



TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE CAUSES OF POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN WEST AFRICAN SENIOR SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

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Abstract

This paper focused on teachers' perception of the causes of poor academic performance of students in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations. The study was premised on descriptive research design of survey type. Two thousand two hundred and forty-two teachers in 36 public secondary schools and 1,882 in 42 private secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area formed the study population. Eighteen public and 21 private schools were selected proportionately. From each school, 10 teachers were randomly selected, totaling 390 respondents. Teachers' Perception on the Causes of Poor Academic Performance of Students in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations Questionnaire (TPCPAPSWASSCE) was used to collect data for the study. The instrument was validated, subjected to a reliability test and found a coefficient of 0.78. T-tests and percentages were utilized for data analysis. As revealed by the findings, poor seriousness of students to learning, poor commitment of teachers to teaching, and inadequate teacher motivation, among other things were the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE while school type and family size were not. It was recommended that the government and proprietors of private secondary schools make the teaching profession more attractive by adequately motivating teachers through financial and non-financial means and always providing adequate instructional resources for schools, to facilitate effective teaching and learning that would enhance students' performance in WASSCE.

Keywords: teachers' perception, academic performance, West African Senior School Certificate Examination

Introduction

Academic performance is crucial as it provides insight into students' success in learning within a specific period. In Nigeria, the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) assesses senior secondary school students before they complete their three-year program. However, poor academic performance in this examination has been a concern. Factors like parents' inability to fulfill their roles, such as paying school fees, providing necessary materials, and supervising their children's academic work, can contribute to this. Active parental support for children's education is crucial for their academic success. Other factors contributing to poor academic performance include incomplete syllabi coverage, teachers' lack of interest in students' understanding, absenteeism, poor teacher-student relationships, lateness, and inadequate student reinforcement.

Academic performance is essential because it is the channel via which parents, students, teachers, government and members of the public are informed about the level of success students have made in

learning within a specified period. In Nigeria, the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) conducted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) assesses senior secondary school students before they complete their three-year program. However, poor academic performance in this examination has been a concern. According to Worlu and Puyate (2022) factors like parents' inability to fulfill their roles, such as paying school fees and other levies at the right time, providing textbooks, and writing materials, and supervising their children's academic work, can contribute to poor academic performance. Oyedare et al. (2016) maintained that the extent to which parents actively support their children's education is a great determining factor of their academic performance. Other factors contributing to poor academic performance include incomplete syllabi coverage, teachers' lack of interest in students' understanding, absenteeism, poor teacher-student relationships, lateness, and inadequate student reinforcement (Etsey et al., 2015, Aremu & Sokan 2013).

Poor academic performance of Nigerian secondary school students in WASSCE has been a topic of discussion among stakeholders in education, especially members of the public, parents, teachers and government. To support this statement, the table below shows the performance of Nigerian students in WASSCE from 2014 to 2023.

Table 1: Performance of Students in WASSCE from 2014 to 2023

S/N	Year	Percentage of Students Who Got Five Credits and above, Including Mathematics and English Language
1.	2014	58.05
2.	2015	38.68
3.	2016	52.97
4.	2017	26.01
5.	2018	49.98
6.	2019	17.13
7.	2020	39.82
8.	2021	81.7
9.	2022	76.36
10.	2023	79.81

Source: West African Examination Council (2023)

As shown in Table 1, in the last ten years, only in 2014, 2016, 2021, 2022 and 2023 did the percentage of candidates achieving five credits, including English language and General Mathematics surpass the average. These scenarios testified to the fact that students' performance in WASSCE in the last 10 years has not been encouraging. Also, as shown in the table, in the last three years, students' performance was above 75% but not 100%. This prompted the researchers to investigate what might be the causes of this trend.

Several researchers have worked on related studies. Salako (2020) investigated the perception of teachers on the causes of poor students' academic performance in English Language in WASSCE and it was revealed that the school environment, poor dedication of teachers, peer influence, poor supervision and poor leadership caused poor students' academic performance. Oguejiofor (2021) conducted a study on factors responsible for poor academic achievement in junior secondary schools in Enugu North Local Government Area and found that poor teachers' commitment, poor motivation, poor attitudes of students to learning, poor environment and insufficient instructional resources were factors accountable for poor



academic achievement. George and Henry (2018) investigated students' poor academic performance in secondary schools in Iwo Local Government Area, Osun State. The findings of the study revealed that nonchalant attitudes of students towards learning, poor parental support, societal influence, poor conducive environment and shortage of instructional resources were the causes of poor students' academic performance. However, no previous studies have focused on secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government, Kwara State or examined family size, school type, poverty and teacher incompetence as factors that could be responsible for the poor performance of students. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE, considering differences based on school type and gender. One research question and two hypotheses were raised and answered in this study.

