

Relationship between Research Methods Course Scores and Undergraduate Project Performance among Theatre Arts Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the relationship between students' scores in the Research Methods course (THA312) and their performance in undergraduate projects (THA410) among Theatre Arts students. The objective was to determine the extent to which these scores correlate. A correlational design was employed, involving two sets of student cohorts: 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 sessions, and 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 sessions, with each set consisting of 80 students. From each cohort, a sample of 50 students was drawn. The study addressed four research questions and tested two null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. Data were collected using a proforma to record students' scores in the Research Methods course and their undergraduate projects for the respective sessions. Means were used to answer the first two research questions, while the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Coefficient of Determination were employed for the third and fourth research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. Findings indicated a low and inconsistent relationship between scores in the Research Methods course and undergraduate projects. The hypotheses testing revealed non-significant results, leading to the conclusion that there is no adequate correlation between students' scores in these two areas. The study recommends further research to investigate this relationship more comprehensively.

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INTRODUCTION

It is often said that variety is the spice of life, and change is the only thing that is constant in life. By his nature man is a dynamic creature who seeks different ways of doing things. Occasionally, man tries kinetic means of addressing situations or challenges when it is obvious that traditional or conventional approaches have failed.

The knowledge of what to do to address a particular phenomenon is a product of research and science. Although the two concepts are complementary, this work will focus on the former. The work will be narrowed down to undergraduate students' research methods

scores and project scores among Theatre Arts students in Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State.

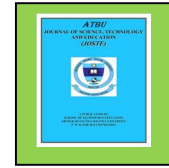
Understanding the concept of research is important in this study. Several authors have presented the concept of research in different ways. For instance, Mowarin and Layade (2022) defined research as a systematic investigation that is designed to increase scientific knowledge and increase an understanding of the subject studied. Similarly, Ottuh, et al. (2022) described research as a quest for knowledge or any methodical examination into the discovery of facts. The two views of research demonstrate the fact that research is a scientific activity and must be

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handled as such. Best and Kahn (2007) presented a broader view of research to further corroborate the scientific nature of research. Best and Kahn (2007:23) conceived research as “the systematic and objective analysis and recording of controlled observations that may lead to the development of generalization, principles, or theories, resulting in prediction and possibly control of events. The systematic nature of research implies that it is not a haphazard exercise, nor is it an affair for all comers (Maledo & Omosor, 2022).

Researches, have been conducted in different subject areas or disciplines (education, humanities, science, medicine, social sciences, etc.) to increase knowledge. Research in the humanities, in particular, Theatre Arts, entails that the researcher has to be cautious and mindful and well-informed to guard against delving into other subject areas or disciplines that are likely to make the exercise futile (Anyanwu, 2022). The reason for this, according to the author, is that Theatre Arts is unique and it incorporates aspects of other disciplines in the arts and humanities, besides its connection to other subject areas. At the undergraduate level in faculty of arts, a three-unit course titled “Research Methods for Humanities” is taught to all the students in the faculty. In this course, students are acquainted with research procedures (Maledo & Omosor, 2022). More specifically, Theatre Arts students offer a course, a three-unit course, “Research Methods and Materials”. This is the course where the peculiarities of research in Theatre Arts are taught (Anyanwu, 2022). Research in Theatre Arts draws from five main methods, namely, the historical, the sociological, the literary, the artistic and experimental methods (Ukala, 2016). Knowledge of the research taught at the faculty level (FOA301-Research Method for the Humanities) is expected to complement students’ knowledge and skill in THA312.

Experience has shown that in the preparation of research reports students often make some common mistakes. Some of these are choosing a researchable topic (Okobia, 2012; Okorodudu, 2013; Ukala, 2016). Others are Background to the Study, Statement of the Problem, Poor language skills and poor citations

(Anyanwu, 2022; Okorodudu, 2013; Ossai; 2018; Ukala, 2016). In his study, Ossai (2018) reported that students often turn the background to their study into review of related literature and also present sweeping statements (without sources) in the name of literature review. Regarding Statement of the Problem, Anyanwu (2022) reported that students often come up with “a string or series of questions” (p. 187).

