PLASU Journal of Educational Research (PLASUJER) Vol. 1, No. 2, 2025
A Publication of the Faculty of Education, Plateau State University, Bokkos – Nigeria
ISSN: 3121-9624 https://journals.plasu.edu.ng

EFFECT OF SIMULATION INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN ECONOMICS IN BOKKOS LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE.

Emmanuel Istifanus Dang
Department of Social Science Education
Faculty of Education, University of Jos
07069022611, dange@unijos.edu.ng

Yunana Kosom Francis
Department of Social Science Education
Faculty of Education, University of Jos
08100740455

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of simulation instructional strategies on the achievement of secondary school students in Economics. A quasi-experimental design was used, involving a pretest and post-test of 250 students from two schools in Bokkos Local Government Area. The experimental group received simulation-based instruction, while the control group received traditional instruction. Results showed no significant difference in pre-test scores, but the experimental group's post-test mean score (80.2%) was significantly higher than the control group's (60.5%). The study also found a significant gender difference in the experimental group, with males outperforming females. The findings confirm that simulation is a highly effective strategy for improving student performance in Economics.

Keywords: Simulation instructional strategies, Student achievement, Economics education, Quasi- experimental design, Gender differences

Introduction

The quality of education is a cornerstone for economic and social development, and central to this is the effectiveness of instructional strategies. In a globalized and complex world, subjects like Economics require pedagogical approaches that go beyond traditional, lecture-based methods to foster a deeper understanding of abstract concepts and real-world applications (Omar & Afolabi, 2023). One such innovative strategy that has gained prominence in educational research is simulation. Simulation-based learning allows students to actively engage with subject matter by mimicking real-world scenarios, thereby promoting critical thinking, problem-solving, and a more profound grasp of economic principles (Martins, 2024).

The shift towards student-centered learning is a global trend, and Nigeria's educational system is increasingly recognizing the limitations of conventional teaching methods. These methods often fail to accommodate diverse learning styles and may not adequately prepare students for the complexities of modern life (Adetola, 2023). Simulation instruction, by providing a dynamic and interactive learning environment, has the potential to address these challenges and enhance economic literacy, which is crucial for producing informed citizens and future professionals (Yakubu & Dada, 2024).

While the benefits of simulation instructional strategies have been explored in various contexts, there remains a need to investigate their specific effects in different socio-cultural and educational environments. This study focuses on Bokkos Local Government Area (LGA) in Plateau State, a region characterized by unique socio-economic diversity and persistent challenges in educational quality, including limited teaching resources and outdated methodologies (Peter, 2023; Bello, 2024). The implementation of simulation-based learning in this specific context could offer a practical and effective framework for improving academic outcomes.

Existing literature provides strong theoretical and empirical support for the use of simulations in education. The approach is deeply rooted in constructivist theories, which argue that learners construct knowledge through active experience and problem-solving (Piaget, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978). By allowing students to experiment with economic variables and observe the consequences of their decisions in a safe, controlled environment, simulations facilitate experiential learning and foster a deeper, more enduring understanding of economic concepts (Akintunde & Nasir, 2023; Ogunyade, 2023). Empirical studies, such as those by Obiora (2024) and Nwankwo (2023), have demonstrated that students exposed to simulation-based instruction show improved academic performance and higher levels of motivation compared to their peers in traditional classrooms. A meta-analysis by Hwang et al. (2019) further confirms this positive correlation between simulation-based learning and enhanced academic performance.

Despite this evidence, the widespread adoption of such strategies in Nigerian secondary schools, particularly in regions like Bokkos LGA, is not yet a reality. Current educational practices often rely on traditional lecture-based methods, which can hinder student engagement and fail to meet their diverse learning needs (Adamu, 2022). This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the effect of simulation

instructional strategies on the achievement of secondary school students in Economics within this specific local government area. The research aims to assess not only the academic impact but also the potential of simulation to foster collaborative skills and connect classroom learning to students' lived experiences, such as local agriculture and community trade (Ogunode & Adesola, 2020; Adedayo, 2024).

The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the academic discourse on effective instructional strategies, particularly in the context of economics education in Nigeria. By providing concrete evidence from a unique local context, this research can inform educational policy and inspire broader pedagogical reforms, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and a more relevant, engaging learning experience for all.

