



Correlation Between Pre-Service Teachers' Perception and Academic Achievement in Geography among Colleges of Education in Northwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the Relationship between Pre-Service Teachers' Perception, Gender, and Academic Achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted, with a population consisting of 1,057 NCE III pre-service Geography teachers from nine Colleges of Education. A multistage sampling technique was used, four colleges and 285 participants were selected for the study. Data were collected through two instruments: a researcher-developed perception questionnaire and an academic achievement proforma. Both instruments demonstrated acceptable face, content, and construct validity, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and simple linear regression to test the stated hypotheses. The findings revealed a weak but positive relationship between perception and academic achievement among pre-service Geography teachers in the selected Colleges of Education. The study concluded that perception serves as a predictor of academic achievement among pre-service Geography teachers. It recommends that there is a need for Geography lecturers and curriculum planners to design learning experiences that enhance students' perception, relevance, and perceived value of Geography.

Keywords: Pre-service teachers, Perception, Gender, academic achievement.

Introduction

Colleges of Education in Nigeria are tertiary institutions that offer three- to four-year programmes designed to train students as teachers for the country's nine-year basic education system (NCCE, 2020). These institutions award the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE), which is the minimum qualification for teaching at the basic education level in Nigeria. Colleges of Education play a vital role in preparing pre-service teachers across various subjects, including Geography (Olayiwola, Idowu, & Kudirat, 2015). Perception is the process of interpreting experiences based on prior knowledge, plays a crucial role in academic achievement (Mukesh & Sarita, 2015). Pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions of the subject can significantly influence their educational success. For instance, Pokhrel and Chhetri (2024) found that students held positive perceptions toward learning Geography, while Yentür (2023) reported a positive relationship between Geography teachers' perceptions and their teaching attitudes, with female teachers demonstrating more favorable attitudes than males. Similarly, Edward and Jim (2023) confirmed a link between students' perceptions and academic achievement. Gruman, Schneider, and Coutts (2016) demonstrated that positive perceptions enhance academic performance, whereas negative perceptions hinder it. However, Atkins (2018) found no significant correlation between perceptions and the performance of high and low achievers, while Rendhi (2021) observed a positive correlation between perceptions and academic success. Further studies have revealed mixed findings for instance Kwame et al. (2020) reported negative perceptions among Geography students, contrasting with earlier evidence of positive attitudes toward the subject. Okafor and Alex (2018) found that gender significantly influences students' perceptions of Geography in higher education. Ahmed, Taha, Al-Neel, and Gaffar (2018) observed that higher-achieving students held more positive perceptions of their education, while lower achievers exhibited negative views. Mukesh and Sarita (2015) also demonstrated that students' perceptions affect their academic outcomes. Likouri, Klonari, and Flouris (2017) found that high-performing Geography students held more favorable perceptions, with no gender differences observed. Muhammed (2010) similarly indicated positive perceptions of Geography among students. Collectively, these findings suggest that positive perceptions tend to enhance performance, while negative perceptions may impede it. Gender also plays a role in shaping students' perceptions of Geography. Ifegbesan and Azeez (2022) found a positive relationship between gender and perception, while Abdullahi and Ahmed (2019) reported no significant gender differences. Okafor and Alex (2018) indicated that gender influences



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students' views on Geography, whereas Fekumo and Omeka (2022) found no significant contribution of gender to students' perceptions. These mixed findings suggest that the influence of gender on perception may vary across contexts and populations. A review of the literature reveals divergent findings on the relationship between students' perceptions and academic achievement. Both positive and negative outcomes have been reported, underscoring the need for further investigation. Against this background, the present study seeks to examine the relationships among pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions, gender, and academic achievement in Colleges of Education across Northwest Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Geography education equips students with the knowledge and skills to understand the natural world and human environment interactions. Despite its significance, there is growing concern over the low academic achievement of pre-service teachers in Geography within Nigeria's Colleges of Education. Research suggests that perception and gender may significantly influence academic achievement (Mgbomo et al., 2024; Yousuf & Nur, 2023; Mukesh & Sarita, 2015). Pre-service Geography teachers in Northwest Nigerian colleges face challenges stemming from negative perceptions and gender disparities. Studies by Atanu et al. (2019) and Salisu (2018) have documented low academic performance among these students, attributing it to factors such as perceptions and attitudes. However, research findings remain inconsistent: some studies emphasize the influence of these factors, while others report no significant impact (Mamah et al., 2023; Rendhi, 2021). Globally, studies on students' perceptions of Geography indicate that perception and gender significantly influence academic achievement. Mgbomo, Joseph, and Agwu (2024) highlighted the impact of gender on academic performance, while Yousuf and Nur (2023) confirmed gender's influence. Conversely, Mamah et al. (2023) found no gender effect on achievement but reported that grit strongly predicts success in science subjects. This study aims to bridge the existing gap by examining the relationships among pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions, gender, and academic achievement in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria, an area that has not been previously investigated. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no similar study has been conducted in this context, which justifies the focus of the present research.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out the relationship between Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among colleges of education students in Northwest Nigeria
2. Ascertain the gender difference in the relationship between Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among colleges of education students in Northwest Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study answers the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among colleges of education in Northwest Nigeria?
2. What is the difference in the relationship between male and female Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among colleges of education in Northwest Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the stated research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated.