These pitfalls are capable of impacting negatively on the final project, THA410 “Research Project”. This is a six-unit course in which a student submits a reasoned essay in practical or theoretical areas in Theatre Arts (Information Handbook, 2018). Ukala (2016) outlined the headings of how students’ projects could be scored. These are evidence of wide reading /adequate collection of data, organization of materials, interpretation of material/analysis of data, effective use of language, mechanical accuracy and practical (creative writing, construction, design, etc). In this order, according to the author the scores are 10%, 10%, 10%, 10%, 15%, 15% and 40%. He added that in the absence of the practical work, the scores are 20%, 15%, 20%, 25% and 20% respectively. Thus, a student’s scores on THA312 (Research Methods and Materials) may impact on their scores in THA410 (Research Project).

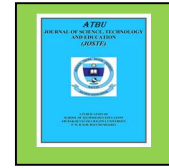
Relating research methodology and project scores, Ossai (2016) studied the relationship between students’ scores on research methods and statistics, and undergraduate project scores. Final year students totaling 278 (two hundred and seventy-eight) constituted the population for the study. This was made up of 86, 90 and 102 students for 2009/2010, 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 sessions respectively. Sample sizes of 23, 25 and 30 were respectively drawn from the three population figures. The project scores (EDU400) for these three sessions were correlated with scores from research methodology course (EDU312) for 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2009/2010 respectively. Out of the three hypotheses tested, only the hypothesis relating to research methodology scores for 2008/2009 and project scores for 2009/2010 was rejected.

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The present researchers deemed it necessary to conduct a similar study in the Department of Theatre Arts, Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. To accomplish this research methodology scores for 2017/2018 session were correlated with the corresponding project scores of 2018/2019 session. Similarly, research methodology scores for 2021/2022 session were correlated with the corresponding project scores for 2022/2023 session. Four research questions and two hypotheses were respectively answered and tested in the study. Thus the study sought answers to:

- i) what are the mean scores for research methods in 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic session?
- ii) what are the mean scores for projects in 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 session?
- iii) what is the extent of relationship between research methods scores and project scores for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 sessions?
- iv) what is the extent of relationship between research methods scores and project scores for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 sessions?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational design. Two sets of populations (80 each) from final year students of the Department of Theatre

Arts were used in the study. The first population consisted of students who took research methods as a course in 2017/2018 session and conducted undergraduate research in 2018/2019 session. The second population was made up of students who registered research methods in 2021/2022 academic session and conducted undergraduate research in 2022/2023 academic session in the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. Research methods and projects are coded THA312 and THA410 respectively. A sample size of 50 students was each drawn from the two populations. Data (students' scores from the two courses) were collected using a profoma. The first and second research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The Product Moment correlation co-efficient (Pearson's r) and co-efficient of determination were employed in answering research questions three and four. The two null hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance using Pearson's r . In interpreting the mean, the scoring guide in Delta State University, Abraka was used.

Research Question One: What are the mean scores for research methods in 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions?

Table 1: Mean scores and standard deviations of students' scores in research methods for 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions

Variable	N	Mean Score	Mean Diff.	SD
2017/2018 Research Methods	50	42	5	10.5
2021/2022 Research Methods	50	47		7.5

Table one highlights students' mean scores and standard deviations regarding research methods for 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 academic sessions respectively. A mean

difference was recorded in favour of 2021/2022 academic session.

Research Question Two: What are the mean scores for projects in 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 academic sessions?

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Table 2: Mean scores and standard deviations of students' regarding projects for 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 academic sessions

Variable	N	Mean Score	Mean Diff.	SD
2018/2019 Research Methods	50	55.3	1.9	6.5
2022/2023 Research Methods	50	57.2		6

Table two shows students' mean scores and standard deviations for project scores in 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 academic sessions. The mean score difference was 1.9 points in favour of the latter session.

Research Question Three: What is the extent of relationship between research methods scores and project scores for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic sessions?

Table 3: Pearson's correlation of research methods scores and projects scores for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 sessions

Variable	N	r	r ²
Research Methods	50	.221	.05
Project	50		

Table three highlights the relationship between scores for research methods and project for the sessions being studied. It shows that only 5% of students' scores in project can be attributed to students' achievement in research methods.