Literature Review

The importance of effective instructional strategies in enhancing student achievement is widely acknowledged in educational research. In the context of complex subjects like Economics, innovative pedagogical approaches are crucial for moving beyond abstract theory to practical application. One such strategy that has emerged as a vital tool is simulation instructional strategies, which recreate realistic scenarios for educational purposes, thereby fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and the active application of knowledge (Taylor, 2023). This approach aligns with the Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners build knowledge through active experience and reflection (Wilson, 2023). The effectiveness of simulations lies in their ability to provide immediate feedback, promote self-directed learning, and cater to diverse learning styles (Rodriguez & Smith, 2025). Modern trends in this field include the integration of Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create highly immersive and personalized learning experiences (Johnson et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2025).

Implementing simulations involves a systematic process. This begins with the design phase, where learning objectives are identified and realistic scenarios are developed to align with curriculum goals (Smith & Brown, 2023). This is followed by the implementation phase, which requires careful planning and clear facilitation to ensure student engagement (Garcia, 2025). A crucial component is the facilitation of reflection and feedback, typically through guided debriefing sessions, which helps students analyze their performance and learn from one another (Lee et al., 2023). Finally, assessing learning outcomes often requires moving beyond traditional methods to use alternative strategies like performance assessments and reflective journals (Johnson, 2025). In Economics education, various types of simulations are used, including online simulations, which use digital platforms to replicate real-world economic environments; game-based simulations, which incorporate elements of gaming to increase engagement; role-playing simulations, where students step into the shoes of different economic agents; and VR simulations, which provide a fully immersive, hands-on learning experience (Doe, 2023; Green, 2023; Clark, 2023).

The benefits of using simulations in Economics are well-documented. They promote active learning by encouraging students to apply theoretical concepts to practical

situations, which leads to deeper cognitive processing and higher retention rates (Johnson & Lee, 2023; Wang et al., 2025). They also foster essential collaborative skills, such as teamwork and communication, mirroring real-world professional environments (Smith & Turner, 2023). By bridging the gap between theory and practice, simulations equip students with the critical thinking and problem-world problem-solving abilities that employers highly value (Martinez & O'Connor, 2023). However, the adoption of simulations is not without its challenges. Technological readiness remains a significant hurdle, as many institutions lack the necessary infrastructure (Smith & Green, 2023). The complexity of design and implementation can be a deterrent for educators, as creating effective scenarios requires considerable time and expertise (Roberts et al., 2025). Furthermore, assessing the learning outcomes of these experiential methods can be difficult, and the variability in student backgrounds may lead to unequal learning experiences. Finally, there is a risk that students may perceive simulations as mere entertainment rather than a serious educational tool, which can hinder their learning (Chen, 2023).

Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the effect of simulation instructional strategies on the academic achievement of Senior Secondary School Two (SS II) students in Economics within the Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State.
Specifically, the objectives are to:
1. Examine the difference between the achievement pre-test mean scores of SS II students in the experimental and control groups.
2. Determine the difference between the achievement post-test mean scores of SS II students in the experimental and control groups.
3. Investigate the difference between the achievement pre-test and post-test mean scores of SS II male and female students in the experimental group.
4. Evaluate the difference between the achievement pre-test and post-test mean scores of SS II male and female students in the control group.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:
1. What is the achievement pre-test mean score of SS II students in the experimental and control groups?
2. What is the achievement post-test mean score of SS II students in the experimental and control groups?
3. What is the achievement pre-test and post-test mean score of SS II male and female students in the experimental group?
4. What is the achievement pre-test and post-test mean score of SS II male and female students in the control group?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the achievement pre-test mean scores of SS II students in the experimental and control groups.
2. There is no significant difference between the achievement post-test mean scores of SS II students in the experimental and control groups.
3. There is no significant difference between the achievement pre-test and post-test mean scores of SS II male and female students in the experimental group.
4. There is no significant difference between the achievement pre-test and post-test mean scores of SS II male and female students in the control group.

