

TEACHERS- STUDENTS RELATIONSHIP AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study determined the relationship between the teachers and students of senior secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. In this regard, the aim of this research is to ascertain from the student's point of view, how their academic performance is affected by this good and poor teachers- students relationship. The population of this study comprised two hundred and twenty-nine (229) students of these three senior secondary schools. Survey research design was adopted and questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed with simple descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. The result revealed that good teachers treat the students with respect, teach them with Enthusiasm and Passion while poor teachers-students relationship can lead to immoral attitude and behaviour, poor academic performance of students, and encouraging school dropout. The study therefore recommended that efforts should be made by the teachers and the school authority to inculcate the value of teacher - students' relationships for enhanced students' academic performance.

Keywords: Teachers-students relationship, Secondary Schools and Academic performance.

Introduction

The educational planners, educational managers, and teachers participating in the educational system are directly responsible for the success or failure of any educational system, whether in developed or developing countries around the world. Teachers play a critical role in our educational system, and it's no exaggeration to say that "no educational system can rise beyond the caliber of its teachers" (FRN 2000). Teachers' services are so essential and crucial in shaping the nation's future by enhancing the caliber of men and women who are desirable to society (Ekechukwu and Ifeanyichukwu, 2021). The academic achievement of pupils at school is influenced by schools and teachers. Students, teachers, or schools could all be to blame for a student's low academic achievement. This is supported by a study (Egbokhan, 2016) that found a positive interaction between professors and students, which has the potential to affect students' academic performance. As a result, effective school planning can assist pupils in overcoming these issues (Amaefule, 2018). This is in keeping with the advice that the teacher-student relationship be improved in order to improve the learning process and develop mutual assistance and interaction in diverse activities (Aduwa, 2014). Teachers and fellow students both have a part in affecting the teacher-student interaction.

The importance of developing teacher-student relationships includes increased student interest in learning, improved student academic achievement, and more motivated students (Adeoye, 2013). Furthermore, teachers must work with children to lessen negative emotions such as anger, despair, dissatisfaction, boredom, and fear, while always boosting positive feelings such as confidence, enjoyment, appreciation, and safety (Ajayi, 2013; Bajah, 2014). If teachers are dissatisfied, frustrated, uninspired, and unmotivated, the nation's educational system is doomed, because educational goals cannot be met without them. According to Ekechukwu and Ifeanyichukwu (2021), the willingness of teachers to cooperate, relate well, and work effectively with their principal is largely determined by the principal's administrative behavior. Some principals embrace an autocratic leadership style, which hinders innovation, effective communication, trust, collective decision-making, and staff morale bragging. Democratic leadership frequently brings out the best in employees, encouraging high levels of initiative, participatory decision-making, and a positive interpersonal interaction between the principal and the staff. This instills in the teachers a sense of worth and dignity, as well as self-respect, self-esteem, dedication, and commitment. According to Akpan (2002), teachers need proper motivation to enhance their effectiveness. Proper management by school principals can produce efficient and effective workforce among the staff for the achievement of educational goals and objectives. Principals need to relate closely with members of staff, involve them in decision making and in day-to-day running of the school. Staff involvement in decision-making in matters affecting them is highly encouraging.

Many aspects within the school organization are influenced and determined by the leadership behaviors of school principals. The employee's sense of the organization's trustworthiness is one of these variables. When school administrators' leadership actions improve, teachers' perceptions of organizational trust in the school improve as well. While the leadership conduct of school administrators was dealt with in this study in a one-dimensional manner, the sense of trust in organizations was dealt with in three dimensions. One of the sub-dimensions of trust in organization is "faith in colleague," which relates to instructors' trust in their coworkers. Teachers' trust in their pupils and parents is reflected in their sense of "trust in students and parents." There is limited research on the relationship between the teachers of the secondary schools and students in Enugu State, Nigeria. In this regard, the aim of this

research is to investigate, from the senior secondary schools students' point of view, how their academic performance is affected by this relationship.

