



Teachers Characteristics as Determinant of Students' Academic Performance in Lagos State Senior Secondary Schools, Nigeria

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Abstract	Original Research Article
<p>The study examined the relationship between teachers' characteristics and students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised to guide the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study was anchored on the Theory of Educational Effectiveness. Descriptive survey of correlational designs was adopted. The study population comprised 8,865 teachers and all SSS 3 students in the 327 Lagos State senior secondary school students, Nigeria. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to generate the sample size of 351 teachers and SSS 3 students in Lagos State senior secondary school. Two research instruments were used to collect data, titled: Teachers' Characteristics Questionnaire (TCQ) responded to by teachers and Records Observation Format (ROF) of SSS 3 students WASSCE in Lagos State. The instrument reliability was subjected to test-retest method using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis at 0.72 and 0.74. The data collected were analysed using the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 26.0. The test of the first and second hypotheses showed that a positive, strong and significant relationship existed between teacher professional experience and students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools, Nigeria ($r = .59, \rho < 0.05$); and a positive, strong and significant relationship existed between teachers' characteristics and students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools, Nigeria ($r = .62, \rho < 0.05$). The study concluded that teachers' characteristics contributes positively to students' academic performance in Lagos State public public senior secondary schools, Nigeria. The study therefore, recommended that teachers' characteristics such as experience significantly contributed to students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary school.</p> <p>Keywords: School Principal, Student Academic Performance, Professional Experience and Teacher Characteristics.</p>	

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Introduction

All over the world, education stands as one of the most powerful instruments for transforming societies and shaping the destinies of nations. In the context of developing countries like Nigeria, where human

capital remains the primary driver of economic growth and social development, the quality of education delivered at the secondary school level assumes critical importance. Secondary education serves as the bridge between foundational primary schooling and higher education or the world of work,

making it a decisive phase in the academic journey of every student. According to Shittu, Idowu and Adedapo (2022), most senior secondary schools in Nigeria have the following hierarchical structures with the principal as the head of the school. In contrast, vice principals are posited to assist the principal in academics and administration. The senior masters coordinate the daily routine of other teachers and boarding house masters. The administrative staff comprises the school secretary, bursar and office clerks, while the support staff includes the gardeners, security staff and cooks. Within this educational landscape, the teacher emerges not merely as a disseminator of information, but as the central figure whose personal attributes, professional competencies, and pedagogical approaches fundamentally determine the quality of learning outcomes achieved by students. Teachers have been shown to have an important influence on students' academic performance and they also play a crucial role in educational attainment because the teacher is ultimately responsible for translating policy into action and principles based on practice during interaction with the students (Akinyemi, Shittu, Faduyile & Orunbon, 2017). The role of teachers in shaping academic performance has been a subject of considerable scholarly interest across diverse educational contexts worldwide. According to Shittu, Agbola and Mohammed (2024), teaching is noble profession and teachers must operate within the established rules and regulations Teacher characteristics remains the single most determinant of student success.

However, academic performance of students in senior secondary schools continues to be a central concern for policymakers, educators, and researchers in Nigeria. The discrepancy between educational resources invested and the outcomes achieved in senior secondary schools has prompted investigations into the determinants of academic performance. Among the key variables consistently identified in educational research is the role of teachers' characteristics, which profoundly influence students' learning experiences, academic motivation, and ultimately, performance outcomes. In Lagos State, Nigeria a major educational hub understanding how teachers' attributes shape academic

performance is critical for improving educational quality and student achievement. Teachers' characteristics to include various professional and personal attributes such as academic qualifications, years of teaching experience, pedagogical skills, professional training, attitudes toward teaching, classroom management, and instructional effectiveness. Academic performance, on the other hand, is often defined by students' results in internal assessments or standardized external examinations like the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Existing literature suggests that teacher characteristics are part of the educational production function, serving as inputs that significantly shape student outcomes.