H₀₁: There is no significance relationship between Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among Colleges of Education in North-West Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significance difference in the relationship between male and female Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement among colleges of education in Northwest Nigeria.

Methodology

This study employed a correlational research design to examine relationships among pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions, gender, and academic achievement in Colleges of Education across Northwest Nigeria. This design was appropriate for exploring associations among naturally occurring variables without manipulation. The population comprised 1,057 NCE III pre-service Geography teachers from nine Colleges of Education. Using Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's sample size determination criteria, 285 participants were selected at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error through multistage sampling technique. First, four colleges were randomly selected and Proportionate sampling

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was then used to allocate participants according to institutional size and gender distribution, followed by simple random sampling to select individual respondents. Data were collected using two instruments: a researcher-developed perception questionnaire assessing perceived difficulty, relevance, and usefulness of Geography, rated on a five-point Likert scale; and a proforma for academic achievement, summarizing cumulative examination scores from NCE Levels I and II. The instruments demonstrated acceptable face, content, and construct validity, with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86. Data were analysed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and simple linear regression to test hypotheses, including gender-based analyses. Assumptions of linearity, normality, independence, and homoscedasticity were confirmed prior to analysis.

Presentation of Results

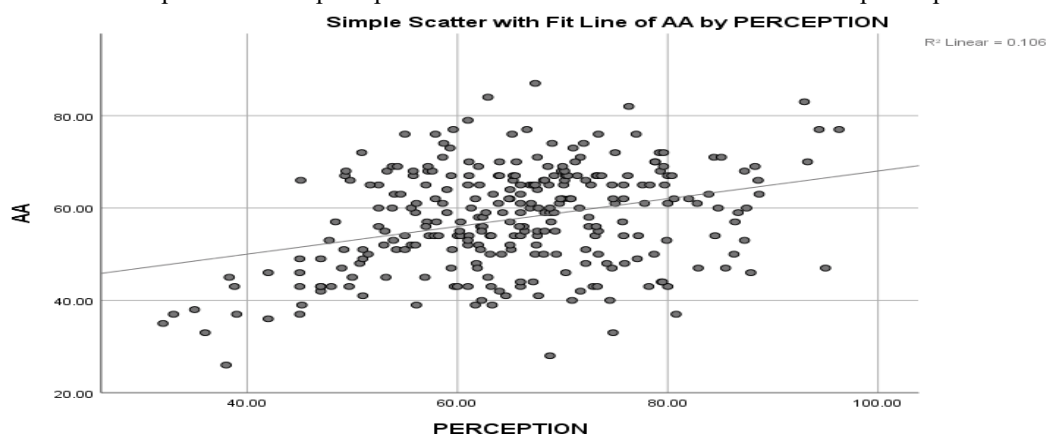
Research Question One:

What is the relationship between Pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among Colleges of education in Northwest Nigeria?

Table 1: Pearson's (r), Mean and SD showing the relationship between Pre-service teachers' Perceptions and Academic Achievement in Geography

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Remark
Perception	285	65.40	11.96	0.325	Weak positive relationship
Academic Achievement	285	57.64	11.05		

Table 1 presents the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) showing the relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography. The results indicate that pre-service teachers recorded a mean perception score of 65.40 with a standard deviation of 11.96, while a mean academic achievement score of 57.64 with a standard deviation of 11.05 was obtained. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria ($r = 0.325$). This weak relationship suggests that academic achievement is influenced by several factors beyond perception alone. This finding is further supported with a scatter plot, which illustrates the nature of the relationship between the perception and academic achievement. The scatter plot is presented in Figure 1.



Key: AA Academic Achievement

Figure 1: Scatter plot showing the relationship between pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Colleges of Education across Northwest Nigeria

Figure 1 present the simple scatter plot illustrates the relationship between pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions and their academic achievement at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. The graph reveals a positive linear relationship, indicating that perception serves as a predictor of academic achievement. The coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.106$) shows that approximately 10.6% of the variation in academic achievement can be explained by pre-service teachers' perceptions of Geography.

Research Hypothesis One:

There is no significant relationship between perceptions of Pre-service teachers and academic achievement in Geography among Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria.



