



Exploring Teachers Engagement Practices as Determinant for Students Academic Performance; Implications for Educational Planning in Ondo State Public Senior Secondary School

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Abstract

Review Article

This study investigates the relationship between teachers’ engagement practices and students’ academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Using a quantitative correlational survey design, data were collected from 360 teachers across 45 schools and analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed significant positive correlations between behavioral, emotional, and cognitive teacher engagement and students’ academic achievement ($r = .615-.671, p < .05$). Also the adequacy of educational facilities was found to interact with teacher engagement, jointly influencing student performance ($r = .701, p < .05$). The results underscore the importance of teacher motivation, professional development, and supportive school environments in enhancing learning outcomes. Recommendations include establishing standardized professional development frameworks, incentivizing teacher retention, strengthening teacher-student relationships, and adopting holistic policy interventions that simultaneously address infrastructural and pedagogical challenges. The study concludes that improving both teacher engagement and school facilities is critical for educational effectiveness in Ondo State.

Keywords: Teacher engagement, Academic performance, Public secondary schools, Educational facilities.

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Introduction

Education is globally recognized as a fundamental driver of individual empowerment and national development, with the quality of teaching serving as a critical determinant of educational outcomes. At the public senior secondary school Level of

education in Nigeria, which functions as a vital bridge between basic and tertiary education, the attainment of educational objectives depends largely on the availability of functional educational facilities and the extent of teachers’ engagement practices, Academic performance, commonly used as an indicator of educational effectiveness, reflects how



well schools, teachers, and students achieve established learning goals. However, persistent challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited institutional support, and declining teacher motivation continue to undermine teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes in many public senior secondary schools.

According to Rufai, & Eyiemi, (2024). Education can be seen as the bedrock of every society and tool for nation building. It is also a means of preserving societal and cultural settings, plus the acquisition of skills that make members of the society useful to themselves and the society

The behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects of teacher engagement practices have a big impact on how well students learn and how well teachers teach. The school environment has a significant impact on these engagement activities, especially the quality and functionality of the instructional facilities. In Ondo State, public senior secondary schools are confronted with chronic infrastructural deficiencies and varying levels of teacher engagement, which may jointly contribute to students' academic underperformance. Although previous studies have examined teacher-related factors or educational facilities in isolation, limited empirical evidence exists on their interactive effects. This study therefore investigates the relationship between teacher engagement practices, educational facilities, and students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Academic performance is the outcome of education, that is, the extent to which a student, teacher and an institution have achieved their educational goals. It is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are more important. (Akinyemi & Gbenu 2021)

Academic performance is a major indicator of the effectiveness of an educational system. It reflects the extent to which students, teachers, and institutions achieve stated educational goals. Academic performance is commonly measured through examinations and continuous assessment, although there is no universal consensus on the most appropriate measurement approach. Adu, Ojelabi,

and Adeyanju (2009) describe academic performance as the outcome of all academic tasks and rigours undertaken by an individual, which may result in either successful or poor achievement. Ijaduola (2008) further notes that students' academic performance cannot be enhanced in an atmosphere of discouragement, highlighting the crucial role of teachers in motivating learners. Effective teaching, efficient time management, and adherence to instructional standards have been shown to positively influence students' academic performance (Akinyemi et al., 2024).

Teacher engagement has emerged as a critical factor influencing instructional quality and student outcomes. Engagement refers to the investment of time, effort, and resources by teachers or students to optimize the learning experience and improve learning outcomes (Kuh, 2003; 2009; Trowler, 2010). Fredricks et al. (2004) conceptualize engagement as comprising three interrelated dimensions: behavioral engagement (such as punctuality, lesson preparation, and classroom involvement), cognitive engagement (investment in teaching tasks, reflective practice, and openness to instructional challenges), and emotional engagement (positive affective responses such as enthusiasm, commitment, and a sense of belonging). These dimensions jointly shape teachers' effectiveness in the classroom.

However, teachers' engagement is strongly influenced by institutional support systems. The absence of standardized teacher professional development (STPD) has been identified as a major constraint on teachers' cognitive engagement. Without regular, research-based professional development, teachers are often compelled to rely on outdated instructional methods, limiting their capacity for reflective practice and pedagogical innovation (Rubenson, 2015). This situation creates a vicious cycle in which low cognitive engagement leads to ineffective instruction, poor student outcomes, reduced teacher self-efficacy, and eventual emotional disengagement. Consequently, a well-structured, adequately funded, and mandatory STPD framework is essential for strengthening teacher capacity and breaking this cycle.