Moreso, the senior secondary school level in Nigeria represents a crucial transition point in the educational system. Students at this level are preparing for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) which serve as gatekeepers to higher education and employment opportunities. In Lagos State senior secondary schools, where students sit for crucial exit examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), experienced teachers frequently serve as mentors and academic coaches, helping students to internalize examination requirements and build confidence. The performance of students in these examinations has historically raised concerns among stakeholders, with national statistics indicating persistent challenges in achieving satisfactory pass rates, particularly in core subjects such as Mathematics, English Language, and the Sciences. Given the high stakes nature of these examinations and their implications for students' future prospects, investigating the factors that contribute to academic success or failure at this level becomes imperative.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, concerns have continued to grow about the fluctuating academic performance of students in senior secondary schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. Despite government investments in curriculum development, infrastructure, and policy reforms, students' outcomes in both internal and external examinations remain inconsistent. Public

discourse often attributes poor performance to factors such as inadequate facilities, large class sizes, or student-related issues. However, one critical factor that requires deeper scholarly attention is the characteristics of teachers and how these characteristics influence students' academic performance. Teachers occupy a central position in the teaching and learning process. Their professional qualifications, years of experience, subject mastery, pedagogical competence, commitment, personality traits, classroom management skills, and motivation levels significantly shape the quality of instruction delivered to students. In Lagos State senior secondary schools, variations exist in teachers' academic backgrounds, training exposure, and instructional approaches. Some teachers possess strong subject knowledge but may lack effective pedagogical skills, while others may demonstrate enthusiasm but struggle with classroom control. These differences raise important questions about how specific teacher characteristics contribute to or hinder students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on standardized assessments such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) has intensified scrutiny on school performance indicators. While students' results are frequently used to evaluate schools, insufficient empirical evidence exists on the extent to which teachers' characteristics directly account for variations in students' academic outcomes within Lagos State. Without such evidence, educational policies and professional development programmes may not adequately address the root causes of underperformance. There is therefore a pressing need to systematically examine the relationship between teachers' characteristics and students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to:

1. examine the relationship between teachers' professional experience and student academic

performance in senior secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria.

2. determine the relationship between teachers' characteristics and student academic performance in senior secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were raised:

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between teachers' professional experience and student academic performance in senior secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers' characteristics and student academic performance in senior secondary school in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

This study is anchored on theory of educational effectiveness was propounded by Creemers 1994. According to Creemers, effective instruction starts with teachers in the classrooms, and this refers to two important implications. Firstly, teachers as a central factor have to make a lot of decisions in the classroom: about goals, the allocation of time to (groups of or individual) students, the use of material, their own instruction, and behaviour management during the instructional process. Secondly, to guide the planning of the instructional process by teachers and the development of effective arrangements, central guiding ideas are of crucial importance. These can be found, next to the goals of education, in theories and research about learning and teaching, and in theories and research about the quality and effectiveness of instruction. The theory presents a holistic view on education as it considers the outcomes of education, the input, the process, and the context in which education takes place. Secondary schools Principals are seen to be responsible for managing the people's characters, the programme, and the structure through leadership (Shittu, Mbamaonyeukwe & Mohammed, 2025).

Teacher characteristics are multidimensional and can be broadly classified into professional, personal, and pedagogical dimensions. Each of these dimensions contributes uniquely to teachers' performance, students' academic achievement, and overall school effectiveness. Understanding these dimensions provides a theoretical framework for evaluating how teacher quality mediates the relationship between school leadership and educational outcomes. Professional characteristics refer to the knowledge, competence, ethics, and behaviour that define a teacher's professional identity and practice. Mohammed (2020) emphasises that professional characteristics include continuous learning, research engagement, and compliance with institutional and professional codes of conduct. Professional teachers demonstrate intellectual curiosity, participate in workshops and conferences, and adapt to innovations in teaching and assessment. Personal characteristics are the heart of effective teaching because they shape the emotional climate of the classroom. Teachers who are patient and empathetic are better able to understand students' needs, especially those from diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds. Such teachers use encouragement and motivation rather than fear or punishment to inspire learning.

