to advocate well, they engage.

More so, it indicates that students’ reaction to personal need for development influences above other needs, the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria. In further response to research question two, it was revealed that information seeking has significant influence on academic engagement of students investigated with an average score of 3.0. The items were couched positively and negatively and they all received high response with mean scores of 3.0 for each of them. The understanding that using textbooks for case citations instead of law reports would not provide one with adequate material, with a mean score of 3.26 and the habit of still continually using it despite being aware, with a mean score of 2.75, show a positive influence on engagement; but poor information skills. This is the same thing with knowing that browsing library shelves wastes academic time (with mean score of 2.78) and still browsing library shelves despite this knowledge (with a mean score of 2.74). Other poor attitudes towards information were downloading so many materials and ending up not using them (2.93 mean score), being conscious of cost implications of printing materials that they end up not using them (2.60 mean score), and getting tired of studying when one has to use law reports for case law (2.87 mean score). Despite the fact that these items portray lack of legal skills, they were shown to still have influence on students’ engagement; thereby indicating that law students investigated are engaging wrongly. However, there were behaviours that indicated positive information skills with positive influence on academic engagement. Students’ investigated used the library regularly for their studies (2.66 mean score), asked questions from library staff (2.74 mean score), sought help from peers (2.65 mean score), sought help always (2.46 mean score), sought help from lecturers (2.81 mean score), used both electronic materials (2.70 mean score) and print materials (2.93 mean score). Thus both positive and negative information seeking behaviours of students investigated had influence on their academic engagement.

In further response to research question two, it was revealed that information use has positive influence on academic engagement with mean score of 3.0. All the items were couched positively and they all received high responses with mean scores of 3.0. “I use the information I source as a means to exchange ideas with my peers” received the highest response (85.4%) with mean score of 3.06. Thus, in response to research question two, it is shown that reactions to information needs, information seeking and information use have influence on academic engagement of undergraduate law students investigated. This implies

that information behaviour affects positively the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.

Test of hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study were tested using regression analyses respectively.

Hypothesis 1: Economic status does not significantly influence academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria

Table 1: Prediction of Economic status and academic engagement of undergraduate of law students in South-West, Nigeria

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean squares	F- ratio	Sig.	R	R ²
Regression	6537.952	1	6537.952	34.813	0.000	0.185	0.034
Residual	184985.746	985	187.803				
Total	191523.698	986					

Table 1 shows the influence of economic status on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria ($F=34.813$, $P<0.05$). It shows that economic status influences the academic engagement of undergraduate law students, thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, economic status significantly predicts the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria.

The Table further reveals that all the variables of economic status jointly explained about 3.4% ($R^2=0.034$) of the total variance in academic engagement. The remaining 96.6% unexplained variance is largely due to variation in other variables. There exists a significant relationship ($R=0.185$, $P<0.05$) between variables of economic status and academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria. This implies that economic status influences the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: Ethnic group does not significantly influence the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria

Table 2: Prediction of ethnic background and academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean squares	F- ratio	Sig.	R	R ²
Regression	7941.072	1	7941.072	42.607	0.000	0.204	0.041
Residual	183582.626	985	186.378				
Total	191523.698	986					

Table 2 shows that ethnic background influences the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria ($F=42.607$, $P<0.05$). Thus the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, ethnic background influences the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.

The table also reveals that all the variables of ethnic background jointly explained about 4.1% ($R^2=0.041$) of the total variance in academic engagement. The remaining 95.9% unexplained

variance is largely due to variation in other variable outside the regression model. There exists a significant relationship ($R=0.204$, $P<0.05$) between variables of ethnic group and academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria. This implies that ethnic background has significant influence on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence of information behaviour on academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria

Table 3: Multiple Regression showing the contribution of information behaviours on the academic engagements of undergraduate law students in South-West, Nigeria

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	T	Sig	R	R ²	F
	B	Std.error	Beta					
Constant	11.137	1.779				0.557	0.333	163.613
Information Needs	0.266	0.075	0.134	3.551	0.000			
Information Seeking	0.339	0.064	0.219	5.318	0.000			
Information Use	0.505	0.067	0.292	7.550	0.00			

$P<0.05$

Table 3 shows that information behaviours jointly and significantly contributed to the academic engagements ($F=163.613$, $P<0.05$) of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that information behaviour has significant influence on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria. The best predictor of academic engagement is information use with a beta weight of 0.292. This is closely followed by information seeking with a beta weight of 0.219 while reactions of information need with a beta weight of 0.134 are the least predictor of academic engagements.

All the variables of information behaviours jointly explained about 33.3% ($R^2=0.333$) of the total variance in academic engagement. The remaining 66.7% unexplained variance is largely due to variation in other variables. There exists a significant relationship ($R=0.577$, $P<0.05$) between variables of information behaviours and academic engagements. The effect of reactions of information needs ($t=3.551$, $P<0.05$), information seeking ($t=5.318$, $P<0.05$) and information use ($t=7.550$, $P<0.05$) on academic engagements is at 0.05 level of significance in each case.