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Table 2: Model summary of the simple linear regression analysis between pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.325 ^a	.106	.100	10.44836

a. Predictors: (Constant), PERCEPTION

Table 2 presents the model summary of the simple linear regression analysis examining the relationship between pre-service geography teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Northwest Nigeria. The correlation coefficient (R = 0.325) suggests that perception has a weak positive linear relationship with academic achievement. The coefficient of determination (R² = 0.106) shows that perception accounts for 10.6% of the variance in academic achievement among pre-service geography teachers. The regression coefficient is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression coefficients showing the predictive relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	38.249	3.449		11.091	0.000
	PERCEPTION	.296	.052	0.325	5.698	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Academic achievement

Table 3 presents the regression coefficients showing the relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. The results reveal that the p-value is less than the level of significance (p < 0.05); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between pre-service teachers' perceptions and their academic achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. The analysis further shows that pre-service geography teachers' perception is a significant predictor of academic achievement. The unstandardized regression coefficient (B = 0.296) indicates that a one-unit increase in perception score results in an increase of 0.296 units in academic achievement. The positive standardized beta coefficient suggests that higher levels of perception are associated with higher academic achievement among pre-service geography teachers. Based on the regression analysis, the model is expressed as follows: AA = 38.249 + 0.296 (Perception).

Research question two:

What is the relationship between male and female Pre-service teachers' Perceptions and academic achievement in Geography among Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria?

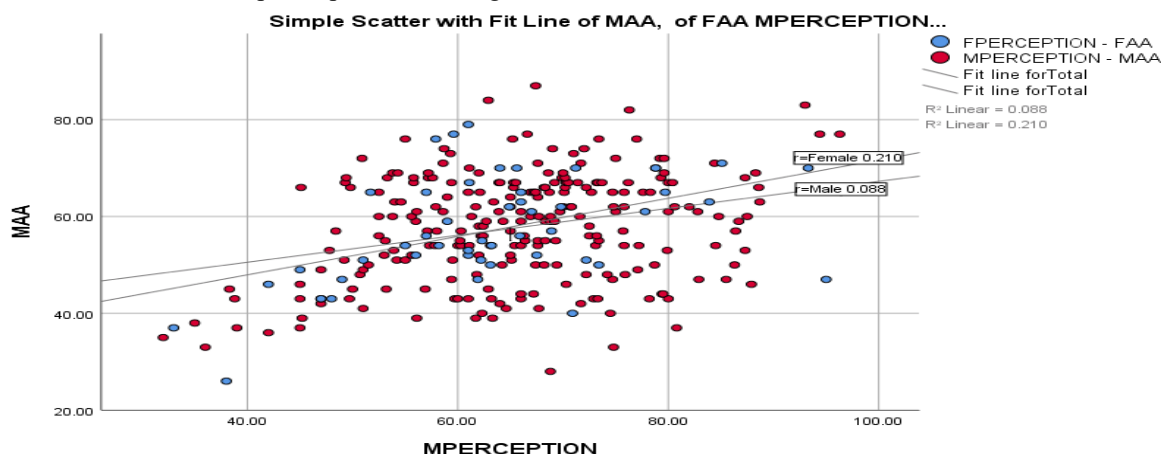
Table 4: Pearson correlation showing the relationship between perception and academic achievement among male and female pre-service Geography teachers

Gender	Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Remark
Male	Perception	238	65.80	11.76	0.296	Weak Positive Relationship
	AA	238	57.67	11.02		
Female	Perception	47	63.15	12.86	0.459	Moderate Positive Relationship
	AA	47	57.10	11.08		

Table 4 presents the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) showing the relationship between Male and Female pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography. The results indicate that male pre-service teachers recorded a mean perception score of 65.80 with a standard deviation of 11.76, while a mean academic achievement score of 57.67 with a standard deviation of 11.02 was obtained. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between male pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria (r = 0.296). This weak relationship suggests that academic achievement is influenced by several factors beyond perception alone. The results also indicate that female pre-service teachers recorded a mean perception score of 63.15 with a standard deviation of 12.86, while a mean academic achievement score of 57.10 with a standard deviation of 11.08 was obtained. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between female pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria (r = 0.459). The difference in the relationship between pre-service teacher

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perception and academic achievement is 0.016 in favour of the female. This finding is further supported by the scatter plot, which illustrates the nature of the relationship between Male and Female pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement. The scatter plot is presented in Figure 2.



Key: MAA Male Academic Achievement, FAA female Academic Achievement

Figure 2: Scatter plots showing the relationship between perception and academic achievement among male and female pre-service Geography teachers.

Figure 2 illustrate the scatter plots showing the relationship between male and female pre-service Geography teachers' perception and academic achievement. For males, the plots indicate a positive linear relationship, with the coefficient of determination ($R^2=0.088$) showing that perception accounts for approximately 8.8% of the variance in academic achievement. Similarly, the scatter plots for females reveal a positive linear pattern, with an R^2 value of 0.210, indicating that perception explains about 21.0% of the variance in academic achievement. These findings suggest that perception is a stronger predictor of achievement among female students than males.

