

Effects of Large Class on Teaching-Learning Process as Perceived by Lecturers and Students of Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo

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Abstract

The study focused on the effects of large class size on teaching-learning process in tertiary institution as perceived by lecturers and students of Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. A convenience sampling technique was employed to select a total of 297 respondents - two hundred and fifty-six (256) students and forty-one (41) lecturers. The research design adopted for the study was descriptive survey. The instrument employed was titled "Effects of Large Class Questionnaire" - an adapted version of "Implications of Large Class Size Questionnaire" developed by Ayeni and Olowe (2016). The face and content validity of the instrument were ascertained and the reliability coefficient of 0.87 was established. Frequency distribution, mean and t-test were employed for data analysis. A research question and three hypotheses were generated to guide the study. The findings revealed that the effects of large class include lower rate of assimilation, lack of motivation, high rate of failure, reduced attention, unruly behaviours, increased stress, negative effects on teachers' health and well-being among others. It was recommended that the school authority should support the Management Information System (MIS) unit of the institution to make the school community ICT-inclined for both the lecturers and students so as to checkmate the negative effects of large class, efficient public address system should be made available in all lecture theatres and Counsellors should organize seminars on stress management for lecturers to assist them acquire various coping skills for managing stress, etc.

1. Introduction

Class size refers to the number of students in a given course or classroom, specifically either the number of students being taught by individual teachers in a course or classroom or the average number of students being taught by teachers in a school or educational system (Ayeni & Olowe, 2016). The term may also be the number of students participating in learning experience. Kohler (2020) states that class size has a great impact on both teaching and learning. Class size is almost an administrative decision over which teachers have little or no control (Ayeni & Olowe, 2016). There are two forms of class size - small and large.

A large class can be defined as a context where student learning is negatively impacted by the number in a class. Large classes are typically considered those held in large 'lecture' halls and often hold seventy-five (75) or more students. Large class also known as overcrowded classroom has increased the possibilities for mass failure and make students to lose interest in school. This is because large classes do not allow individual students to get attention from teachers which invariable lead to low reading scores, frustration and poor academic performance. Larger classes are proven to make it more difficult for teachers to set and enforce behavioral expectations, monitor students, and pay individual attention to each student. It can lead to more disorder in the classroom which ultimately affects student learning.

Previous research which provided data on students' dissatisfaction with large classes has indicated several practical and logistical reasons that large classes are being disliked (Koenig, Gray, Lewis & Martin, 2015). Primarily among these is that there is less student-faculty interaction and more anonymity. However, other reasons include distraction in the environment, lower quality of learning, lower responsibility and the effect that lowered responsibility could have on learning (Koenig, Gray, Lewis & Martin, 2015). Therefore, there is the need to address the issue of large class size because of its debilitating effects on both the lecturers and students.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The debilitating effects of large classes cannot be over-emphasized in Nigeria tertiary institutions. It results in great stress for both the teachers and the students, classes are not conducive, lecturers strain their voices

especially when the public address system is poor or not available, students are hanging around the lecture theatre because of lack of space to sit, many sit on the floor and around the corridors, even those that struggle to enter the lecture room share seat with one another while others remain standing to copy their notes. This in turn give some students the opportunity to make noise; paying little or no attention to the lecturers; form their own discussion group when lecture is in progress; use phone for non-academic purposes such as chatting, snapping each other, watching films and pornography among others. In short, there are many distractions which do not allow the majority of the students to benefit from such large classes.

Considering the state of discomfort, many of the students decide to stay back at home while many are always late. All the issues arise from having large classes tend to affect the academic performance of students resulting in mass failure among the students and ill-health among the lecturers. Pertinent to this matter is to look into ways by which large class will be stress-free for both the lecturers and students. Therefore, there is the need to address the issue of large classes in Nigerian tertiary institutions in order to achieve a positive outcome where teaching and learning process will take place with ease in a comfortable environment.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the perception of lecturers and students of Adeyemi University of Education on the effects of large class size on teaching-learning process.

1.3. Scope of the Study

The study was limited to some undergraduates who are in large classes as well as some of the lecturers who handle large class sizes.

