

Participant/Avoidant Learning Approaches and Academic Performance in Cost Accounting: A Study of South-South Nigerian Federal University Students

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Abstract: *Since most students are unaware of the various learning approaches and the best style for learning a particular course (for example, Cost Accounting), they tend to perform below their best. Also, due to the nature of cost accounting as a core accounting course, which has to do with real-work experience and computations, students tend to adopt a different learning approach in learning the course. As a result, they tend to perform below their best. The participant learning approach is an instructional method that actively involves students in their learning process. It emphasizes engagement, interaction, and hands-on experiences rather than passive reception of information. The correlation between avoidant learning strategies and students' academic achievement in disciplines such as cost accounting is a subject of considerable interest and pertinence. The study investigated the correlation between participant/avoidant learning strategies and students' academic achievement in cost accounting at four Federal Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria. The population consisted of 556 final-year accounting students from the accounting departments of four Federal Universities. The researchers used a descriptive research design and a randomly selected sample of 248 students. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to analyze the association between the learning style preference of senior accounting students in cost accounting and their academic performance in the preceding semester's final grade. The study found a significant positive correlation between participants' learning approach and students' academic achievement in cost accounting. Conversely, there was a significant negative correlation between the avoidant learning approach and students' performance in cost accounting. The study recommends fostering self-motivation among students, encouraging them to seek approval from parents and instructors, and exposing them to diverse learning styles. This self-motivation is believed to facilitate the acquisition of appropriate learning strategies for effective learning. The research suggests that students who adopt an avoidant learning approach tend to perform poorly academically. To address this issue, it is recommended that instructors and fellow students discourage.*

Keywords: participant learning approach, avoidant learning approach, students' performance, cost accounting.

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1. Introduction

The expansion and application of knowledge, specifically through education, is playing an increasingly significant role in driving socio-economic and political developments on a global scale. This statement elucidates the significance of education in a broad sense, and more specifically, higher education, in relation to the advancement and expansion of knowledge and the economy (World Bank, 2019). Kapur (2018) asserts that enhancing students' acquisition of academic information, skills, and talents is facilitated through learning and academic performance. According to Eze et al. (2016), academic achievement can be attributed to the level of effort exerted by students during examinations.

According to Al-shammari et al. (2017), “performance” refers to a student's ability to demonstrate professional abilities or behaviour. On the other hand, “achievement” is defined as the level of attainment of specified objectives within educational activities (Gqokonqana et al., 2022; Spinath, 2012). Poor academic performance is defined as not meeting the desired criteria (Danladi & Abdullahi, 2023). Various factors have been identified as influential in affecting academic performance, including inadequate effort, lack of self-motivation, learning preferences, past and recent academic accomplishments, academic disposition, and the educational institution previously attended (Issahaku, 2017).

In recent times, scholarly investigations in education have discovered several elements contributing to variations in students' learning processes (Okoedion et al., 2019). All scholars possess the learning capacity, albeit with variations in their preferred learning modalities. The authors additionally asserted that certain individuals acquire knowledge through auditory means, but others exhibit enhanced learning through visual reading, logical reasoning, or active engagement in experiential learning. This elucidates the phenomenon of individual variations in learning styles. Kidane et al. (2020) noted an upward trend in the quantity of research inquiries focused on investigating variations among individuals in the process of learning. From this standpoint, the learning process entails active engagement in the processing of novel information, employing cognitive methods to acquire knowledge and establish systematically organised cognitive structures.

The participant learning approach is an instructional method that actively involves students in their learning process. It emphasizes engagement, interaction, and hands-on experiences rather than passive reception of information (Perry et al., 2018). In cost accounting, this approach would involve students actively participating in activities, discussions, problem-solving, and real-world applications related to cost accounting concepts and principles. The participant learning approach in cost accounting significantly impacts students' performance (Parr, 2018). This approach encourages active engagement and motivation, leading to better retention of concepts and overall performance. Students can gain a deeper understanding of complex topics and connect theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios by participating in discussions, problem-solving, and practical applications.

