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Perceived Effects Of Compressed Academic Calendar On The Academic Performance Of Agricultural Science Education Students Of University Of Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine the effect of compressed academic calendar on the academic performance of students of University Abuja, Nigeria. Five objectives were set and four research questions were answered. The study adopted a correlational research design. Population for the study was 146 comprising 21 lecturers and 125 students of Agricultural science education programme in the department of science and environmental education, University of Abuja and was used for the study as sample because the population size. Data was analysed using percentages, mean, standard deviation, Pearson product moment correlation coefficient and t-test statistics. The study found out a relationship between compressed academic calendar and work load of students and lecturers ($t = 0.221 > 0.05$). Also, the study found a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar and students' withdrawal from a programme ($r = 0.221 > 0.05$). Results of the findings reviewed a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar and examination malpractices ($r = 0.340 > 0.05$). Finally, the study found a significant relationship between compressed academic calendar and damaging effects on the grade of degrees ($r = 0.319 > 0.05$). The study concluded that compressed academic calendar, even though found ideal for the university management and contain the same materials as a full-length semester is generally regarded as less effective for students and lecturers, and hence, lead to poor students' performance. It was recommended that university management should ensure that adequate provision of resources and logistics needed to enhance good academic achievement of students undergoing a study in a compressed calendar. The lecturers in the university should be provided with incentives and other logistics needed for effective teaching process in order to encourage them work hard in a compressed academic calendar. Schedule of academic activities should be made in such a manner that students are not discouraged to study but prepare well for all examinations. The university management should ensure implementation of full and long semesters in order to run smooth academic activities.

Keywords: Perceived Effect, Compressed Academic Calendar, Academic Performance, Agricultural Education and Students

INTRODUCTION

The students, who is one of the basic elements of the education system have from past to present been regarded as the future of society and have been included in a continuous development process. Nations follow the global development process and attempt to foster knowledge, skills, behaviour, competence

and ideas in line with this development. For this purpose, education systems aim for students to integrate with the world and speak the same language, attain success, acquire a profession, contribute to the nation, gain the habit of lifelong learning and most important of all, acquire 21st century skills. In this regard, the students are expected excel in academic performance.

Academic performance is progress made towards attaining one's goals (Wolman in Ozcan, 2021). In other words, performance can be expressed as progress made towards attaining the goals determined by individuals or institutions. In terms of the student, performance it means reaching the objectives framed in the curriculum (Kazazoglu, 2013). In education institutions, however, the aim of this achievement is to improve and advance academically. Academic performance is the knowledge, skills, success and development instilled in students by the teacher in schools (Carter & Good in Ozcan, 2021). Academic performance involves the student's changes in behaviour in all curriculum domains other than behaviours in the psychomotor and affective domains (Ahmann & Glock in Ozcan, 2021). In order to enable academic performance, it is expected that students will successfully carry out the tasks given to them, display a perfectionist approach, show resistance in the face of obstacles and develop strategies for overcoming difficulties that they face (Cox, 1990). Academic performance is the extent to which a pupil, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals (Bassey, 2012). Cumulative GPA and completion of educational benchmarks such as primary school certificate represent academic performance. Academic performance is the measurement of student achievement across various academic subjects. Teachers and education officials typically measure achievement using classroom performance, graduation rates, and results from standardized tests. Among the important factors affecting students' academic performance are the economic conditions they find themselves in, their habits for studying and for doing homework, their time management skills, their health conditions and their relationships within the family and academic calendar (Munoz & Portez, 2001).

It is a fact that the student's academic performance, which is one of the most basic and indispensable aims of education institutions is also an expectation of society. Therefore, when education systems are setting their goals and objectives, they take academic performance into consideration alongside a number of competences. In educational institutions, that success also depends on academic calendar. Academic calendar is a schedule of all the events that occur in an academic year. These events may include lecture dates, examination dates, spring break or reading week and the last day of the semester. Academic calendars and the dates included can be presented at the semester level or as part of an academic year-long calendar. In the context of this study, Academic calendar refers to dates and events that a university operates around. Most academic calendars include the add, withdraw and drop deadlines for each session within each semester.

A good academic calendar ensures smooth running of academic activities. It also enhances academic performance of in the universities and creates conducive learning atmosphere for students. An academic calendar is very important for teaching and learning, because it guides the planned activities of universities. The success or failure of any teaching and learning process also depends on the way academic calendar is planned and managed. However, it has been observed over the years that the academic calendar of the University lasts for two and half months with rushed activities. As a result, it seems to decrease the average student credit hour load and an increase in the percentage of students' withdrawal from a programme. The aberration has inflicted on university a siege mentality with its damaging effects on the *grade* of degrees they offer. The lecturers are also overloaded with teaching, conduct of research and marking of examinations scripts. The cases of missing scripts are traced to compressed academic calendar.