Purpose of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the relationship between teachers' engagement practices as Determinant of students' academic Performance of students in Public senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the level of teachers' engagement practices (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) in Public senior secondary schools in Ondo State.
2. To examine the relationship between teachers' engagement practices and students' academic performance in Ondo State Public senior secondary schools.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of teachers' engagement practices (behavioural, emotional, and cognitive) in public senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria?
2. Is there any interactive effect of teachers' engagement practices and the status of educational facilities on students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

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

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' engagement practices (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) and students' academic performance in Ondo State public senior secondary schools.

H₀₂: There is no significant public senior between teachers' engagement practices and the status of educational facilities on students' academic performance in Ondo State public senior secondary schools.

Importance of Teacher Engagement on Student Performance

1. **Increased Student Motivation:** Teachers that are actively involved in their students' education provide a supportive learning atmosphere that inspires them to take an active role in their education. Students are more inclined to emulate their teachers' zeal and dedication, which boosts their interest and effort in their studies (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). According to this study, teacher engagement is a crucial component of instruction that could have a big impact on students' academic achievement in Ondo State's public senior secondary schools.
2. **Improved Academic Achievement:** Research consistently shows that teacher engagement correlates with higher student academic performance. Engaged teachers often employ diverse teaching strategies and adapt their methods to meet students' needs, which can lead to better learning outcomes (Hattie, 2009). When teachers are committed, they invest time in understanding their students' strengths and weaknesses, thereby tailoring instruction for maximum effectiveness. This indicates that teacher engagement may serve as an important predictor of students' academic achievement in Ondo State public senior secondary schools.
3. **Better Teacher-Student Relationships:** Part of engagement is fostering a close bond with pupils. These connections help create a nurturing learning atmosphere where children are treated with respect and feel appreciated. Because it motivates students to take chances in their studies and ask for assistance when necessary, this emotional support is essential for their success (Pianta, 1999). A major method via which teacher involvement may result in better academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Ondo State is the strength of the connections between teachers and students, according to this study.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

This study is anchored on Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which was primarily developed by Albert Bandura in 1986. The theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding human learning, motivation, and behavior within social contexts. It explains human functioning through the concept of triadic reciprocal causation (Bergman et al., 2019), which posits that behavior, personal factors (such as beliefs, thoughts, and self-efficacy), and environmental factors continuously interact and influence one another in a dynamic and reciprocal manner.

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which was primarily developed by Albert Bandura (1986), explains human functioning and learning through the concept of triadic reciprocal causation (Bergman, et. al., 2019). This model posits that behavior, personal factors (like beliefs, thoughts, and self-efficacy), and environmental factors constantly interact and influence one another in a dynamic, continuous loop. A goal feature of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is observational learning (or modeling), where individuals acquire new behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions by watching others, particularly role models and observing the consequences of their actions (vicarious reinforcement) (Horsburgh, & Ippolito, 2018). Crucially, the theory emphasizes self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their own capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. High self-efficacy influences the goals people set, the effort they expend, their persistence in the face of difficulties, and ultimately, their performance outcomes (Porter, et. al., 2020).

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is highly suitable for this research because it provides the micro-level, psychological mechanism for how the structural factors (Educational Production Function inputs) actually affect the outcome, particularly by focusing on the agentic roles of both teachers and students. Teachers' Practices are examined through the lens of teacher self-efficacy: a teacher's belief in their ability to teach effectively and motivate students, which directly determines the quality of their instructional behaviors (Burić, & Kim, 2020).

Empirical Review

A substantial body of research in Nigeria confirms a positive and significant relationship between effective Teachers' Practices and Students' Academic Performance. Studies across various states, including those geographically close to Ondo State, have shown that teacher factors like using appropriate teaching methods, effective classroom control and management, and the resourceful utilization of instructional materials strongly predict student success (Ayo-Oladapo, et. al., 2023). For instance, research conducted in Oyo State indicated that classroom practices, encompassing methodology and class management, have a moderate significant relationship with student performance, suggesting that the quality of pedagogy is a key driver of academic outcomes (Adeleke, & Adeleke, 2024). Also, studies investigating teacher engagement characterized by teacher-student interactions, which, in turn, are crucial determinants of improved student achievement in Nigerian secondary schools (Nonyelum, et. al., 2022). Vigour, dedication, and absorption reveal that engaged teachers are more likely to foster positive