Collaborative activities in the participant learning approach improve analytical skills and the ability to apply cost accounting principles to different situations (Parr, 2018). The participant learning approach often includes case studies, simulations, and projects that mimic real business scenarios, preparing students for future careers (Rear, 2017). Active learning methods, such as discussions, debates, and hands-on projects, result in better long-term knowledge retention than passive learning methods. Additionally, engaging in communication and presentation activities enhances students' communication skills, which are crucial in effectively conveying financial information (Onwunyili, 2023).

The correlation between avoidant learning strategies and students' academic achievement in disciplines such as cost accounting is a subject of considerable interest and pertinence (Jones, 2017). Avoidant learning approaches refer to strategies or behaviours that students adopt to avoid engaging with the material or tasks associated with their studies. These approaches can have a negative impact on academic performance, as they often result in incomplete understanding, lack of retention, and poor problem-solving skills. In cost accounting, students often demonstrate avoidant learning approaches that can hinder their understanding and application of the subject. One way this is evident is through procrastination and last-minute studying, which

leaves insufficient time to grasp the material (Amira & Jelas, 2010). This lack of deep understanding leads students to rely on memorization and rote learning, preventing them from effectively applying the principles in practical situations (Hofer & Stern, 2016). Additionally, students may avoid problem-solving. Skipping classes, neglecting reading assignments, and avoiding tutorials can also contribute to avoidant learning in cost accounting (Sezer et al., 2023). This behaviour prevents students from clarifying doubts and enhancing their understanding of the subject. Approaching the subject with a negative mindset, assuming it is too difficult or irrelevant, can further hinder engagement with the content (Kılınç, 2023). Fear of failure or making mistakes can also lead students to avoid challenging tasks, preventing them from understanding cost accounting more deeply (Shaheen, 2016). These avoidant learning approaches have been found to be associated with poor academic performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem. Avoidant learning approaches contribute to poor academic performance in cost accounting (Hassel & Ridout, 2018). Avoidant learners often need help with exam performance, confidence, and understanding fundamental concepts in cost accounting. They skim over or skip challenging topics, leading to incomplete understanding of fundamental concepts.

Since most students are not aware of the various learning approaches as well as the best style for learning a particular course (for example, Cost Accounting), students tend to perform below their best (Schunk, & DiBenedetto, 2016; Petersdotter et al., 2017). Also, due to the nature of cost accounting as a core accounting course, which has to do with real-work experience and computations, students tend to adopt a different learning approach in learning the course. As a result, they tend to perform below their best. Therefore, on these notes, the study sought to determine how students' learning approaches relate to their academic performance in cost accounting. However, on this premise, the study sought to determine how students' learning approaches relate to their academic performance in cost accounting.

1.3 Purpose of the Study. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the correlation between participant/avoidant learning strategies and the academic achievement of students in the field of cost accounting. Specifically, the study was designed to;

- ascertain the correlation between the learning style adopted by participants and their academic achievements in cost accounting.
- investigate the correlation between the avoidant learning technique and students' academic achievement in cost accounting.

1.4 Research Questions. The following research questions guided the study.

- What is the correlation between the learning approach participants adopted and students' academic success in Cost Accounting?
- What is the correlation between the avoidant learning strategy and students' academic success in Cost Accounting?

1.5 Research Hypotheses. The null hypotheses were constructed and evaluated at a significance level of .05.

- H01: The participatory learning approach does not correlate statistically with students' performance in Cost Accounting.
- H02: There is no significant correlation between the utilisation of the avoidant learning technique and students' academic achievement in Cost Accounting.

1.6 Significance of the Study. This study provides valuable insights for researchers in Education, Accounting, and Business, as well as parents and guardians who can monitor their children's learning approaches and help them maximize their strengths at home and during holidays. It also helps curriculum experts understand students' different learning approaches and prepare effective curriculums.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Social Learning Theory – Bandura Albert (1977). Albert Bandura's social learning theory, developed in 1977, explains how individuals learn by observing others (Mariano & Batchelor, 2018). Bandura identified four key processes in observational learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Marjanović & Križman, 2018). Attention is important for effective learning, and factors such as distinctiveness, affective

valence, prevalence, complexity, and functional value can influence the attention allocated (Eftekhari et al., 2023). Retention involves remembering what was observed, and factors such as symbolic coding, mental images, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal play a role in this process. Reproduction refers to performing the observed behaviour, and motivation is necessary for successful observational learning (Marjanović & Križman, 2018).