Literature Review

According to Abari and Mohammed (2018), students' management should include counseling services targeted at aiding them in studying efficiently because they are an important component of the school that serve as indications for grading the school's level of achievement or failure. The amount to which work is completed in the school system is determined by the principal. It's not surprising, however, that Lunenburg (2010) considers the school principal's instructional leadership to be a crucial aspect in the school's improvement projects' success and overall efficacy. The principal's primary role is to ensure that all students learn and succeed. This was also consistent with Kamoche's assertions (2013), that a school's product is evaluated by society. This is because good performance is required for student selection and placement in higher education institutions as well as work in various firms and organizations. The aggregate number of students who excel in the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) is often used to assess educational quality. The most notable factor is how the educational system is run in terms of the structure of learners' learning activities and learning outcomes.

Relationships between teachers and students are crucial in forming an individual's mental image. According to Ewnetu and Fisseha (2008), teachers have basic demands for relatedness among the students in their class, which can have a significant impact on students' self-concepts, academic expectations, and how to make a meaningful life after school. As a result, a student's self-esteem is shaped by the general sense of support they receive from the essential people in their lives. Myers and Pianta (2008) indicate that the teacher-student interaction is critical to kids' healthy growth in school, particularly in terms of self-esteem. According to Lee (2007), the trust that develops in teacher-student relationships might influence students' academic achievement. Student – teacher relationship can influence students' future paths towards academic excellence (Lee, 2007). As a result, as Lee (2007) points out, a positive and professional relationship between teachers and students is critical in providing a safe environment in which students may work without feeling rushed and become motivated to learn.

To create secure environments and offer students confidence in their abilities to work without pressure and become motivated to learn, a decent and professional connection is essential (O'Connor, Dearing, and Collins, 2011). Students are better able to recall freshly taught knowledge when they are directed by favorable emotional inputs (Nelson & Lorber, 2009). It should be stressed that when the teaching and learning atmosphere is safe and supportive, children are motivated, impacted, and stimulated to actively participate with their professors. That is the relationship between the teacher and the pupil. According to Fraser, Adridge and Soerjaningsih (2010), teachers should establish a professional relationship with their students, because the creation and maintenance of a positive classroom climate plays an important role in rendering the teaching and learning process more effective and efficient.

Good Relationships in School

For schools to achieve high performance in general and external examinations (such as SSSCE, GCE, and IGCSE conducted by WAEC, NECO, and Cambridge), school principals who are personnel managers must put in place relevant personnel management strategies, especially in the working relationship with teachers, for a single reason: only students who obtain at least five (5) credit passes in these examinations can continue their education into any higher education. To this aim, Mohammed, Edu, and Etoh (2020) asserted that principals

who offer qualified teachers, usually through prompt requisitions to authorized authorities; provide the essential teaching-learning materials for instructional effectiveness; and, in addition, establish an enabling atmosphere and maintain an effective communication link with all other members of the subordinate chain known as the school management team (SMT), have a high likelihood of improving academic outcomes. It's no surprise that Edgeron and Kritsonis (2006) believe that principals can improve teachers' overall perceptions by simply attending to core components of effective relationships. Teachers become more effective in the classroom as they begin to feel better about themselves and their collective missions as a result of extensive interactions with their principals. Emotions and relationships have become an inextricable aspect of daily life, and they are nearly unavoidable in the classroom setting, as previously stated by Sias (2005).

When a school encounters the bad aspects of these feelings and relationships, it can be devastating to the members of the school community, particularly the helpless youngsters. Celebrating and sharing good practice and the results obtained is a powerful way to motivate people to make positive changes. Such a negative circumstance might be communicated or amplified by cultivating a favorable relationship between them in order to emotionally and practically empower them (Lewis, 2009).