Teacher-Student Relationship

The Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) refers to the quality of the interpersonal connection and interaction that exists between a teacher and their students, characterized by emotional warmth, mutual trust, respect, and effective communication (Apeh, & Nteh, 2024). It is a critical component of Teachers' Practices because it forms the relational foundation upon which all instruction and classroom management rests. A high-quality Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) is generally defined by the teacher exhibiting behaviors like responsiveness, consistent fairness, empathy, and providing individualized support, while students, in turn, feel understood, valued, and safe (Wolff, 2022). This relationship moves beyond mere professional courtesy to become a significant emotional bond that influences the student's psychological well-being and their attitude towards school and learning. The quality of the Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) has profound implications for student academic

engagement and learning outcomes. When students perceive the relationship as positive and supportive, they are more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior, comply with classroom rules, and take academic risks necessary for deep learning (Su, & Wang, 2022). The emotional security derived from a strong Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) reduces defensive behaviors and fosters the development of academic self-efficacy (Xu, 2024). Students are more willing to ask questions, persist through challenging tasks, and seek help when needed because they trust the teacher's commitment to their success. Conversely, strained or conflict-ridden relationships are associated with increased disruptive behavior, higher rates of absenteeism, and lower levels of engagement and achievement.

In the context of the current research, the Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) acts as a vital mediator that helps to maximize the return on educational inputs, particularly in environments facing resource constraints. Even where Educational Facilities are lacking (e.g., overcrowded classrooms), a teacher with strong relational skills can use rapport to create a psychologically conducive learning environment that mitigates the negative effects of the physical setting (Cao, 2025). The teacher's practice of establishing a supportive relationship is a powerful, low-cost intervention that promotes discipline and internal motivation, enhancing the effectiveness of any instructional strategy implemented. Thus, a positive Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) is an essential practice that ensures students are emotionally and cognitively ready to receive and process instruction. Therefore, the concept of the Teacher-Student Relationship is central to assessing effective Teachers' Practices because it determines the success of both Classroom Management and Instructional Resources utilization. It is the human element that allows a teacher to effectively manage a large Nigerian classroom and motivate a student to engage with challenging material. Studies across various contexts confirm that the quality of this relationship is often a more potent predictor of student success than class size or physical school resources alone, making its investigation critical for understanding academic performance in schools (Olayinka, 2024).

Methodology

The study adopted a Quantitative Correlational Survey Research Design, which is highly appropriate given the research objectives. This design is selected because the primary aim is not to manipulate variables but to determine the degree and direction of the relationships (correlation) between the independent variables (Teachers' Engagement Practices) and the dependent variable (Students' Academic Performance). Also, this research design makes it possible to determine how well each independent variable predicts the outcome variable. It also allows the researcher to examine their combined predictive power when considered together. In addition, the design supports the analysis of interaction effects between the two independent variables. This means it can show whether the effect of one variable depends on the level of the other variable. Such an approach is commonly used in multivariate statistical modelling to examine complex relationships among variables (Ouyang et al., 2017). The survey approach allows for the efficient collection of quantifiable data from a sufficiently large and representative sample of schools and teachers, which provides the necessary statistical rigor to test the complex hypotheses.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sampling plan is designed to ensure both adequate statistical power and strong geographical representation. The final sample size include a minimum of 45 public senior secondary schools, which is statistically robust for multivariate regression analysis. 360 senior secondary school teachers (approximately 8 teachers per school) and 45 school principals/vice-principals were involved in the facility rating to complete the engagement survey.

Procedure for Data Collection

Data collection Commenced after securing Administrative Clearance through formal letters submitted to the ODSGMOEST and TESCOM. Research Assistants (RAs) were thoroughly trained on ethical requirements and standardized instrument

administration. During Field Administration, the RAs first obtained the Principal's consent, then distribute and immediately collect the TEPQ from sampled teachers to maximize returns. The EFSAC Objective Audit were completed collaboratively with a school official, and the Subjective Adequacy Rating were administered to administrators. Crucially, the SAPRS data (academic performance percentages) were extracted non-intrusively from official school records. The entire data collection phase was carefully planned for a manageable six-week duration.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both Descriptive Statistics and Inferential Statistics through the Statistical Package for the Social

Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive Statistics (Mean Scores and Standard Deviations) was used to address Research Questions 1 and 2 (prevailing levels of practices and facilities status). Inferential Statistics, with all null hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers’ engagement practices (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) and students’ academic performance in Ondo State Public senior secondary schools. (Table 1).