Research Question

One research question will be answered in the course of the study.

1. What are the teachers' perceptions on the cause of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE?

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: Teachers are not significantly different in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on school type.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on gender.

Literature Review

Academic performance is crucial in the education system. According to Alarape (2020), academic performance refers to the results which students have been able to achieve in school, after a period of learning. Poor academic performance is prevalent in secondary schools in Nigeria, and several factors contribute to it. Oduma (2016) identified variables such as non-conducive classroom environments, insufficiency of qualified teachers, poor communication skills, inadequate internet facilities, and limited access to modern equipment as causative factors responsible for poor students' academic performance. Ali et al. (2021) indicated that parental involvement, home background, student location, and teaching methods are prospective factors that determine the academic performance of students. Mosha (2014) found that teacher incompetence which resulted in skipping the teaching of some difficult topics in the syllabus, poor classroom conditions, lack of parental support to students learning, poverty, and large class sizes contribute to poor student performance in WASSCE. Oguejiofor et al. (2021) asserted that inadequate funding for education leads to shortages of necessary teaching materials and poor teacher remuneration, which affects school goals and student performance in Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE).

Alarape (2022) suggests that a lack of qualified teachers, insufficient instructional materials, and poor classroom environments can negatively affect the performance of secondary school students. According to Sam et al. (2018), lack of student motivation and qualified teachers, as well as poor academic performance, are interconnected. Salako (2020) opined that poor academic performance in Nigeria is a result of poor preparation on the part of students, inadequate coverage of syllabus, poor commitment of teachers to their professional duties due to poor motivation and inadequate support of parents or guardians to their children or wards' education. Oluwadare and Wilson (2019) identified poor teaching, nonchalant

attitudes of teachers, parents, and students towards education, and inadequate government funding as the root causes of poor academic performance. George and Henry (2018) maintained that addressing teachers' motivation through benefits, capacity building, salary, promotion, and working conditions could enhance students' performance in Nigerian secondary schools. Additionally, James (2021) believed that poor academic performance is not solely the fault of teachers, but also involves students, parents, and the government.

Methodology

The study focused on the teachers' perception of the causes of poor students' academic performance in WASSCE. It used a descriptive research design of the survey type and involved 4,324 teachers, with 2,442 from 36 public and 1,882 from 42 private secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area. The sample represented 50% of the entire population of teachers. The study used a stratified sampling technique to group all the secondary schools in the area into private and public, and then randomly selected 18 public secondary schools out of 36 and 21 private secondary schools out of 42. With the use of a simple random sampling technique, 10 teachers were selected from each of the sampled schools, totaling 390 respondents, which represented 16% of the entire population. A self-designed questionnaire titled "Teachers' Perception on the Causes of Poor Academic Performance of Students in West African Senior School Certificate Examinations Questionnaire" (TPCPAPSWASSCE) was used to gather data for the study. The researcher sought feedback from three Educational Management lecturers at the Federal College of Education, Iwo, Osun State, who made professional inputs and suggested corrections, ensuring the questionnaire's accuracy. Reliability was determined by administering the instrument to 30 participants not involved in the study. The analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient of 0.78. Afterwards, the instrument was administered to respondents in various sampled schools by a team of four researchers, who then collected the questionnaires immediately after administration. The research questions were answered and the sample was analyzed using percentages, while hypotheses were tested using a t-test at a significance level of 0.05.

Findings

Distribution of Respondents

Table 2: *Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	171	47.5
Female	199	52.5
Total	370	100

Table 2 shows the percentage of the sample of respondents based on gender. As shown in the table, 47.5% of the respondents were male while 52.5% were female.

Table 3: *Distribution of Schools Based on Type*

School Type	Frequency	Percentage
Public	18	46.2
Private	21	53.8
Total	39	100

Table 3 shows the percentage of the sampled secondary schools based on type. As shown in the table, public schools had 46.2% while private schools got 53.8%.

Research Question One: What are the teachers’ perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE?