Teaching experience is another characteristic widely explored in educational research. It encapsulates the cumulative years a teacher has spent in active instruction and is often associated with classroom management expertise, pedagogical refinement, and adaptive instructional judgment. According to research by Abiola and Yusuf (2020), teaching experience enhances a teacher's ability to create a conducive learning environment and address individual learner challenges. Similarly, Oladipo and Gbadegesin (2024) highlighted that teachers with longer years of service demonstrate higher instructional effectiveness, which translates into improved academic performance among secondary school students. These findings align with broader educational studies that emphasize the positive impact of teaching experience on student achievement and instructional quality (Johnson & Birkeland, 2020). Research over the past decade has increasingly highlighted that teacher characteristics such as academic qualifications, years of teaching

experience, subject specialization, use of learner-centered strategies, and engagement in continuous professional development correlate with students' academic performance (Akinola & Adeleke, 2022; Bello, 2023; Ezeudu & Nkwocha, 2021). Scholars argue that these characteristics shape the quality of instruction and the learning environment, with substantial implications for students' academic outcomes. The persistent concern with students' performance in examinations conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) underscores a need for systematic inquiry into the extent to which teacher-related factors explain variations in student achievement in senior secondary schools in Lagos State. The secondary senior school in Lagos State consist of Six (6) Education District (Odumbo, Shittu, Akiyemi & Momoh, 2017).

Moreso, teacher professional experience is another critical component of teacher human capital. Experienced teachers tend to have greater familiarity with curriculum content, better understanding of student learning needs, and more refined classroom management skills. They draw upon years of practice to anticipate student misunderstandings, differentiate instruction, and employ diverse teaching strategies. Several studies have highlighted the positive correlation between years of teaching experience and student performance. For instance, experienced teachers are often more adept at creating engaging classroom environments and using instructional materials effectively. In Lagos State senior secondary schools, where students sit for crucial exit examinations such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), experienced teachers frequently serve as mentors and academic coaches, helping students to internalize examination requirements and build confidence. Teacher qualifications have long been considered a fundamental indicator of teacher quality and a predictor of student achievement. In the Nigerian context, the minimum qualification for teaching at the secondary level is a Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or a Bachelor's degree in Education or in a relevant subject area.

However, the relationship between formal educational qualifications and teaching effectiveness is neither straightforward nor universally consistent.

While higher academic qualifications may indicate greater subject matter knowledge, they do not automatically translate into effective classroom instruction. The pedagogical skills required to convey complex concepts, manage diverse classrooms, and adapt teaching strategies to varied learning styles often depend as much on professional training and practical experience as on academic credentials. This complexity necessitates a nuanced examination of how different qualification levels among teachers in Lagos State secondary schools relate to the academic performance of their students. Teaching experience represents another critical variable that has attracted significant research attention. The intuitive assumption that teachers improve with years of practice finds support in various studies suggesting that experience contributes to the development of classroom management skills, instructional routines, and the ability to anticipate and address student learning difficulties.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The study population comprised 8,865 teachers and all SSS 3 students in the 327 Lagos State senior secondary school students, Nigeria. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 351 teachers and SSS 3 students was selected through simple random sampling techniques, ensuring equal representation across Education Districts in Lagos State senior secondary school. Two research instruments were

used to collect data, titled: Teachers’ Characteristics Questionnaire (TCQ) responded to by teachers and Records Observation Format (ROF) of SSS 3 students WASSCE in Lagos State. The instrument reliability was subjected to test-retest method using Pearson’s Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis at 0.72 and 0.74. The questionnaires were divided into two sections: Sections A and B. Section A sought respondents’ demographic information, while Section B contained structured items aligned with the research questions. Each of the items was measured using a four-point Likert-type rating scale, including: *Strongly Agree (SA)*, *Agree (A)*, *Strongly Disagree (SD)*, and *Disagree (D)*. The validity of the instruments was established by experts in educational management and measurement, who reviewed the items for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed using the Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0. This statistical tool was appropriate for measuring the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables in the study.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between teachers’ professional experience and students’ academic performance in Lagos State secondary schools, Nigeria.