1.4. Research Question

What are the effects of large class on teaching-learning process?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

Three research hypotheses were generated to guide the conduct of this study. The hypotheses are as follows:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students towards effects of large class size on teaching-learning process.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the effects of large class size on teaching-learning process.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between in the perception of student on the effects of large class size based on mode of study.

2. Method

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey. A total of two hundred and ninety-seven (297) respondents which consisted of thirty-one lecturers and two hundred of fifty-six students participated in the study using a convenience sampling technique. The sample was drawn from Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo. The instrument is titled "The Effects of Large Class Questionnaire" which is made up of two sections – Section A comprised the demographic data and section B contained fifteen (15) items on the effects of large class size was an adapted version of questionnaire on "Effects of Large Class Size" by Ayeni and Olowe (2015) with reliability co-efficient of 0.87. The instrument was given to experts in the field of Educational Psychology and Counselling as well as Test and Measurement in order to ensure its content and face validity. The statistical methods employed for the data analysis were mean and t-test statistical tool.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This segment presents the descriptive statistics of gender, status, years of experience for lecturer and mode of study for student.

Table 1 showed that eighty-two (82) male and two hundred and fifteen (215) female respondents representing 27.9% and 72.1% respectively participated in the study. The table further revealed that 256 students and 41 lecturers representing 86.1% and 15.9% participated in the study. Also, it was indicated that out of 256 students that participated in the study, one hundred and twenty-four (124) students are pursuing

National Certificate on Education (NCE) while one hundred and thirty-two (132) students are into Bachelor's degree programme.

Table 1. The Frequency Count of Demographical Information of the Respondents

S/N	Demographical information	Labels	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Total No. of respondents
1.	Gender	Male	82	27.9	297
		Female	215	72.1	
2.	Status	Students	256	86.1	41
		Lecturers	41	15.9	
3.	Years of Experience (for lecturer)	5yrs and below	12	29.3	41
		6-10yrs	13	31.7	
		11-15yrs	2	4.9	
		16-20yrs	0	0	
		21yr and above	10	24.4	
		No response	4	9.7	256
4.	Mode of study (for student)	NCE	124	47.9	
		Degree	132	52.1	

3.2. Research Question: What Are the Effects of Large-Class on Teaching-Learning Process?

The data presented in the table reveals a consistent agreement on the detrimental effects of large class sizes on the teaching-learning process. All items received mean scores above 2.50, indicating that respondents perceived each of these effects as significant.

Table 2. Item by Item Analysis on the Effects of Large-Class on Teaching-Learning Process

S/N	Effects of large class size on teaching-learning process	Mean	Decision
1	Large class lowers students' rate of assimilation	2.86	Agreed
2	It is an avenue for interaction instead of learning	2.98	Agreed
3	Information from the teacher will not be properly disseminated	3.01	Agreed
4	High cases of examination failure are recorded in large class	3.23	Agreed
5	Interference from unserious students affect learning in a large class	3.17	Agreed
6	There is no motivation to attend classes	3.06	Agreed
7	It gives opportunity for students to exhibit unruly behaviour due to inability of teacher to control students	3.11	Agreed
8	Facilities to enhance learning are not available in a large class	3.52	Agreed
9	It encourages regular lateness for lectures	2.94	Agreed
10	Students are less attentive in large class sizes	3.21	Agreed
11	Ability of each student will not be known by teachers	3.14	Agreed
12	Increase stress /strain on teachers	3.43	Agreed
13	Large class frustrate the teachers	3.07	Agreed
14	Sometimes the class become a noisy place during teaching	3.25	Agreed
15	It affects teachers' health and wellbeing negatively	3.36	Agreed

Decision value: 2.50

3.3. Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students towards the effects of large class size

Table 3 reveals that there was no significant difference between the perception of lecturers and students towards the effects of large class size; $t(295) = -1.299$, $p > 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 3. Independent t-Test Summary Showing the Difference in the Effects of Large Class Size as Perceived by Lecturers and Students

	Variable	N	Mean	St.D	Df	T	Sig	P
Implications of large class size	Students	256	46.99	7.397	295	-1.299	0.19	>0.05
	Lecturers	41	48.61	7.563				

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the effects of large class size on teaching-learning process.