Research Hypothesis two:

There is no significance difference in the relationship between male and female Pre-service Geography teachers' Perceptions and academic achievement among Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria.

Table 5: Model Summary of Gender, Perception, and Academic Achievement

Gender	Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Male	1	.296 ^a	0.088	0.084	10.58773
Female	1	.459 ^a	0.210	0.193	9.96345

Table 5 presents the model summary of the simple linear regression analysis examine the relationship between male and female pre-service geography teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Northwest Nigeria. The correlation coefficient of male ($R = 0.296$) suggests that perception has a weak positive linear relationship with academic achievement among male. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.88$) shows that perception accounts for 8.8% of the variance in academic achievement among male pre-service geography teachers. The correlation coefficient of female ($R = 0.459$) suggests that perception has a moderate positive linear relationship with academic achievement among female. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.210$) shows that perception accounts for 21.0% of the variance in academic achievement among female pre-service geography teachers. The difference in the variation of male and female pre-service geography teachers' academic achievement as predicted by perception is 12.2% in favour of female pre-service geography teachers'. Therefore, gender moderated 12.2% of the variation in pre-service geography teachers' academic achievement in favour of the female than their male counterparts. The regression coefficient is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients of Gender, Perception, and Academic Achievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
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Gender			B	Std. Error	Beta		
Male	1	(Constant)	39.417	3.912		10.075	0.000
		PERCEPTION	0.278	0.058	0.296	4.759	0.000
Female	1	(Constant)	32.141	7.358		4.368	0.000
		FPERCEPTION	0.395	0.114	0.459	3.461	0.001

Table 6 presents the regression coefficients showing the relationship between male and female pre-service teachers' perceptions and academic achievement in Geography at Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. The results reveal that the p-value for male is less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between male pre-service teachers' perceptions and their academic achievement. The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.278$) indicates that a one-unit increase in perception score results in an increase of 0.278 units in academic achievement. The positive standardized beta coefficient suggests that higher levels of perception are associated with higher academic achievement among male pre-service geography teachers. Based on the regression analysis, the model is expressed as follows: $AA = 39.417 + 0.273$ (Perception). The results also reveal that the p-value for female is less than the level of significance ($p < 0.05$); therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between female pre-service teachers' perceptions and their academic achievement. The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.395$) indicates that a one-unit increase in perception score results in an increase of 0.395 units in academic achievement. The positive standardized beta coefficient suggests that higher levels of perception are associated with higher academic achievement among female pre-service geography teachers. Based on the regression analysis, the model is expressed as follows: $AA = 32.141 + 0.395$ (Perception). The regression coefficients reveal meaningful gender differences in how perception predicts academic achievement; perception significantly predicts performance for both groups, but its predictive strength is moderate for females and only weak for males.

Discussion of the findings

The finding from research question one shows a weak positive relationship between pre-service Geography teachers' perceptions and their academic achievement, indicating that students with more favorable attitudes toward Geography tend to perform better academically. This agrees with previous research (Edward & Jim, 2023; Rendhi, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2018; Yasar et al., 2018; Supreet & Meenu, 2018), which consistently emphasizes that learners' positive perceptions enhance motivation and lead to improved outcomes. These findings also align with Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which suggests that learners' beliefs and attitudes influence their effort, engagement, and academic success. However, they differ from Atkins' (2018) report of no significant relationship between students' perceptions and performance. The finding from research question two revealed a weak positive relationship between perception and achievement among males and a moderate positive relationship among females. Regression analysis showed that perception significantly predicted achievement for both genders, with stronger effects for females. This result corroborates earlier findings (Okafor & Alex, 2018; Al-Balushi et al., 2022; Wrigley-Asante et al., 2023; Ifegbesan & Azeez, 2022), which highlight gender as a factor shaping perceptions and academic outcomes. Conversely, studies by Abdullahi and Ahmed (2019) and Fekumo and Omeka (2022) found no significant gender influence, suggesting that contextual factors such as institutional environment and learning culture may moderate gender effects.

Conclusions

This study investigated how perception and gender predict academic achievement among pre-service Geography teachers, focusing on gender-based differences in these relationships. The findings revealed a weak but positive relationship between perception and academic achievement among pre-service Geography teachers in Colleges of Education across Northwest Nigeria. Additionally, perception significantly predicted achievement for both male and female students, with a stronger effect observed among females. The study concludes that perceptions predict academic achievement among pre-service Geography teachers in Colleges of Education across Northwest Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

1. There is a need for Geography lecturers and curriculum planners to design learning experiences that enhance students' interest, relevance, and perceived value of Geography.

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2. There is a need for Geography lecturers to promote interactive and gender-inclusive instructional strategies may strengthen students' engagement and academic performance.

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