

Analysis of Students' Academic Performance in 2021 - 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple Choice Objective Tests in Government

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Abstract: *This study investigated and analyzes academic performance of students in Nigerian senior school certificate examination multiple-choice objective tests in Government in South-Western, Nigeria between years 2021 and 2023. Exploratory survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study consisted of all senior secondary school students (SSS) in all 1735 public senior secondary schools in South-western States of Nigeria. A total sum of One thousand three hundred and forty-eight (1,348) participated in the study. Multi-stage sampling and systematic random sampling techniques were adopted for selection of a sampled of schools and sampled students for the study. The years 2021-2023 June/July series of the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Multiple-Choice Objective Tests in Government were adopted and used as instruments in this study. Data analysis was carried out by scored all responses dichotomously and descriptive statistics were used for the analysis with the SPSS software. The findings of the study revealed that the performance level of students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2013-2015 in South-Western, Nigeria were low and that there is no significant difference among the performance level of students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2021-2023 in South-Western, Nigeria. In view of the findings of this study, Conclusions were made and recommendations were proffered.*

Keywords: academic, government, performance, national examination council of Nigeria (NECO), senior school certificate examination (SSCE).

INTRODUCTION

Education can be described as the holistic process that characterized human learning, through which knowledge is imparted, pass across from one generation to another, faculties trained and skills developed. Education is the total process of human learning by which knowledge is impacted, faculties trained and skills developed (Jackline & John, 2014). Education is segregated into different level ranging from primary to secondary and tertiary education. All the levels are vital to human learning and academic prowess but very significant is the impact of secondary school education as it serves as the link between primary and tertiary education. Secondary schools not only occupy a strategic place in the educational system in Nigeria, it is also the link between the primary and the university levels of education. Asikhai (2010) opined that education at secondary school level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. It is rather unfortunate that the secondary schools today are not measuring up to the standards expected of them.

Testing has become one of the most important parameters by which a society judges the product of her educational system (Emaikwu, 2012). Essence of testing is to reveal the latent ability of examinee. According to Rivera (2007), a standard test is an instrument that has been carefully prepared in accordance with scientific techniques to measure intelligence, aptitude, or achievement in school subjects. Standardized tests are often considered high stake because results are used to make important decisions concerning admission into higher institution of learning, graduation requirements and certification and employment, thus making validity a central issue.

One of the cardinal goals of education in Nigeria as provided for in National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) is the development of appropriate skills, mental, physical and social abilities and competencies to empower the individual to live in and contribute positively to the society. Thus it becomes highly imperatives to conduct examinations within and outside the schools as a basis for assessment.

Secondary education occupies a strategic place in the educational system in Nigeria, because it serves as link between the primary and the university levels of education. Wang and Zhan (2020) stated that education at secondary school level is supposed to be the bedrock and the foundation towards higher knowledge in tertiary institutions. Secondary school education, according to Asikhai (2010), is expected to be the backbone and foundation for further education at postsecondary institutions.

National Examination Council of Nigeria (NECO) is an examination body in Nigeria responsible for conducting the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE) in the country. The NECO administer other examinations apart from SSCE which encapsulates; Basic Education Certificate Examination (otherwise referred to as BECE) and National Common Entrance Examination (Known as NCCE). NECO was created in 1999 by the then, Head of state, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, with a vision of preparing and conducting standard and acceptable examinations that are credible nationally and internationally across the world (NECO, 2017). The NECO must also ensure that the examinations it administered

are in accord with the provisions and cardinal expectations of the Nigerian Curriculum and National Policy on Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2017). The Senior Secondary School Certificates awarded by these examination bodies are required for employment and admission into higher institution of learning in Nigeria and elsewhere.

Government as a subject in senior secondary school is referred to as an academic field of study which deals with the study of agencies, political institution and dynamics of state Muraina, Muraina, and Oladele (2024). As an academic field of study, Government is given various names as it suites the institution concerned, many institutions refer to it as Political Science or Politics. To Malik (2018) and Hung (2023) Government deals with the study of mechanism of government aimed at equipping citizens to take part in the art of governance of their respective state. Government became a compulsory subject for students in art who intend to further more in their academic career either at the college of education, polytechnic or university level in social science such as political science, public administration, international relation to mention but few (Hamudy, 2020; Sclafani, 2007).