Bandura's social learning theory is relevant to learning styles and the Grasha-Riechmann model. The theory suggests that individuals learn by watching others, and they may choose to learn by depending on others or being independent (Marjanović & Križman, 2018). This aligns with the independent and dependent learning styles in Grasha's social interaction learning theory. Furthermore, Bandura's famous doll experiment highlights that not all observable information is effectively learned (McMahon, 2018). This implies that not all instruction delivered by teachers in the classroom is effectively learned by students. Individual differences and learning styles also contribute to variations in learning ability. Grasha's learning styles theory, used in this study, suggests that some students may have avoidant learning styles while others may have participant learning styles. Therefore, not all observed information will be effectively learned by learners. Additionally, some students may adopt a competitive learning style if teachers make their classes competitive. The social learning theory is significant in understanding education and students' learning styles (McMahon, 2018).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Participant Learning Approach and Students' Performance. Participant learning is a process that values and utilizes the existing knowledge and competences of those being taught (Kibler, 2017). It involves active involvement in the learning process and a preference for collaborative learning (Miller, 2012). Participative learners enjoy engaging in various activities and are strongly inclined to complete course components (Khattab, 2015). Reflective learners, on the other hand, prefer silent contemplation and independent work (Miller, 2012). Participative learning is correlated with active learning, which involves students actively engaging in activities such as reading, writing, and problem-solving (Thurman, 2012). Active learners are more likely to retain and comprehend information (Maeda, 2017). Participative learners prefer instructional methods such as discussions, case studies, demonstrations, role plays, and prompt feedback (Maeda, 2017). Participatory learning has been effective and enjoyable for educators and learners (Maeda, 2017).

On the other hand, avoidant learning refers to a learning approach where students actively avoid engaging with the material or tasks they need to learn (Khupe & Keane, 2017). This can lead to problems in academic performance (Khupe & Keane, 2017). Strategies for addressing avoidance include seeking guidance from a professional counsellor, enrolling in study skills or time management courses, and creating classroom rules emphasising respect for others (Tripod, 2012; Hollowell, 2012).

2.3 Empirical Studies. Okoedion et al. (2019) studied the factors influencing educational achievements in Nigerian universities. They found that student characteristics, professor influence, institutional factors, and home-related factors significantly impact below-average academic performance among students in Nigerian colleges. Gqokonqana et al. (2022) studied the problems of implementing blended learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that blended learning is effective in facilitating the study of Cost Accounting 2, but management needs to collaborate with internet service providers to enhance student internet access stability. Amadi and Iroanya (2020) studied the learning approaches in cost accounting and their impact on academic performance in State Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria.

They found a strong correlation between problem-based learning and guided discovery learning methodologies and students' academic success in cost accounting. Stephanie and Ferina (2022) conducted a study on students' perceptions regarding the factors influencing the performance of cost accounting students. They found a significant correlation between student attendance and academic achievement in the module. Hecht et al. (2020) studied the potential negative impact of regular performance reporting on motivation. They found that organizations need to balance the advantages gained from knowledge with the potential demotivating effects of regular reporting when developing performance reporting systems.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study. The study used a descriptive research design to analyze a randomly selected sample, focusing on students' learning techniques and academic achievement, allowing for broad conclusions.

3.2 Area of the Study. The study explores Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, comprising six states and known as the Niger Delta oil zone. It also highlights the presence of four Federal Universities in the zone: the University of Benin, the University of Calabar, the Federal University of Otueke, and the University of Uyo.

3.3 Population of the Study. The study population consists of all the 556 final-year business education students in the four Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria obtained from the Departments of Business education in the four Federal Universities slated for the study.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique. A study was conducted on 248 final-year business education students from four Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria, using a cluster sampling technique. Keiser and Tortora (2022) recommended a response rate of at least 30%. The study's sources are presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Distribution of Respondents According to Clusters/Federal Universities

| Federal Universities in South-South, Nigeria. | Number of Final Year Accounting Students | No. of Students (45%) Sampled |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| University of Uyo | 68 | 30 |
| Univerisity of Calabar | 133 | 60 |
| University of Portharcourt | 166 | 74 |
| University of Benin | 189 | 84 |
| Total | 556 | 248 |

Source: Compiled by the authors

3.5 Instrumentation. The study used two instruments to gather data: the Grasha-Riechmann's Student Learning Style Scale (GRSLSS) and the students' previous-semester final grades in Cost Accounting. The GRSLSS questionnaire, developed by Anthony-Okeke (2020), consisted of 60 items and assessed learning styles and methods related to social interaction. It was divided into sections A for collecting respondents' bio-data and B for gathering information on students' learning methodologies. The academic achievement of students in Cost Accounting was.