Similarly, there is increase in examination malpractices and 'blocking' in order to pass examination. This could affect students career and good performance at place of work after graduation. Despite series of complaints from students, staff and parents concerning the issue of rushed academic activities, the university still operates a compressed academic calendar. It is against this background that the study designed to examine the effect of compressed academic calendar on the academic performance of students of University Abuja, Nigeria.

An observation by the researcher revealed that the University of Abuja has been a long time operating a compressed academic calendar which seems to be disadvantaged to students, parents, lecturers and staff members who participate in a compressed academic calendar programs with negative thought and feelings about it. It is at this background that the study designed to examine the effect of effect of compressed academic calendar on the academic performance of students of University Abuja, Nigeria.

Objectives

1. Ascertain the relationship between compressed academic calendar and work load of lecturers and students
2. Examine the effect of compressed academic calendar on students' withdrawal from a programme
3. Determine the influence of compressed academic calendar and examination malpractices
4. Determine the relationship between compressed academic calendar and damaging effects on the grade of degrees

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between mean ratings of lecturers and students on the effects of compressed academic calendar on work load of lecturers and students
2. There is no significant relationship between compressed academic calendar and students' withdrawal from a programme
3. There is no significant relationship between compressed academic calendar and examination malpractices
4. There is no significant relationship between compressed academic calendar and damaging effects on the grade of degrees

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a correlational research design. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population for this study is 146 comprising 21 lecturers and 125 students of Agricultural science education programme in the department of science and environmental education, University of Abuja and was used for the study as sample because the population size could be handled effectively by the researcher. The instrument for the study is was a structured questionnaire titled 'Effect of Compressed Academic Calendar on the Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (ECACAPSQ)'. The data collected was analysed using, percentages, mean, standard deviation, t-test Pearson product moment correlation coefficient.

RESULTS

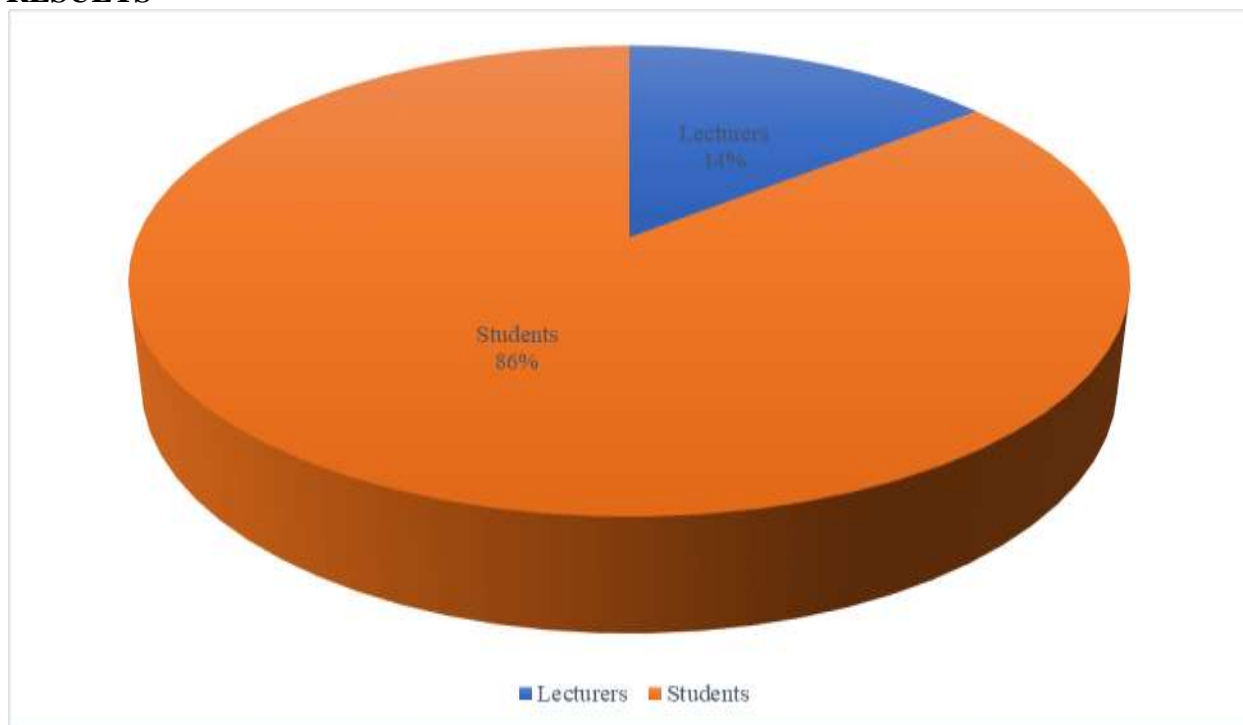


Figure 1: Percentage of Lecturers and Students

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 1 shows percentage of respondents under study. Lecturers were 14% while students were 86% respectively.