Government as one of the senior secondary school subjects attracts a very moderate number of students in terms of enrolment in Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations because the subject is normally offered by students of arts and social sciences-based disciplines. The SSCE syllabus guides the teaching and learning process in the classroom; these syllabi were derived from the approved National Curriculum for Senior Secondary School developed and produced by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). These syllabi were prepared with due cognizance to the aims, objectives and purposes of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations. The multiple-choice items in these examinations are often subjected to different process of validations.

According to NECO (2006), Government test has been designed with blueprint/specifications that indicate five (5) underlying structures of the domains being measured and in view of the importance of the decisions made on the basis of NECO Senior Secondary Certificate test results. Over the years, researches have reported that the majority of students that sat for Senior Secondary Certificate Examinations have been recording mass failure in many subjects. However, despite the above importance attached to the learning and teaching of Government as subject in our educational system, the performance of students in secondary schools in Nigeria has remained an issue of concern to all stake holders.

The National Examinations Council (NECO) November/December 2009 results show 98% failing to clinch five credits, including Economics, English and Mathematics. Only 1.8% got five credits, including Economics, English and Mathematics. Other subject like Government was not left out. It was the poorest result in the history of the examination body. Commenting (on the issue of mass failure in 2009 November/December NECO examinations) in the Nigerian Tribune of April 5, 2010 by Tope Ademola, a Public Affairs commentator, said that there could not have been a worse period for the Nigerian educational system than the disclosure that 98 per cent of students who sat for the November /December 2009 examination of the National Examination Council (NECO) failed.

According to the report, only 4,223 out of the 236,613 candidates who sat for the examination had credits in five subjects, including English and Mathematics. The figure regrettably represents less than two per cent of those who took the examination. In the same vein, the National Examinations Council (NECO) registered another mass failure in the November/December external 2010 examinations as out of the 25 subjects taken by students none had up to 50 per cent pass record. This message was reported by the Registrar of the council, Professor Promise Okpala, who announced the results to newsmen in Minna on March 30, 2011. Out of the total number that sat for the English Language examination, 51, 781 candidates passed, constituting only 20 per cent and in Mathematics, 87, 508 translating to 34 per cent of candidates that sat for the examination passed. French Language recorded the lowest pass with no candidate having a credit out of the 473 students that sat for the subject, amounting to 57 percent failure (Ebije, 2011).

This is worrisome because it has strong implication for the study of many humanities or social sciences courses at institutions of higher learning. It is against this backdrop that this study assessed and analyzes secondary school students' academic performance in the years 2021 – 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-Choice Objective Tests in Government in South-Western, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to analyze the academic performance of students in the years 2021 – 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government. The study specifically analyzed:

- a. the profile of students' scores in the years 2021 – 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government.
- b. determine if there is any difference in students' scores in the years 2021 – 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide this study:

Research Question 1: What is the profile of students' scores in the years 2021 – 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government?

Research Question 2: Is there any difference in students' scores in the years 2021 – 2023 Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government?

METHODOLOGY

Exploratory survey research design was adopted for this study. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) an exploratory research design is a valuable means of finding out 'what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light. While Saka, Osademe, and Ononokpono (2023) confirmed that exploratory research is particularly useful if researchers wish to clarify the understanding of a problem, such as if they

are unsure of the precise nature of the problem. This design was considered the most appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to collect necessary data and make useful deduction and judgment at the end of the study with the aid of instrument.

The population of this study consisted of all senior secondary school students (SSS) in all 1735 public senior secondary schools in South-western states of Nigeria. The target population for the study consisted of all Senior Secondary School Three (SSS.3) students that offered Government in all senior secondary schools in South-Western States of Nigeria. A total sum of One thousand three hundred and forty-eight (1,348) out of 3034 students that registered for Government in the final senior school certificate examinations in 49 public senior secondary schools students participated in the study.