According to Wheelan and Kesselring (2005), the co-worker exchange relationship inside an organization is influenced by the quality of the interaction between leaders and members. The importance of good communication and shared ideals in this partnership cannot be overstated. In an ideal world, a principal would be able to get staff to agree on regulations and how they should be enforced. Effective communication techniques must be known and understood by the principal. The single most critical aspect for effective school improvement programs has been stated as creating a collaborative environment and open communication (Misbah, Sabana and Safia, 2020).

The relationships that principals form with teachers have a direct impact on teacher trust and support, as well as on teachers' impressions of student participation. School administrators must be able to strike a balance between changing community situations and school culture. The best school leaders can tilt the balance to propel their schools to new heights, but only when the principal and teachers have a positive connection. Expectations are the foundation of a successful principal-teacher relationship (Misbah, 2020).

Empirical Studies

Misbah, Shabana, and Safia (2020) looked at the impact of schools with positive and healthy principal-teacher interactions, as well as the elements that help and contribute to learning outcomes, character development, and citizenship. A total of 209 instructors and 19 principals were included in the sample size. The findings of the literature review were corroborated by the findings of the study, which corroborated prior studies and studies that suggest that teacher support has a substantial impact on their relationships and educational goals. In the Albanian context, Arijaq, Silva, and Denisa (2021) investigated the impact of the teacher-student interaction on the academic achievement of pupils aged 12 to 15. A total of 121 pupils from three Tirana 9-year schools made up the sample. Individual attributes such as temperament, personality, ability, and psychological effects were found to be related to internal elements that influence the teacher-student connection. Chukwu and Deba (2020) investigated the impact of teacher-student relationships on students' academic performance in Bauchi State's colleges of education. The study population is made up of students from Bauchi State's two institutions of education, Aminu Saleh College of Education Azare and

Adamu Tafawa Balewa College of Education, Kangere. From this group, a sample of sixty (60) teachers and thirty (30) students was drawn at random from the aforesaid institutions, with each institution receiving a sample of sixty (60) teachers and thirty (30) students. The data was obtained using a closed-ended structured questionnaire, and the results were analyzed using the mean average. The study's findings revealed that teacher-student relationships had a moderate impact on students' academic achievement in Bauchi State's colleges of education. Using Magu District as a case study, Mahona and Demetria (2020) investigated the impact of teacher-student relationships on students' academic achievement in Tanzania. This study took the form of a descriptive survey. The findings of this study revealed that in Tanzanian public secondary schools, the interaction between teachers and students is a critical factor and catalyst for academic performance. According to the findings, despite the fact that teachers and students were aware of the characteristics of teacher-student relationships, the relationships were weak. In senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria, Mohammed, Edu, and Etoh (2020) investigated the impact of schools maintaining strong and healthy relationships between principals and teachers, as well as the elements that facilitate and contribute to student academic performance. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. As a result, regression analysis was employed to examine the assumptions in question. The results revealed that the principal's interpersonal contact with teachers has a weakly significant favorable impact on pupils' academic achievement (1.029; 0.05). Years of experience, on the other hand, are positively negligible in improving students' academic performance ($\beta_1=0.020$; $p>0.05$). In the South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, Ekechukwu and Ifeanyichukwu (2021) researched the principal-staff interaction for effective secondary school management. Using the test-retest procedure, the instrument was verified and a reliability index of 0.86 was established. The study found that efficient school management occurs when the principal-staff relationship is free of jealousy and hostility, intimidation, pride, and a non-challant attitude toward the wellbeing of employees and kids. Effective communication, group decision-making, adherence to the staff code of conduct, the principle of fair hearing, and the showing of sympathy and empathy were discovered to be important attributes of principals-staff that increase effective secondary school administration in the zone.