DISCUSSION

The major findings of this study show that:

1. Ethnic background does not have negative influence on students' academic engagement; and economic status also does not have negative influence on students' academic engagement.
2. Information behaviour of reactions to information need, seeking and use have significant influence on the academic engagement of undergraduate law students in South-West Nigeria; with information use having the highest influence.

The result of this study has covered a research gap which showed dearth of literature in Nigeria regarding the influence of ethnic background on academic engagement. Since there were no studies on influence of Nigerian multi-ethnic groups on education, it was assumed that ethnicity could have negative influence on students' academic engagement. However the result from this study has shown that despite Nigerian diversity, ethnic background has positive influence and not negative one; thereby enhancing the assertion in Jekayinfa (2002), Ogunnika (2013) and Thomas (2012). These studies provided information on Nigerian diversity and the fact Nigerian universities scattered in different ethnic communities is open to students of any ethnic background despite the fact that the community in which the university is situated has its unique culture. This therefore gave the impression that students outside their ethnic community could face challenges. However the result from this study has negated this and has also negated the negative identifiable habitus as found in Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bingham and Okagaki (2012), Thomas (2012) which showed that students outside their ethnic environment would not engage well as they would feel isolated due to community culture which differs from their own. Though there could be identifiable habitus, however they were shown not to influence negatively the academic engagements of students investigated.

The result of this study which showed that economic status influences positively the academic engagement of law students investigated has confirmed the study in Bryne (2015) which states that students from working class or low economic status could navigate their economic limitations and engage. Furthermore, it is shown that Nigerian law students investigated are good in navigating their background limitations to engage in their academics. However while it confirms the study in Bryne (2015), the result in this study disagrees with the findings in Chevalier and Banot (2002); Jensen (2013) and Nickelson (2017) where poverty was shown as a factor militating against the academic engagement of students. The result of this study by showing that poverty has no negative influence on students investigated but a positive one has differentiated students in Nigeria from the students investigated in Jensen (2013). Thereby portraying that empirical conclusion outside Nigerian environment should not apply in Nigeria.

The result that information behaviour influences the academic engagement of undergraduate law students shows that despite students' poor information skills as portrayed in Ogba (2013a,b) and Ossai (2009), they still engage in their academics. Although their poor information skill shows that they are not engaging well. The result showing reactions to academic competition as the lowest item of influence and academic development as highest item of influence negated the findings in Massimiliano and Prue (2009) and Krieger (1998; 2011) on students psychological trauma due to excessive competition. By showing that Nigerian law students do not engage in harmful competition, the importance of students' environment and culture is again shown; as students investigated in this study were more interested in their personal development than unnecessary competition.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the economic and ethnic situations in Nigeria presumed to have inherent ability to inhibit engagement has been overridden. Students' in Nigeria, no matter the situations they are in have self groomed to know how to navigate challenges and cover up their gaps. Their reaction to self need for development, found to be a propelling factor to their engagement pushes them to navigate challenges and limitations. Although their information skills were shown to be poor, nevertheless, they were still seen to put in efforts to engage in ways they understand how best to do. In conclusion, it is shown that students investigated needs supervision and support for maximal academic engagement.

Implication to research and practice

This study in contributing conceptually to literature shows that the concepts of economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour are realistic among Nigerian undergraduate law students. Economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour were found to be inputs that contribute to academic engagements; while academic engagement was shown as dependent variable that could be influenced. Previous studies on economic status and ethnic background investigated inputs that did not reflect clear realities in Nigeria. In the same way, information behaviour of undergraduate law students, a concept that has been studied in Nigeria, did not establish a connection between information behaviour and academic engagement (Ogba,2013; Ossai,2009). This gap was filled in this study by showing that economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour are concepts that are connected and which work together towards students' academic engagement. More so, the concept of academic engagement which has not been studied extensively in Nigeria, among undergraduate law students, was investigated.

This study has also contributed empirically to literature by extending studies carried out outside Nigeria to the Nigerian environment. Thus it provided a study that looked at Nigerian environment specifically. Therefore findings that came out of this study are such that provide a best practice for the Nigerian situation and among Nigerian undergraduate law students. Thereby providing authority that could portray the influence of economic status, ethnic background and information behaviour on undergraduate law students in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Consequent upon the results of the analysis which show that economic factor, ethnic background and information behaviour influence academic engagement of undergraduate law students, it is recommended as follows:

1. Law faculties in Nigeria should provide academic activities that focus on interrelationship among students.
2. Law faculties should ensure that students are given life cases to resolve as a group, without provision of case citations. This would sharpen their legal information skills while engaging them academically. More so, students would understand the need to use reference materials like index, legal encyclopaedias, digests, law dictionaries and others.
3. Law librarians should be involved in the legal information skills training of law students.

4. The economic status and ethnic background of students should be downplayed in students' academic engagement.

Future Research

Suggestions for further studies are made as follows:

1. Similar studies can be carried out to include law students from 100 levels to 500 levels.
2. Similar studies could also be carried out among law students in other geographical locations like the Eastern and the Northern parts of Nigeria.
3. Studies could also be carried out in other disciplines in Nigerian institutions, with the same variables used in this study.
4. Similar studies could also be carried out comparatively between private and public universities in Nigeria.

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