Multi-stage sampling and systematic random sampling techniques were adopted in this study. Multi-stage sampling technique guaranteed greater representativeness of the sample in relation to the population and ensures that minority subgroups of the population are equally represented in the sample. Systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting a sampled of schools and sampled students from those that registered for Government in the final senior school certificate examinations in each of the selected schools.

The years 2021 – 2023 June/July series of the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Multiple-Choice Objective Tests in Government were adopted and used as instruments in this study. The years 2021 – 2023 June/July series of the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government consisted of Sixty (60) items each. These instruments are standardized achievement tests developed by the National Examination Council (NECO), an indigenous public examination body in Nigeria and the researcher was of the opinion that both the validity and reliability of these tests might have been determined by the relevant unit of the said examination body before administration, hence the issue of validity and reliability estimation of these tests/test items were not addressed. The instruments were tagged Government Achievement Test (GAT) and it was categorized as Paper 1, Paper 2 and Paper 2. Answer sheet was provided which contained sixty (60) columns 1 to 60 for the sixty (60) questions with columns for five options (A to E) for responses to the items on the past questions compiled.

The researcher and the trained research assistants administered the instruments to the selected Senior Secondary School Three (SSS.3) students in each of the selected schools. The participants were guided to respond to Sections A and B in each instrument independently. Duration of 1Hour was allocated to each instrument and each instrument was administered per week. Two (2) weeks were used for the administration of the two (2) instruments. Data collected were scored dichotomously, that is 1 assigned to right and 0 to wrong responses, after which the descriptive statistics were used for the analysis with the version 21 of Statistical Package Social Sciences software.

RESULTS

Two research questions were raised in this study. Research questions 1 and 2 were answered with descriptive statistics.

Research Question 1: What is the profile of students' scores in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government in years 2021 – 2023?

In order to provide answer to the above research question, the scores collected through the administration of the adopted Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government in years 2021 – 2023 were analysed and the results are present in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below:

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the students' scores in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Test in Government (2021)

Indexes	Value
Mark Obtainable	60
Maximum Mark Obtained	56
Minimum Mark Obtained	4
Mean	27.73
Mode	33
Median	28.50
Skewness	.085
Kurtosis	-1.07

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of scores of students in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Test in Government in years 2021. The Obtainable score was 60, Maximum score obtained was 56, Minimum Mark obtained was 4, Mean was 27.73 while Mode was 33 and Median was 28.50. The above results indicate that average score was 27.73, but many students had 33 score. The above results also revealed that both the mean (27.73) and the median (28.50) were below the average score of 30 (i.e. 50% of 60 marks). The Skewness of .085 indicates that the distribution of scores obtained is negatively skewed. Singh, Gewali and Khatiwada (2019) stated that Skewness of a probability refers to the departure of the distribution from symmetry, in same view Sharma, Kumar and Chaudhary (2009) described negative skewness as distribution with longer tail on the left. That is negative skewness indicates that the distribution has an asymmetric tail extending towards more negative values/scores. i.e. the scores clustered at the high end.

On the other hand the Negative Kurtosis value of -1.07 indicates that the scores have a relatively flat distribution (Kim, 2013) i.e. there are too many scores at the extreme low side. The above indicates that few students had high score and many students had low scores in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the year 2021. The foregoing analyses show that the performance level of students in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice tests in Government in year 2021 was low.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the students' scores in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Test in Government (2022)

Indexes	Value
Mark Obtainable	60
Maximum Mark Obtained	60
Minimum Mark Obtained	0
Mean	27.02
Mode	10
Median	24
Skewness	.244
Kurtosis	-1.447

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of scores of students in NECO Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Test in Government in years 2022. The Obtainable score was 60, Maximum score Obtained was 60, Minimum Mark Obtained was 0, Mean was 27.02 while Mode was 10 and Median was 24. The above results equally indicates that average score was 27.02, but many students had 10 score. The above results as well revealed that Mean (27.02), Median (24) and Mode (10) were below the average score of 30 i.e. 50% of 60 marks. The Skewness of .244 indicates that the distribution of scores is positively skewed. According to Singh, Gewali and Khatiwada (2019) positive skewness indicates a distribution with an asymmetric tail extending towards more positive values. i.e. the scores clustered at the low end.