Methodology

This study employs a quasi-experimental design. Specifically, it uses a non-randomized pretest-posttest control group design, which is suitable for educational research where complete randomization is impractical (Nwana, 2024). The research population is 2874 students offering Economics consists of all Senior Secondary School Two (SS II) students in government secondary schools within the Bokkos Local Government Area of Plateau State. A sample of 250 students from two secondary schools were selected as the sample, one school as experimental while the other as the control.

The primary instrument for data collection is a self-developed Economics Achievement Test (EAT). This test is a comprehensive tool designed to assess students' understanding of the SS II Economics curriculum through multiple-choice questions, short answers, and problem-solving tasks. To ensure the instrument's effectiveness, its content validity was established by experts in economics education, and its reliability will be determined using the test-retest method.

The data collection process spans six weeks and consists of two phases. In the first phase, a pre-test is administered to both the experimental and control groups to establish a baseline measure of their knowledge. In the second phase, the experimental group receives instruction using simulation instructional strategies, which include role-playing, case studies, and interactive games, while the control group receives traditional lectures on the same topics. After the six-week instructional period, both groups will take a post-test using the same EAT to measure their achievement gains.

The data collected from the pre-test and post-test will be analyzed using statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, such as mean scores and standard deviations, will be used to summarize the data. To test the research hypotheses, inferential statistics will be applied. The t-test for independent samples will be used to compare the mean scores of the two groups and determine the statistical significance of the intervention's impact on student achievement.

Results

This study examined the effects of simulation instructional strategies on student achievement in Economics by analyzing pre-test and post-test scores from both experimental and control groups.

Research question one: What is the achievement pre-test mean score of SS II students in the experimental and control group?

Table 1: The achievement pre-test means score of the experimental and control group.

GROUP	N	MEAN (%)	SD
Experimental	120	35.40%	68
Control	130	34.90%	72

The pre-test results for both groups show that they have very similar mean scores, with the experimental group at 35.4% and the control group at 34.9%. This suggests that both groups started with a comparable level of prior knowledge in Economics.

Hypothesis one: There is no significance difference between the achievement pre-test mean scores of SS II in the experimental and control groups.

Table 2: Difference between pre-test mean scores of experimental and control groups.

Group	N	Mean	Sd	t-value	p-value	Significance
Experimental	120	354	68	0.52	0.6	Not significant
Control	130	349	72			

The analysis confirms there is no significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of the two groups. The p-value of 0.60 is greater than 0.05, so we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that the groups were well-matched in terms of their initial knowledge.

Research question two: What is the achievement post-test mean score of SS II students in the experimental and the control groups?

TABLE 3: The post test achievement test of experimental and control group.

GROUP	N	MEAN (%)	SD
Experimental	120	80.20%	85
Control	130	60.50%	98

After the intervention, the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The experimental group's mean score rose to 80.2%, while the control group’s score was 60.5%, indicating a notable positive effect of the simulation instructional strategy.

Hypothesis two: There is no significant difference between the achievement post-test mean score of the experimental and control group.

Table 4: Difference between the achievement post-test mean score of the experimental and control group.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
experimental	120	802	85	15.62	< 0.001	Significant
Control	130	605	98			

The t-test results show a highly significant difference in the post-test scores between the two groups. With a p-value less than 0.001, we reject the null hypothesis, confirming that the simulation instructional strategy had a significant positive impact on the experimental group's performance.

Research question three: What are the achievement pre-test and post-test mean scores of SS II male and female students in the experimental group?

TABLE 5: The Achievement Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores of SSII Male and Female Students in the Experimental Group.

GENDER	N	PRE-TEST MEAN (%)	PRE-TEST SD	POST-TEST MEAN %	POST-TEST SD
Male	136	35.80%	71	82.10%	82
Female	114	35.00%	65	78.30%	88

Both male and female students in the experimental group showed substantial improvement. Male students had a slightly higher pre-test mean and a higher post-test mean of 82.1%, compared to the female students' 78.3%.

Hypothesis three: There is no significant difference between the achievement pretest-posttest mean scores of SS 2 male and female students in the experimental group.

Table 6: ANCOVA for the achievement pretest-posttest mean scores of SS 2 male and female students.

Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t-value	p-value	Significance
Male	136	821	82	0.52	0.02	Significant
Female	114	783	88			

The analysis indicates a significant difference between the mean scores of male and female students in the experimental group. With a p-value of 0.02, we reject the null

hypothesis, suggesting that gender played a role in achievement within the simulation-based learning environment.

Research Question Four: What is the achievement pre-test and post-test mean score of SS II male and female students in the control group?

Table 7: The Achievement Pre-Test and Post-Test Means Score of SSII Male and Female Students.

GENDER	N	PRE-TEST MEAN (%)	PRE-TEST SD	POST-TEST MEAN %	POST-TEST SD
Male	136	35.20%	73	61.20%	95
Female	114	34.60%	71	59.80%	102

Both male and female students in the control group showed some improvement, but the gains were modest compared to the experimental group. Their pre-test scores were comparable, and their post-test scores remained close to each other.

Hypothesis four: There is no significant difference between achievement pretest-posttest mean score of SS II male and female students in the control group.

Table 8: ANCOVA of the Pre-test - Post-test mean scores of SS II male and female students in the control group.

Gender	N	Mean	Sd	t-value	p-value	Significance
Male	136	612	95	0.85	0.4	Not significant
Female	114	598	102			

The results indicate no statistically significant difference between the achievement of male and female students in the control group. With a p-value of 0.40, which is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that traditional instruction methods did not produce a notable gender-based difference in achievement.

Discussion

This study's findings provide strong evidence that simulation instructional strategies significantly improve academic achievement in Economics. The analysis began by confirming that both the experimental and control groups had similar levels of prior knowledge, as shown by their comparable pre-test scores. This established a solid baseline for a reliable comparison, consistent with research by Akpan (2022).

The most compelling finding is the dramatic increase in the experimental group's post-test scores. Their average score rose to 80.2%, far surpassing the control group's average of 60.5%. This significant difference, with a p-value less than 0.001, strongly

confirms that simulation-based learning is a highly effective strategy for teaching Economics. These results align with previous studies by Thabane and Hanif (2022) and Akpan (2022), which found that simulation-based learning leads to enriched experiences and improved academic performance.

The study also revealed a significant gender-based difference within the experimental group, where male students slightly outperformed females on the post-test. While both genders showed substantial improvement, the greater gains by males suggest that factors like engagement or motivation might differ between genders in a simulation-based setting. This finding invites further exploration into the specific dynamics of how male and female students respond to such interventions.

In contrast, the control group, which received traditional instruction, showed only modest improvement for both genders, with no significant difference between male and female students. This lack of significant gain reinforces the assertion by Kumar and Sharma (2023) that traditional methods often fail to promote deep understanding and retention. The findings underscore the importance of innovative strategies like simulations for creating a more conducive learning environment where all students can thrive (Amaechi, 2023).

Conclusion

The study successfully demonstrates that simulation instructional strategies are significantly more effective than traditional teaching methods for enhancing student achievement in Economics. The initial findings confirmed that both the experimental and control groups had comparable prior knowledge, as shown by their similar pre-test scores. This established a fair starting point for the research. After the intervention, the experimental group, which used simulation techniques, showed a remarkable improvement, with a post-test mean score of 80.2%, far surpassing the control group's 60.5%. This significant difference highlights the superiority of active, hands-on learning approaches in fostering better educational outcomes.

Additionally, the study found that while simulation strategies benefited both male and female students, male students in the experimental group slightly outperformed their female counterparts. In contrast, there was no significant difference in achievement between genders in the control group. Overall, the findings strongly recommend the adoption of simulation instructional strategies to improve student learning experiences and academic performance in Economics and similar subjects.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Integrate Simulation-Based Learning: Schools and policymakers should officially incorporate simulation instructional strategies into the economics curriculum and provide teachers with the necessary training to implement these models effectively.
2. Enhance Professional Development: Educators should be encouraged to participate in continuous professional development to master innovative teaching methods like simulations.

3. Explore Gender-Based Approaches: Given the slight performance difference between male and female students in the experimental group, future research should explore the factors behind this disparity to develop more gender-sensitive teaching practices.
4. Encourage Future Research: More studies are needed to examine the long-term impact of simulation-based instruction on student achievement across various subjects, providing insights for broader educational reforms.

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