Table 4 reveals that there was no significant difference between the perception of male and female participants towards effects of large class size on teaching-learning process; $t(294) = -0.995$, $p > 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4. Independent t-Test Summary Showing the Difference in the Effects of Large Class Size on Teaching-Learning Process as Perceived by Male and Female Respondents

	Variable	N	Mean	St.D	Df	t	Sig	P
Implications of large class size	Male	82	46.52	7.285	295	-0.98	0.34	>0.05
	Female	215	47.48	7.496				

H₀₃: There is no significant difference between in the perception of student on the effects of large class size based on mode of study

Table 5 shows that there was a significant difference between the perception of NCE and Degree students towards effects of large class size on teaching-learning process; $t(257) = -1.56, p > 0.05$. Thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.

Table 5. Independent t-Test Summary Showing the Difference in the Perception of Students on the Implication of Large Class Size Based on Mode of Study

	Variable	N	Mean	St.D	Df	T	Sig	P
Effects of large class size	NCE	124	45.34	7.832	257	-1.56	0.21	>0.05
	Degree	135	48.70	6.613				

3.4. Summary of the Findings

The study revealed that:

- The effects of large class size include lower rate of assimilation, lack of motivation, high rate of failure, reduced attention, unruly behaviours, increased stress, negative effects on teachers' health and well-being among others.
- There was no significant difference in the perception of lecturers and students towards the effects of large class size.
- There was no significant difference in the perception of male and female students towards the effects of large class size on teaching-learning process.
- There was no significant difference between in the perception of student on the effects of large class size based on mode of study.

3.5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the research question revealed several critical challenges that both teachers and students face in large-class environments. The effects of large class size on students include lower rate of assimilation, lack of motivation, high rate of failure, reduced attention, unruly behaviours among others. The effects of large class size on lecturers include increased stress, negative effects on the health and well-being of the lecturers among others. This corroborates the findings of Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2011) which stated that large classes impede student learning because individualized attention decreases, making it hard for teachers to address diverse learning needs. Research by Finn, Pannozzo, and Achilles (2003) indicates that students in smaller classes perform significantly better in assessments due to more direct teacher-student interaction. Chingos and Whitehurst (2011) suggest that student engagement drops as class size increases, particularly in lecture-dominated settings. Similarly, the findings from Bascia (2010) asserted that teachers in overcrowded classrooms experience higher levels of burnout due to workload, noise, and student behavior management. The physical and emotional toll of managing large groups without adequate support can lead to chronic stress. Also, Kyriacou (2001) identifies large class size as a major contributor to teacher stress and reduced job satisfaction.

The result of hypothesis 1 showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of lecturers and students concerning the effects of large class sizes on the teaching-learning process. This finding aligns with previous research that highlights a broad consensus on the adverse impact of large class sizes on educational quality. For instance, Blatchford, Bassett and Brown (2011) observed that both educators and students reported difficulties such as reduced individual attention, limited classroom interaction, and challenges in maintaining discipline in larger classes. Similarly, Ozoemena (2013) found that both lecturers and students acknowledged that large classes often hinder effective communication and reduce opportunities for active participation. The lack of significant perceptual difference may be attributed to the direct experiences both groups have with overcrowded classrooms. Lecturers face logistical difficulties in engaging a large number of students, assessing learning outcomes effectively, and providing timely feedback (Toth & Montagna, 2002). On the other hand, students in large classes often report feelings of anonymity and reduced motivation due to limited personal interaction with instructors (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Furthermore, the shared perceptions could

reflect a common recognition of systemic issues affecting class size, such as increasing student enrollment without a corresponding rise in institutional resources or faculty. This has been particularly evident in developing countries where universities often struggle with inadequate infrastructure and staff-to-student ratios (Adeyemi, 2008).