3.6 Validation of the Instrument. Shaheen (2016) suggests assessing the validity and reliability of the Global Rating Scale for Language and Social Skills (GRSLSS) before its application in a different country based on its face validity and appropriateness, which is assessed by three research specialists.

3.7 Reliability of the Instrument. Shaheen (2016) proposed verifying the dependability of the GRSLSS using a test-retest approach. The instrument was administered twice to a non-participating cohort, maintaining uniformity. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation assessed its dependability, resulting in a 0.77 coefficient.

3.8 Administration of the Instrument. The researcher and investigators from the selected institutions administered the questionnaire for the study. The survey instrument was distributed to the participants and promptly collected once they finished to minimise the risk of data loss.

3.9 Data Analysis Technique. The study utilized the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) as the statistical methodology to address the research questions and test the hypotheses. The PPMC was chosen to examine the correlation between the preferred learning style of senior accounting students in Cost Accounting and their academic performance in the previous semester's final examination in Cost Accounting.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis of data results and the discussion of findings. The results are presented and analysed by the study's variables. The findings of the analysis are displayed in the following section.

Research Question 1. What is the correlation between the learning approach participants adopted and students' academic success in Cost Accounting?

Table 4.1 The Correlation Between the Learning Approach Adopted by Participants and the Academic Performance of Students in Cost Accounting

| Variables | N | r | Decision |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|---------------|
| Participant Learning Approach | 248 | | |
| | | .301 | Weak positive |
| Students' Performance | 248 | | |

Source: SPSS

The study reveals a modest positive correlation between students' learning strategy and academic achievement in cost accounting at Federal Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Research Question 2. How does the avoidant learning technique correlate with students' academic achievement in cost accounting?

Table 4.2 The Correlation Between the Avoidant Learning Technique and Students' Academic Achievement in Cost Accounting

| Variables | N | r | Decision |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|---------------|
| Avoidant Learning Approach | 248 | | |
| | | -.143 | Weak negative |
| Students' Performance | 248 | | |

Source: SPSS

The results shown in Table 4.2 indicate that the avoidant learning technique is associated with a negative correlation coefficient of -.143. This suggests a modest negative correlation between the avoidant learning technique and students' academic achievement in Cost Accounting in the Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1. There is a lack of substantial correlation between the participants' learning styles and students' academic success in cost accounting.

Table 4.3 The Results of a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis, Examining the Association Between Participants' Learning Strategy and Students' Performance in Cost Accounting

| Variables | N | r-calc. | r-critical | Decision |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------|------------|-------------|
| Participant Learning Approach | 248 | | | |
| | | .301 | .113 | Significant |
| Students' Performance | 248 | | | |

Note: Significant at .05 level; df = 246

Source: SPSS

The study's r-value of .301 exceeds the crucial r-value of .113 and rejects the null hypothesis, indicating a significant correlation between learning style and academic achievement in Cost Accounting students.

Hypothesis 2. There is a lack of substantial correlation between the avoidant learning technique and the academic achievement of students in the field of Cost Accounting.

Table 4.4 The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Results Examining the Association Between the Avoidant Learning Approach and Students' Performance in Cost Accounting

| Variables | N | r-calc. | r-critical | Decision |
|----------------------------|-----|---------|------------|-------------|
| Avoidant Learning Approach | 248 | | | |
| | | -.143 | .113 | Significant |
| Students' Performance | 248 | | | |

Significant at .05 level; df = 246

Source: SPSS

The r-value of .143, exceeding the crucial r-value of .113, rejects the null hypothesis, indicating a significant correlation between avoidant learning technique and cost accounting student academic achievement in South-South Nigeria.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Participant Learning Approach and Students' Performance. The study conducted in Federal Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria found a positive correlation between participant learning approach and students' performance in cost accounting (Miller, 2012). This suggests that students who actively engage in classroom activities are more likely to achieve higher levels of academic success in cost accounting. The r-value of .301 indicates that the more students choose to participate in all aspects of a course, the better their academic performance will be in that course (Miller, 2012).