Table 1: Pearson’s correlation analysis between teachers’ professional experience and students’ academic performance in Lagos State secondary schools, Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	α	Sig.
Teachers’ Professional Experience	351	3.45	0.75			
Students' Academic Performance	351	4.20	1.95	0.59	0.05	0.000

The result of the test performed indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between teachers’ professional experience and students’ academic performance in Lagos State secondary schools, Nigeria ($r = .59, p < 0.05$). The implication of this is that teachers’ professional experience positively influences students’ academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools, Nigeria to a large extent. Thus, the result shows that the teachers’ professional experience is statistically significant in determining students’ academic performance in Lagos State’s senior secondary schools, Nigeria. The null hypothesis is rejected; hence, there is a significant relationship between teachers’ professional experience and students’ academic performance in Lagos State’s senior secondary schools, Nigeria. In line with this, Fadimatu and Awodoyin (2025) investigated the

relationship between teachers’ subject mastery, teaching experience, and student achievement in post-basic schools. Their results indicated a significant positive association between teachers’ mastery of subject content and student academic performance, with high subject competence linked to better learning outcomes. This reinforces the notion that content mastery is a critical teacher attribute for academic success.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between teachers’ characteristics and students’ academic performance in Lagos State secondary schools, Nigeria.

Table 2: Relationship between teachers’ characteristics and students’ academic performance in Lagos State secondary schools, Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	α	Sig.
Teachers’ Characteristics	351	3.47	0.80			0.000
Students’ Academic Performance	351	4.20	1.95	0.62	0.05	0.000

The result of the test performed indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between teachers’ characteristics and students’ academic performance in Lagos State secondary schools, Nigeria ($r = .62, p < 0.05$). The implication of this is that teachers’ characteristics positively influences students’ academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools, Nigeria to a large extent. Thus, the result shows that the teachers’ characteristics are statistically significant in determining students’ academic performance in

Lagos State’s senior secondary schools, Nigeria. The null hypothesis is rejected; hence, there is a significant relationship between teachers’ characteristics and students’ academic performance in Lagos State’s senior secondary schools, Nigeria. This finding was in line with Folorunsho, Olorisade, and Bakare (2025), who found a significant positive relationship between teacher characteristics and students’ academic performance in Kwara State ($r = 0.674, p < .05$), indicating that teacher attributes play a crucial role in shaping learning outcomes. Several

studies have emphasised the importance of teacher quality, including professional qualifications and training. For instance, higher teacher quality characterised by qualifications and professional development, was significantly associated with improved student performance in Lagos State.

Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers' characteristics contributes positively to students' academic performance in Lagos State public public senior secondary schools, Nigeria. The findings of this study clearly show that teacher professional experience has a strong and positive impact on students' academic performance in Lagos State senior secondary schools. Teachers who demonstrate effective lesson planning, use appropriate instructional strategies, manage classrooms efficiently, employ instructional materials, and apply continuous assessment techniques create learning environments that actively engage students. When instruction is learner-centered, feedback is constructive, and teaching is adapted to students' needs, learners exhibit higher motivation, better comprehension, and improved academic outcomes. This underscores that pedagogical competence is a key driver of teaching effectiveness and meaningful learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Ministry of Education in Lagos State should place greater emphasis on recruiting qualified and professional teachers who possess the right academic experience.
2. School management should organize regular training programmes, workshops, seminars, and professional development activities for teachers to update their character.
3. Experience teachers should be encouraged to mentor younger and less experienced teachers within the school system in order to contribute positively to students' academic performance in senior secondary school

4. School principals should ensure effective supervision and monitoring of teachers' instructional activities to maintain high teaching standards.
5. Parents, communities, and other educational stakeholders should collaborate closely with teachers and school authorities to create a supportive learning environment for secondary school student in Lagos State.

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