Methodology

For this study, a descriptive survey research design was used. Three senior secondary schools in Oji-River, Enugu State, Nigeria made up the study's population. Two hundred and twenty-nine (229) pupils from these three senior secondary schools are; Oji-Urban Secondary School, Boy's Secondary School, Inyi, and Community Secondary School Isiama, Awlaw.. Based on the modified likert scale format of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, the instrument has two sections and 20 questionnaire items. Colleagues tested the questionnaire for face and content validity. The test-retest reliability approach was used, resulting in a reliability value of 0.86. The questionnaires were retrieved in their entirety.

Data analysis

Research Question One

How does teacher's relationship with students influence academic performance of senior secondary school students in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean responses of the influence of good teacher's - students relationship in academic performance of senior secondary school students in Enugu State

| S/N | Influence of Teacher-Students on academic performance | SD | X | Decision |
|-----|--|------|------|----------|
| 1 | Students' academic performance is influenced by teachers who teach with enthusiasm and passion. | 1.64 | 3.28 | Agree |
| 2 | Teachers consistently provide students with an organized learning environment to have an impact on their academic success. | 1.59 | 3.17 | Agree |
| 3 | Teachers encourage kids to participate in extracurricular activities. | 1.62 | 3.24 | Agree |
| 4 | Teachers go above and beyond for children who require assistance, volunteering their time to tutor them. | 1.64 | 3.28 | Agree |
| 5 | Teachers treat pupils with respect and have an impact on their academic achievement. | 1.71 | 3.42 | Agree |

Data presented in Table 1 shows the item by item analysis of the influence of good teacher-students relationship on academic performance of students' in secondary schools. The result revealed that all the questions answered scored above the benchmark (2.50), showing that the level of respondents rated the item is highly effective. The implications are that; teachers treat the students with respect, influence academic performance of students, teach with Enthusiasm and Passion, influence students' academic performance, and teachers always provide students, with a structured learning environment, influence students' academic performance, and likes.

Table 2: Mean responses of the effect of Poor Teacher-Students' Relationships in Secondary Schools

| Students in Enugu State | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|------|------|----------|
| S/N | Poor Teacher-Students' Relationships in Secondary Schools Students | SD | X | Decision |
| 1 | Immoral attitude and behaviour of students | 1.50 | 3.11 | Agree |
| 2 | Lack of professional supports from teachers. | 1.56 | 3.19 | Agree |
| 3 | Poor academic performance of students | 1.65 | 3.39 | Agree |
| 4 | Encouraging school dropout | 1.70 | 3.38 | Agree |
| 5 | Lack of Team work and motivation. | 1.74 | 4.48 | Agree |

The data presented on table above revealed that the effect of Poor Teacher-Students' Relationships in Secondary Schools in Enugu State (X 3.11, 3.19, 3.39, 3.38, and 4.48).

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; show that poor teachers-students relationship can lead to immoral attitude and behaviour, poor academic performance of students, encouraging school dropout and lack of team work and motivation in secondary schools.

Data presented in Table 2 shows the item by item analysis and the result showed that all the questions answered scores above the benchmark (2.50), showing that the level of respondents rated the item is highly effective. The implications are that; poor teachers-students relationship influence academic performance of students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study show that teacher-student connections have a moderate impact on students' academic achievement in Enugu State's secondary schools. The study's findings demonstrate that the item was considered extremely effective by the majority of respondents. The implications are that good teachers treat students with respect, have an impact on their academic performance, teach with enthusiasm and passion, have an impact on students' academic performance, and always provide students with a structured learning environment, all of which have an impact on their academic performance and likes. In secondary schools, poor teacher-student relationships can lead to unethical attitudes and behavior, low academic achievement, school dropout, and a lack of teamwork and enthusiasm.

The study recommends that:

1. Teachers and school officials should make efforts to instill the value of teacher-student interactions in order to improve students' academic achievement.
2. Teachers should be encouraged to build their personal interactions with students, as this will improve the state's pupils' academic achievement.
3. To improve academic achievement in senior secondary schools, parent-teacher associations should foster supportive ties in the classroom.

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