Thurman (2012) established a connection between participant learning and active learning. Active learning is a pedagogical approach where students actively participate in activities that involve analyzing, synthesizing, and assessing class content (Felder, 2006). Research by Felder (2006) suggests that such active learning

methods as discussions, practical applications, and explaining material to others, can enhance participant retention and comprehension of information. Gqokonqana et al. (2022) also emphasized the role of active learning in developing higher-level thinking skills in students. Amadi and Iroanya (2020) highlight the various ways in which participative learning can be applied, including art, discussion, dramatization, games, physical movement, problem-solving, reading, hands-on activities, visualization, and writing. This suggests that participative learning can be utilized in different subjects, including accounting. Overall, the research supports the positive relationship between participant learning.

Avoidant Learning Approach and Students' Performances. The study found a negative correlation between the avoidant learning style and academic achievement in Cost Accounting among students in Federal Universities in the South-South region of Nigeria (Grasha & Riechmann, 2005). The r-value obtained from the analysis indicated a significant inverse relationship between the avoidant learning approach and students' performance in cost accounting (Grasha & Riechmann, 2005). Avoidant learning refers to a cognitive method where individuals acquire knowledge or skills to avoid distressing or undesirable situations (Vaughn et al., 2012). Avoidant learners lack interest, feel overwhelmed, have high absenteeism, poor work and study habits, and lack enthusiasm and participation in the learning process (Amira & Jelas, 2010). This learning approach is detrimental to learners' academic performance and long-term educational process (Hollowell, 2012).

It has been observed that avoidant learners tend to perform poorly in both online and traditional educational settings (Tripod, 2012). Teachers can adopt strategies to help avoidant learners, such as emphasizing respect for students through classroom rules and discussing them frequently to reduce anxiety about class involvement (Hollowell, 2012). Additionally, teachers can advise avoidant students to seek counselling or meet with instructors to discuss the meaningfulness of the course (Hollowell, 2012). In summary, the study confirms that the avoidant learning approach has a negative significant relationship with students' academic performance in Cost Accounting.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Research suggests that accounting students should avoid an avoidant learning approach in cost accounting, as it has a negative relationship with their performance in the course. While there is no strong correlation between learning style and academic performance, there is an indication that more participative students tend to perform better academically. Absenteeism from classes can lead to poor performance, while active participation can improve academic performance. To address these issues, students should adopt active learning strategies such as regular study sessions, concept mapping, practice problems, seeking help when needed, and finding personal relevance in the material. By consistently engaging with the subject and putting in effort, students can build a strong foundation in cost accounting, leading to better academic performance and a deeper understanding of real-world applications.

However, the effectiveness of the participative learning approach depends on various factors, including the instructor's facilitation skills, the learning environment, and the student's willingness to participate actively. Some students may initially find this approach uncomfortable if they are accustomed to more passive learning methods. The study's findings led to the following suggestions:

- Teachers should foster self-motivation in students to excel in school, please parents and instructors, and develop the appropriate learning approaches.
- Educators should offer diverse learning styles to students, as focusing solely on their preferred methods can reinforce existing strengths and neglect areas for improvement.

5.1. Educational Implications. A study conducted in Federal Universities in South-South Nigeria found a notable negative correlation between the avoidant learning approach and students' performance in cost accounting. The research suggests that students who adopt an avoidant learning approach tend to perform poorly academically. To address this issue, it is recommended that instructors and fellow students discourage and discipline avoidant.

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Kingsley Chukwuka; validation: Ekpo Godwin Pius, Godspower Kingsley Chukwuka; visualization: Ekpo Godwin Pius, Godspower Kingsley Chukwuka; writing-original draft preparation: Ekpo Godwin Pius, Godspower Kingsley Chukwuka; writing-review and editing: Ekpo Godwin Pius, Godspower Kingsley Chukwuka.

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