Table 4: Teachers’ Perceptions on the Causes of Poor Academic Performance of Students in WASSCE

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Poor seriousness of students to learning	241 (66.9%)	92 (25.6%)	17 (4.7%)	10 (2.8%)
2.	Poor commitment of teachers to teaching	195 (54.2%)	102 (28.3%)	48 (13.3%)	15 (4.2%)
3.	Inadequate teacher motivation	203 (56.4%)	139 (38.6%)	12 (3.3%)	6 (1.7%)
4.	Poverty	101 (28%)	190 (52.8%)	24 (6.7%)	45 (12.5%)
5.	Poor parents or guardians’ support for their children or wards’ education	271 (75.2%)	56 (15.6%)	13 (3.6%)	20 (5.6%)
6.	Non-conduciveness of the classroom environment	293 (81.4%)	44 (12.2%)	19 (5.3%)	4 (1.1%)
7.	Incompetence of teachers	144 (40%)	129 (35.8%)	51 (14.2%)	36 (10%)
8.	School type (private or public)	35 (9.7%)	24 (6.7%)	138 (38.3%)	163 (45.3%)
9.	Insufficiency of instructional resources	201 (55.8%)	111 (30.8%)	7 (2%)	41 (11.4%)
10.	Family size	79 (21.9%)	10 (2.8%)	213 (59.2%)	58 (16.1%)

Table 4 shows the teachers’ perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE. As shown in the Table, 66.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with item 1 “Poor seriousness of students to learning”, 25.6% agreed, 47% disagreed and 2.8% strongly disagreed. 54.2% strongly agreed with item 2 “Poor commitment of teachers to teaching”, 28.3% agreed, 13.3% disagreed and 4.2% strongly disagreed. 56.4% strongly agreed with item 3 “Inadequate teacher motivation”, 38.6% agreed, 3.3% disagreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed. 28% strongly agreed with item 4 “Poverty”, 52.8% agreed, 6.7% disagreed and 12.5% strongly disagreed. 75.2% strongly agreed with item 5 “Poor parents or guardians’ support to their children or wards’ education”, 15.6% agreed, 3.6% disagreed and 5.6% strongly disagreed. 81.4% strongly agreed with item 6 “non-conduciveness of classroom environment”, 12.2% agreed, 5.3% disagreed and 1.1% strongly disagreed. 40% strongly agreed with item 7 “Incompetence of teachers”, 35.8% agreed, 14.2% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed. 9.7% strongly agreed with item 8 “School type (private or public)”, 6.7% agreed, 38.3% disagreed and 45.3% strongly disagreed. 55.8% strongly agreed with item 9 “Insufficiency of instructional resources”, 30.8% agreed, 2% disagreed and 11.4% strongly disagreed. 21.9% strongly agreed with item 10 “Insufficiency of instructional resources”, 2.8% agreed, 59.2% disagreed and 16.1% strongly disagreed.

Table 4 shows the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE. As shown in Table 4, 66.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with item 1, "Poor seriousness of students to learning", 25.6% agreed, 47% disagreed, and 2.8% strongly disagreed. For item 2, "Poor commitment of teachers to teaching", 54.2% strongly agreed, 28.3% agreed, 13.3% disagreed, and 4.2% strongly disagreed. 56.4% strongly agreed with item 3, "Inadequate teacher motivation", 38.6% agreed, 3.3% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed. For item 4, "Poverty", 28% strongly agreed, 52.8% agreed, 6.7% disagreed, and 12.5% strongly disagreed. 75.2% strongly agreed with item 5, "Poor parents or guardians' support to their children or wards' education", 15.6% agreed, 3.6% disagreed, and 5.6% strongly disagreed. 81.4% strongly agreed with item 6, "non-conduciveness of classroom environment", 12.2% agreed, 5.3% disagreed, and 1.1% strongly disagreed. As for item 7, "Incompetence of teachers", 40% strongly agreed, 35.8% agreed, 14.2% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed. For item 8, "School type (private or public)", 9.7% strongly agreed, 6.7% agreed, 38.3% disagreed, and 45.3% strongly disagreed. 55.8% strongly agreed with item 9, "Insufficiency of instructional resources", 30.8% agreed, 2% disagreed, and 11.4% strongly disagreed. Finally, 21.9% strongly agreed with item 10, "Insufficiency of instructional resources", 2.8% agreed, 59.2% disagreed, and 16.1% strongly disagreed.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on school type.