Research Question Four: What is the extent of relationship between research methods scores and project scores for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 academic sessions?

Table 4: Pearson's r correlation of research methods and project scores for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 sessions

Variable	N	r	r ²
Research Methods	50	-.187	.03
Project	50		

Table four highlights the relationship between scores for research methods and project for the sessions being studied. It shows that only 3% of students' scores in project can be attributed to students' achievement in research methods.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between students' research methods scores in 2017/2018 session and project scores in 2018/2019 session.

Table 5: Pearson's r correlation analysis of research methods scores and project scores for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 sessions

Variable	N	r	Df.	Sig.	Remark
Research Methods	50	.221	48	.122	accepted
Project	50				

Table five shows the analysis of the relationship between research methods scores

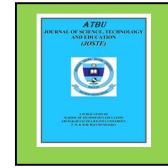
and project scores for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 sessions. The null hypothesis was accepted at .05

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level of significance. Thus, there is no significant relationship between research methods scores and project scores for the period under study.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between students' research methods scores in 2021/2022 session and project scores in 2022/2023 session.

Table 6: Pearson's r correlation analysis of research methods scores and project scores for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 sessions.

Variable	N	r	Df.	Sig.	Remark
Research Methods	50	-.187	48	.193	accepted
Project	50				

Table six shows the analysis of the relationship between research methods scores and project scores for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 sessions respectively. At .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was accepted; thus, there is no significant relationship between research methods scores and project scores for the sessions under study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study was aimed at correlating scores from research methods as a course in the third year and undergraduate project scores among students from the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. Discussion of findings was done as follows in line with the four research questions and two hypotheses stated in the study.

The performance of students' in research methods course with code THA312 showed that students' mean scores for 2017/2018 and 2021/2022 were 42 and 47 respectively. According to the University's grading system, the latter score was just the least pass grade while the former was fail. Thus, for the sessions, an average score of letter grade "C", that is "50-59" range, was not recorded. The size of standard deviations also pointed to the fact that the performances for both sessions were poor.

The mean project scores for 2018/2019 and 2022/2023 sessions indicated a better performance with an average score range of 50-59; the mean difference was 1.9 points in favour of the 2022/2023 academic session. The standard deviations were almost the same. In terms of

excellence, the average scores were below standard.

The relationships between scores from research methods and project for the two sessions were low (Best & Kahn, 2007). Only the relationship for 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 sessions was positive. For these sessions, students' achievement in project could only be ascribed to 5% of its relationship with research methods scores. Likewise, for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 sessions, achievements in project could only account for 3% of its relationship with research methods scores. It implies that the two variables for the two pairs of sessions are not consistently related and so, prediction cannot be done (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2004).

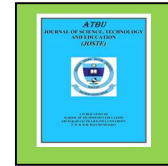
The two hypotheses tested in the study were not significant. This is not surprising given the fact that the relationships that existed in the two pairs of sessions were not consistent. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Ossai (2016) wherein it was reported that research methods scores did not significantly correlate with students' undergraduate project scores. The situation can be attributed to such factors as poor quality of students (Osuya & Okochi, 2014) as well as disregard for supervisors' instructions (Ossai, 2018). The present researchers feel that the nature of examination questions taken by students in the faculty-based research course (FOA301-Research Method for the Humanities) must have impacted negatively on students' achievement in THA312. Objective Questions were taken by students. Such questions are prone to guessing. Thus, students' true ability may not be reflected. (Ossai, 2015; Ossai & Enwefa, 2020). Other

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factors that must have contributed to the seemingly poor must have been large class, rush in academic activities, ignoring instructions from supervisors by supervisees, poor attitude towards attendances at lectures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

For the two sets of sessions studied, relationship between scores from research methods and projects among Theatre Arts students was low and inconsistent. There was no significant relationship. This trend was attributed to factors such as objective-based questions, rush in academic activities, ignoring instructions from supervisors and large classes.

The researchers hereby recommend that more studies should be conducted in other departments or in the same department taking more sessions than were considered in this study. This will enhance generalizability of findings. Also for research based courses, essay questions should be encourage as they will reflect the true ability of students and course advisers should endeavour to sensitize their advisees on the need to attend lecturers.

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