On the other hand Kurtosis value of -1.447 indicates that the scores have a relatively flat distribution (Kim, 2013) i.e. there are too many scores at the extreme low side. The above indicates that few students had high score and many students as well had extremely low scores in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the year 2022. The foregoing analyses show that the performance level of students in NECO Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice tests in Government in year 2022 was low.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the students' scores in NECO Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Test in Government (2023)

Indexes	Value
Mark Obtainable	60
Maximum Mark Obtained	55
Minimum Mark Obtained	4
Mean	28.74
Mode	35
Median	27.35
Skewness	.084
Kurtosis	-1.663

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of scores of students in NECO Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Test in Government in years 2023. The Obtainable score was 60, Maximum score obtained was 55, Minimum Mark obtained was 4, Mean was

28.74 while Mode was 35 and Median was 28.55. The above results indicate that average score was 28.74, but many students had 35 score. The above results also revealed that both the mean (28.74) and the median (28.55) were below the average score of 30 (i.e. 50% of 60 marks). The Skewness of .084 indicates that the distribution of scores obtained is negatively skewed. Singh, Gewali and Khatiwada (2019) stated that Skewness of a probability refers to the departure of the distribution from symmetry, in same view Sharma, Kumar and Chaudhary (2009) described negative skewness as distribution with longer tail on the left. That is negative skewness indicates that the distribution has an asymmetric tail extending towards more negative values/scores. i.e. the scores clustered at the high end.

On the other hand the Negative Kurtosis value of -1.663 indicates that the scores have a relatively flat distribution (Kim, 2013) i.e. there are too many scores at the extreme low side. The above indicates that few students had high score and many students had low scores in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the year 2023. The foregoing analyses show that the performance level of students in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice tests in Government in year 2023 was low.

Research Question 2: Is there any difference in students' scores in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government in years 2021 – 2023?

To provide answer to research question 2, the results of all analyses of students' performance in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government in years 2021 – 2023 presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3 above are considered. Since there is no significant discrepancy between the results of the two tests even across indexes, it is sufficiently enough to state that there is no difference between the students' performance in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government in years 2021 – 2023. Thus the performance of students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2021 – 2023 were low.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study indicate low performance of the students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2021 – 2023. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Adeyegbe (2002), Onipede (2003) and Adeyemi (2010). Adeyegbe (2002) found that there was a decline in students' performance in Senior School Certificate Examinations. In the same direction, Onipede (2003) reported that students' performance fell below expectation in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) in many subjects. Supporting Onipede (2002), Adeyemi (2010) disclosed that performance of students in Senior Secondary Certificate (SSC) Examinations were low. This low performance according to Tshering and Chencho (2022) could be attributed to poor foundation and lack of interest which agrees with WASSCE statement that most of the students fail practical examinations because they lack the basic skill for doing simple experiment in sciences.

Also the findings of this study may be viewed in the same direction with Adeyegbe (2002) who attributed low performance of student to the inadequacy of facilities in schools and Oke's (1992) finding argued that adolescents' experience and other problems affect their studies in secondary schools. The findings of this study as well indicate there is no significant discrepancy between the results of the tests between 2013 and 2015, even across indexes, it is sufficiently enough to state that there is no difference between the students' performance in Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government in years 2021 – 2023. Thus the performance of students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2021 – 2023 were low.

CONCLUSION

Considering the findings of this study, it was concluded that the performance level of students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2021 – 2023 in South-Western, Nigeria were low. It was also concluded that there is no significant difference among the performance levels of students in the Nigerian Senior School Certificate Examination Multiple-choice Objective Tests in Government for the years 2021 – 2023 in South-Western, Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, and to achieve the desired students' performance in Government it was recommended that Extra lessons for students offering Government should be organized in public senior secondary schools and teachers should be well motivated with regular payment of salaries and other allowances. It was also recommended that more classrooms be built in secondary schools in order to decongest overcrowded classes and implement the recommended ratio 1:4 in secondary schools. It was as well recommended that the states ministries of education in the Southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria should encourage production of comprehensive and student oriented Government textbooks.

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