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation of Lecturers and Students on Relationship between Compressed Academic Calendar and Work Load

S/N	Item Statement	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	SD ₁	SD ₂	Remarks
1	The lecturers do not finish marking of a semester examination when another semester is by the corner to teach	2.54	2.92	0.94	1.14	Related
2	Due to rush in the academic calendar, the lecturers are restless with many activities	2.43	2.89	1.25	1.13	Related
3	Lectures are always observed having a lot of academic work to do at hand	2.62	2.65	1.16	1.19	Related
4	The lectures use to miss some classes due to overload	2.86	2.54	0.79	1.21	Related
5	The lecturers always look stressed up	2.53	3.19	1.03	1.04	Related
Grand Mean		2.51	2.84	1.03	1.14	

\bar{x}_1 = Students' mean, \bar{x}_2 = mean of lecturers, SD₁= Standard deviation of Agricultural Science students' SD₂= standard deviation for lecturers.

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result in Table 1 shows that out of 5 items, 4 items had their lecturers' mean values ranged from 2.53 to 2.86 while the mean values of students ranged from 2.54 to 3.19 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that the respondents agreed that there is a relationship between compressed academic calendar and work load of students and lecturers.

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on Relationship between Compressed Academic Calendar and Students Withdrawing from a programme

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	The courses are wide and students need enough time to read	2.57	0.98	Related
2	Students cannot continue with agricultural science programme because it is wide and the time is short to study it	3.01	1.12	Related
3	The students undergo both physical and psychological pains studying agricultural science in a rushed calendar	3.50	0.92	Related
4	Students cannot cope with the theoretical and practical work involve in agricultural science	3.45	0.95	Related
5	Students are a self-sponsored student and you cannot cope with the financial demand in agricultural science programme in a short possible period of time	3.54	0.77	Related
Grand Mean		3.21	0.95	

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result in Table 2 shows that 5 items had their mean values of ranged from 2.57 to 3.57 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. This showed that the respondents agreed that there is a relationship between compressed academic calendar and students' withdrawal from a programme.

Table 3: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on the Relationship between Compressed Academic Calendar and Examination Malpractices

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	Students always prepare expo for all examinations	3.04	1.14	Related
2	The students use to sit close to friends for assistance during examination	3.21	1.07	Related
3	The students have limited time to read for examinations and resolve to cheat in the hall	3.10	1.12	Related
4	The students cheat in the examination hall because I have too much courses to read and write	2.59	1.10	Related
5	Some courses are not well-taught to you during lectures	3.21	0.54	Related
6	The students do not have space in between one lecture to the next	3.47	0.58	Related
Grand Mean		3.10	0.93	Related

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result in Table 3 shows that all 6 items had mean values ranged from 2.59 to 3.47 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. This showed that the respondents agreed that there is a relationship between compressed academic calendar and examination malpractices.

Table 4: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviation on Relationship between Compressed Academic Calendar and Damaging Effects on the Grade of Degrees

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	The rushed academic calendar did not allow students to study well	3.23	0.88	Related
2	Students always have carryovers due to rushed academic calendar	3.43	0.70	Related
3	The semester GPA is always low due to the university academic calendar	3.51	0.74	Related
4	Students have little time to read for assessment and examinations	3.52	0.79	Related
5	There is lack quality time to read and come out with good grades	3.69	0.67	Related
Grand Mean		3.48	0.76	

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result in Table 4 shows that all the 5 items had their mean values ranged from 3.23 to 3.96 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. This showed that the respondents accepted that there is a relationship between compressed academic calendar and damaging effects on the grade of degrees.

Table 5: T-test Result on the Effects of Compressed Academic Calendar on Work Load of Lecturers and Students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	7.615	0.007	-1.230	144	0.221	-0.21152	0.17194	-0.55136	0.12833
Equal variances not assumed			-0.992	19.786	0.333	-0.21152	0.21321	-0.65658	0.23355

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 5 shows a t-test value of 0.221 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. This result is statistically significant. This indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of lecturers and students on the effects of compressed academic calendar on their work load.