Table 5: *Difference in the Teachers' Perceptions of the Causes of Poor Academic Performance of Students in WASSCE Based on School Type*

School type	N	\bar{x}	SD	Calculated t-value	p-value	Decision
Public	172	3.83	.95	2.33	.068	Retained
Private	182	4.12	1.17			

Table 5 presents the calculated t-value (2.33) and the p-value (.068) which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, hypothesis one is retained. This signifies that there was no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on school type.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on gender.

Table 6: *Difference in the Teachers' Perception of the Causes of Poor Academic Performance of Students in WASSCE based on gender*

Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	Calculated t-value	p-value	Decision
Male	161	3.93	1.21	2.49	.072	Retained
Female	199	4.02	1.36			



Table 6 shows the calculated t-value (2.49) and the p-value (.072) which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Hence, hypothesis two is retained. This signifies that there was no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on gender.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that the poor seriousness of students towards learning, lack of commitment of teachers to teaching, inadequate teacher motivation, poverty, lack of support from parents or guardians for their children's education, non-conducive classroom environment, incompetence of teachers, and lack of instructional resources were the primary causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE. The type of school (public or private) and family size were found not to be significant factors affecting academic performance. This finding is consistent with the study by Oguejiofor et al. (2021), which revealed inadequate financial allocation, poor availability of teaching aids, poor learning environment, lack of materials or facilities, large class sizes, and poor teachers' qualifications as the causes of poor academic performance. Additionally, Alarape (2022) showed that poor parenting, instructional delivery, lack of student commitment to learning, teacher motivation and supervision, insufficient instructional resources, and peer influence were also identified as factors contributing to poor student performance.

Further, findings showed that teachers were not significantly different in their perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on school type. This finding agrees with the finding of George and Henry (2018) which revealed that there was no significant difference between teachers' opinions on the causes of poor students' academic performance in Ogbomosho South Local Government secondary schools, Oyo State based on school type. This finding also supports the position of James (2021) that many factors determine the poor performance of students in Nigerian secondary schools but school type is not one of them. Findings showed that there was no significant difference in the teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance of students in WASSCE based on gender. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Alarape (2022) which found that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers' opinions on the causes of poor students' academic performance in Ogbomosho South Local Government secondary schools, Oyo State.

The results of this study also showed that teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance among students in WASSCE did not significantly differ based on school type. This aligns with the findings of George and Henry (2018), who similarly found no significant difference in teachers' opinions on the causes of students' poor academic performance in Ogbomosho South Local Government secondary schools, Oyo State, based on school type. This finding also supports James's (2021) position that although various factors contribute to poor performance among Nigerian secondary school students, school type is not one of them. Furthermore, the study showed that teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance among students in WASSCE did not significantly differ based on gender, agreeing with the findings of Alarape (2022) who also found no significant difference between male and female teachers' opinions on the causes of students' poor academic performance in Ogbomosho South Local Government secondary schools, Oyo State.



Conclusion

The study found that poor student attitude towards learning, lack of teacher commitment to teaching, inadequate teacher motivation, poverty, lack of support for education from parents or guardians, non-conducive school environment for learning, teacher incompetence, and inadequate instructional resources were all factors contributing to poor academic performance in the WASSCE. The study also found that school type (private or public) and family size did not have a significant impact. Additionally, there was no notable difference in teachers' perceptions of the causes of poor academic performance based on school type and gender.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made.

- i. The Government and proprietors of private secondary schools should make the teaching profession more attractive by adequately motivating teachers through financial and non-financial means and always providing adequate instructional resources for schools, to facilitate effective teaching and learning which would enhance students' performance in WASSCE.
- ii. The government should always ensure that a due recruitment process is followed to derive competent teachers to teach and the economy should be holistically revamped so that parents and guardians can be economically buoyant to finance the education of their children or wards in such a way that would make them achieve sound knowledge required to academically perform very well in WASSCE.
- iii. Teachers should be more committed to teaching by passionately discharging their statutory duties in a manner which would aid effective learning and consequently boost students' academic performance in WASSCE.
- iv. Parents and guardians should always intensify efforts in supporting their children and wards' education by adequately providing all their school needs, to facilitate their effective learning, thereby assisting them to achieve outstanding academic performance.
- v. Students should be more serious about their studies by making knowledge acquisition their top priority in schools, to be well-equipped with adequate information needed to academically excel in WASSCE.

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