The result of hypothesis 2 revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the perception of male and female respondents regarding the effects of large class size on the teaching-learning process. This finding suggests that both genders share similar views on how large class sizes impact the quality of teaching and learning. This outcome is consistent with previous research that found gender to be a non-determinant factor in students' perceptions of classroom learning environments in large class settings. For example, Adeyemi (2010) observed that both male and female students reported comparable challenges such as reduced access to lecturers, minimal opportunities for interaction, and difficulties in concentrating in overcrowded classrooms. Similarly, Yilmaz (2011) found no significant gender difference in student evaluations of teaching and classroom environment in large university classes. The uniformity in perception may be attributed to the fact that the disadvantages of large class sizes—such as reduced student engagement, lack of individualized attention, and diminished interaction—are structural issues that affect all students irrespective of gender (Blatchford, Bassett & Brown, 2007). These issues create a shared experience for students, regardless of their sex, especially in contexts where large classes are common and institutional resources are stretched. Furthermore, both male and female students are likely to face similar academic pressures in overcrowded classes, such as competition for participation, limited access to course materials, and general disengagement (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010).

On the other hand, Adeyemi (2010) found that both male and female teachers expressed similar concerns about the strain that large class sizes place on their ability to provide individualized attention, monitor student progress, and maintain classroom discipline. Similarly, Blatchford et al. (2007) reported that regardless of gender, educators acknowledged that large class sizes reduce the quality of interaction between teachers and students, thereby negatively impacting learning outcomes. The convergence in perception can be attributed to the shared professional experiences of lecturers, irrespective of gender. Large class sizes present universal pedagogical difficulties—such as excessive workload, grading pressure, reduced student participation, and limited feedback time—which affect all instructors in similar ways (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). Both male and female lecturers, therefore, are likely to experience the same institutional and logistical constraints when teaching large groups.

The result of hypothesis 3 revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of students regarding the effects of large class size on teaching-learning process based on their mode of study—that is, between National Certificate in Education (NCE) students and Bachelor's degree students. This finding suggests that regardless of the academic program or qualification level, students share similar views about how large class sizes influence the teaching-learning process. This finding resonates with prior studies which have found that the perception of classroom size challenges tends to transcend the mode or level of study. For instance, Adeyemi (2008) observed that students across different academic programs commonly report issues related to large classes, such as reduced lecturer accessibility, limited opportunities for participation, and increased difficulty in maintaining focus. Similarly, Oloyede and Oloyede (2010) noted that both diploma and degree students experience comparable challenges in overcrowded classrooms, which impact their learning negatively. The similarity in perceptions may be explained by the universal nature of the difficulties posed by large class sizes. Whether students are enrolled in NCE programmes or Bachelor's degree courses, they face common obstacles such as inadequate interaction with instructors, difficulty in receiving personalized feedback, and a general reduction in active learning opportunities (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). These shared experiences likely contribute to the convergence in their perceptions.

3.6. Recommendations

- a. Efficient and sophisticated public address system should be made available in all lecture theatres so that the information from the lecturers will not be properly disseminated to students. Also, availability of public address systems will assist in curbing noisy classroom environment, gaining the attention of the students and maintaining decorum which in turn, facilitate effective class management.
- b. Team teaching should be encouraged among the lecturers in tertiary institutions. This would provide the opportunity to divide a large class into smaller units so as to checkmate unruly behaviours, reduce boredom and enable students to actively participate in the learning process.
- c. Provision of additional lecture theatres would encourage effective team teaching in such a way that the same course can be taught at the same time by different lecturers using different venues in order to reduce frustration, stress and other health issues associated with large class size.
- d. The school management should support the Management Information System (MIS) unit of the institution to make the school community ICT-inclined for both the lecturers and students so as to enable teaching-

learning process take place in their various comfort zones, thereby lessen the negative effects of large class size experienced by both the lecturers and students.

- e. The professional counsellors in the counselling center in institutions should organize seminars on stress management for lecturers in order to assist them acquire coping skills for addressing work-related stress associated with a large class size. Moreover, the school counsellors should enlighten and sensitize students on strategies to be adopted in order to effectively cope with a large class.

4. Conclusion

The effects of large class size on both lecturers and students are devastating. It is therefore, paramount to consider the means of managing large class size in such a way that teaching-learning process would take place in a conducive ambience to improve the academic, physical and psychological well-being of both the lecturers and students.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/ or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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