Table 6: Relationship between the Compressed Academic Calendar and Students Withdrawal from a Programme

		Compressed Academic Calendar	Students Withdrawal
Compressed Academic Calendar	Pearson Correlation	1	.221**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.007
	N	146	146
Students Withdrawal	Pearson Correlation	.221**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007	
	N	146	146

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result presented in Table 6 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient of r is 0.221** which is greater than 0.05. This result is significant. This implies that there is a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar and withdrawal from a programme.

Table 7: Relationship between Compressed Academic Calendar and Examination Malpractices

		Compressed academic Calendar	Examination Malpractices
Compressed Academic Calendar	Pearson Correlation	1	.340**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	146	146
Examination Malpractices	Pearson Correlation	.340**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	146	146

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result in Table 7 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient of r is 0.340** which is greater than 0.05. This result is significant. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar and examination malpractices.

Table 8: Relationship between Compressed Academic Calendar and Grade of Degree

		Compressed Academic Calendar	Grade of Degree
Compressed Academic Calendar	Pearson Correlation	1	.319**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	146	146
Grade of Degree	Pearson Correlation	.319**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	146	146

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Field survey, 2025

Result presented in Table 8 shows that the Pearson correlation coefficient of r is 0.319** which is greater than 0.05. This result is significant. This means that there is a positive relationship between compressed academic calendar, work load of lecturers and students.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings on the effects of compressed academic calendar and workload of lecturers, and students revealed a significant relationship. The lecturers do not finish marking of a semester examination scripts when another semester is by the corner; the lecturers are restless due to many activities; lectures have a lot of academic work to do at hand; they miss some classes and always look stressed up. This finding disagrees with that of Choudhury (2017) who reported that statistically significant differences were not found on the workload of lecturers and student who are enrolled into a compressed calendar and those who are on full semester. This disparity could be as result of the time allocated for students learning. It could also be that university of Abuja administration do not support and encourage the students to focus on designated instructional time for their academic needs.

Findings on the effect of compressed academic calendar and students' withdrawal from a programme revealed a significant relationship. The courses are wide and students need enough time to read, they cannot continue with agricultural science programme because it is a programme with wide scope (content), and the time is always shorter for students to study and cover it. The students are undergoing both physical and psychological pains studying agricultural science education under a rushed calendar. The students cannot cope with the theoretical and practical work involve in the programme. Most of the students are self-sponsored, therefore, they cannot cope with the financial demand in agricultural science programme in a short possible period of time. Findings agree with Ozcan (2021) who reported that compressed academic calendar affects students' academic success in terms of academic stressed.

Findings on the effects of compressed academic calendar on examination malpractice revealed a significant relationship. The students do not have a space in between one lecture to the next; they have too much courses with limited time to read to read and write their tests and examinations; some courses are not well-taught to them by lecturers. As an alternative measure, the students always prepare 'expo' for all examinations or sit close to friends for assistance during examinations. The finding collaborates that of Onyibe, Uma and Ibina (2015) which reported that poor teaching is responsible for examination malpractice by students.

Finding on the compressed academic calendar and damaging effects on the grade of degrees revealed a significant relationship. The rushed academic calendar did not allow students to study well; the students always have carryovers due to rushed limited period of time allocated for studies in a semester; they have

little time to prepare for assessment and examinations leading to low GPA which subsequently affect their grades. The findings disagree with Hazzard (2022) who reported that students that enrolled in an eight-week (compressed) term class performed statistically better than those enrolled in the same course during a 16-week (regular) term class. Hazzard (2022) noted that students completing a basic electricity course at a community and technical college in an eight-week term have a higher mean grade than students taking the course in the 16-week term. Disparity between the finding of Hazzard (2022) and the present finding could be that data collected for his study was not from the students who express their views about compressed semesters. Also, the finding agrees with Bangasser (2007) who reported that success rates in students grades consistently decreased in nearly all levels as result of compressed calendars.

CONCLUSION

This study has established a statistically significant difference in academic performance of students of university of Abuja undertaking a compressed academic calendar. Based on findings of the study, the performance of students is always poor. Students do not grasp the concepts and materials faster and could not use them well during the examinations. The study concluded that compressed academic calendar, even though found ideal for the university management and contain the same materials as a full-length semester is generally regarded as less effective for students and lecturers, and hence, lead to poor academic performance of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The university management should ensure that adequate provision of resources and logistics needed to enhance good academic achievement of students undergoing a study in a compressed calendar.
2. Students of the university should be encouraged and properly counselled to be fit into a compressed academic calendar to avoid withdrawal from a programme.
3. The lecturers in the university should be provided with incentives and other logistics needed for effective teaching process in order to encourage them work hard in a compressed academic calendar.
4. Schedule of academic activities should be made in such a manner that students are not discouraged to study but prepare well for all examinations.
5. The university management should ensure implementation of full and long semesters in order to run smooth academic activities.

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