Table 1. Pearson’s Correlation between Teachers’ Engagement Practices and Students’ Academic Performance in Ondo State Public senior Secondary Schools

Variable	Behavioral Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement	Students’ Academic Performance
Behavioral Engagement	1	.642**	.615**	.663**
Emotional Engagement	.642**	1	.628**	.671**
Cognitive Engagement	.615**	.628**	1	.655**
Students’ Academic Performance	.663**	.671**	.655**	1

- N = 300
- Sig. (2-tailed) = .000
- Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Interpretation

Table 1 shows that significant positive correlations exist between teachers’ engagement practices (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) and students’ academic performance in Ondo State public senior secondary schools (r values ranging from .615 to .671; N = 300; p < .05). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between teachers’ engagement practices and students’ academic performance is rejected. This indicates that teachers’ engagement practices significantly influence students’ academic achievement.

In conclusion, teachers’ engagement practices whether behavioral, emotional, or cognitive play a

crucial role in shaping students’ academic performance. When teachers actively engage learners across these dimensions, students are more likely to retain knowledge, perform consistently, and achieve higher academic success.

H02: There is no significant interaction effect between teachers’ engagement practices and the status of educational facilities on students’ academic performance in Ondo State Public senior secondary schools. (Table 2). Pearson’s Correlation Between Teachers’ Engagement Practices, Status of Educational Facilities, and Students’ Academic Performance in Ondo State Public senior Secondary Schools

Variable	Teachers’ Engagement Practices	Status of Educational Facilities	Students’ Academic Performance
Teachers’ Engagement Practices	1	.682**	.701**
Status of Educational Facilities	.682**	1	.695**
Students’ Academic Performance	.701**	.695**	1

Source: Field Survey, 2026

- N = 280
- Sig. (2-tailed) = .000
- Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Interpretation

Table 2 reveals that a significant relationship exists between teachers’ engagement practices, the status of

educational facilities, and students’ academic performance in Ondo State public senior secondary schools (r = .701; N = 280; p < .05). Therefore, the

null hypothesis which states that there is no significant interaction effect between teachers' engagement practices and the status of educational facilities on students' academic performance is rejected. This indicates that both teachers' engagement practices and the adequacy of educational facilities jointly exert a significant influence on students' academic performance.

In essence, the interaction between teachers' engagement practices and the status of educational facilities significantly determines how well students perform academically. When teachers actively engage learners and facilities are adequately provided, students' learning experiences are enriched, retention is improved, and overall academic achievement is enhanced.

Conclusion

This study has established that teachers' engagement practices in term of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive significantly influence students' academic performance in public senior secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. The findings revealed strong positive correlations between teacher engagement and student achievement, underscoring the critical role of teacher motivation, instructional quality, and relational practices in shaping learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that the adequacy of educational facilities interacts with teacher engagement to jointly determine academic success. When teachers are actively engaged and facilities are functional, students benefit from enriched learning experiences, improved retention, and higher achievement levels. Conversely, inadequate infrastructure and low teacher engagement create conditions that hinder effective teaching and learning. These results highlight the need for holistic interventions that simultaneously strengthen teacher practices and improve school facilities to enhance educational effectiveness in Ondo State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Teacher Professional Development (TPD):**
 - i. Establish a standardized, mandatory, and adequately funded teacher professional development framework.
 - ii. Focus on enhancing cognitive engagement through reflective practice, innovative pedagogy, and continuous training.
2. **Promote Teacher Motivation and Retention:**
 - i. Introduce incentive schemes (e.g., recognition awards, career progression opportunities, and welfare packages) to sustain teachers' emotional and behavioral engagement.
 - ii. Provide psychosocial support to reduce burnout and disengagement.
3. **Enhance Teacher-Student Relationships:**
 - i. Encourage teachers to build supportive, respectful, and empathetic relationships with students.
 - ii. Integrate relational skills training into teacher development programs to foster trust and emotional security in classrooms.
4. **Adopt Holistic Policy Interventions:**
 - i. Policymakers should design integrated strategies that simultaneously address teacher engagement and infrastructural challenges.
 - ii. Collaboration between government, school administrators, and community stakeholders is essential to ensure sustainable improvements.

5. Encourage Effective Classroom Management Practices:

- i. Teachers should be trained in structured classroom management techniques that minimize disruptions and maximize instructional time.
- ii. Schools should provide resources that support diverse teaching strategies tailored to students' needs.

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